Aberdeen sets sails for another record cruise season with 75 calls

The first of up to 57,000 cruise tourists arrived in Aberdeen this morning, marking the start of a record season of 75* calls, including 13 maiden visits, to the city.

The Viking Neptune, a Norwegian-flagged liner of 228 metres and 47,800 gross tonnes which accommodates up to 930 guests, made its inaugural call of the season to Port of Aberdeen, berthing alongside Castlegate Quay at South Harbour shortly after 9am. As Viking guests disembarked, they were welcomed by the skirl of Alba Bagpipes and the warm hospitality of VisitAberdeenshire's 'Welcome to Aberdeen' volunteer team.

Guests set off for a range of authentic experiences across the North East, from the city centre to attractions such as Dunnottar Castle, Drum Castle, St Cyrus and House of Dun.

Wendy Atkin-Smith, Managing Director of Viking UK said: "We're delighted to be returning to Port of Aberdeen again this year following the inaugural call of the region's cruise season by the Viking Neptune today. As Scotland's third largest city it has a lot to offer with its strong coastal culture, rich history and distinctive architecture. Our culturally curious guests always enjoy discovering Aberdeen's maritime heritage, exploring its vibrant art scene and visiting the many historic sites nearby. We're also pleased to share that our newest ocean ship, the Viking Mira, will visit Aberdeen for the first time this summer after spending her inaugural season sailing across the Mediterranean. We know our guests will receive a very warm welcome in Aberdeen as always."

Thanks to Port of Aberdeen's £420 million investment in South Harbour, an ever-expanding range of cruise lines and ships are now visiting the city. Joining Viking Neptune on that list in 2026:
- Insignia
- Marina
- MS Artania
- MS Hamburg
- Norwegian Sky
- Norwegian Star
- Ocean Explorer
- Ocean Victory
- Santa Maria Manuela
- Spirit of Discovery
- Viking Mira
- World Navigator

Bob Sanguinetti DL, CEO of Port of Aberdeen said: "The breadth of new and returning cruise lines choosing Aberdeen this season is a real endorsement of cruise tourism in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Every booking is the result of a tapestry of stakeholders working together to make the port and the wider region an attractive destination."

VisitAberdeenshire has expanded the volunteer programme thanks to support from Port of Aberdeen and sponsorship from Peterson Energy Logistics. This means that 42 passionate locals will support every call during the season, helping make memories for cruise visitors and to lay the foundation for return visits.

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire said: "A day ashore in the North-east is a wonderful 'taster' of the

experiences on offer for a return visit another day. First impressions count, so the warmth of the welcome offered on the quayside by our volunteers will go a long way to turning that cruise visit into a longer stay in the future”

Work to secure new and return bookings is continuing at pace, with ambitions to secure 100 cruise calls a season in the years ahead. The CruiseAberdeenshire partnership will be represented on Cruise Britain’s stand (831) at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami in April followed by Cruise Europe in Reykjavik in May.

Christopher Whetham, Port of Aberdeen’s Key Account Manager – Cruise, is attending both events and said: “Guest satisfaction is crucial and we strive to improve this every season. The opportunity to meet senior leaders from cruise lines face-to-face and to understand their ambitions and needs from a destination is crucial to delivering continued growth in this sector.”