



Aberdeen , Scotland, Wednesday, 15 July 2026 TWO crouise ships arrive at Aberdeen South Harbour, Port of Aberdeen Picture by Michal Wachucik/Abermedia

Aberdeen welcomes 54,000 cruise guests in record season

Visitor numbers up 26% to a record 54,000

71 cruise calls during 2026 and bookings now extend to 2033

Continued growth forecast in coming years with new and existing cruise lines

Port of Aberdeen is celebrating another record cruise season, with guest numbers up 26% on 2025 to 54,000 and bookings now extending to 2033.

2026 marked a step change for the port. Almost half of its 71 cruise calls involved vessels measuring 220 metres or longer, and combined gross tonnage increased by 24% to almost 2.5 million. The 294m-long Norwegian Star was one of 13 maiden calls and set a new benchmark as the longest vessel ever to visit Aberdeen. Cruise lines operated across expedition, luxury, premium and mainstream markets, and Viking was Aberdeen's busiest cruise line with 21 calls throughout the season.

Bob Sanguinetti DL, CEO, Port of Aberdeen, said: "Cruise tourism is creating an ocean of opportunity for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, bringing visitors from around the world and supporting local businesses. We're working closely with VisitAberdeenshire and regional stakeholders to bring new cruise lines to the region and strengthen relationships with our existing operators."

Through the CruiseAberdeenshire partnership, Port of Aberdeen and VisitAberdeenshire promoted the destination at industry events across the UK and in Gran Canaria, Miami and Reykjavik.

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire, said: "Cruise tourism in the north-east is on the crest of a wave with the increased demand to visit our region throughout 2026. From the early business development stage, all the way through to the guest experience on the day, the CruiseAberdeenshire project continues to raise the profile and reputation of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, delivering new business today and inspiring future visits for tomorrow."

The wider value of cruise tourism to Scotland was highlighted in new research by Oxford Economics, commissioned by Cruise Lines International Association, which found it generated £343 million for the Scottish economy in 2023.

Ian McQuade, Chair, Cruise Britain, said: "The increase in cruise tourism to Aberdeen and its hinterland is testament to the investment that Port of Aberdeen have made in South Harbour and also to the strength of the CruiseAberdeenshire partnership. Aberdeen is well-positioned on Scotland's north-east coast and is the gateway to wonderful guest explorations that support local businesses both now and in the future. The Port is a valued member of Cruise Britain and we continue to collaborate closely to increase visibility with cruise operators and stakeholders."

This tourism boost brought additional footfall and spending in local attractions, shops and hospitality businesses across the region. Greyhope Bay reported a marked increase in turnover on days cruise ships docked at South Harbour, providing increased funding for activities, events and projects benefiting the local community. Cruise tourism also prompted it to introduce guided coastal walks showcasing local history and wildlife, with a stop for coffee and cake. Garioch Heritage Centre in Inverurie has welcomed regular cruise passenger visits over the past two seasons, with volunteer guides offering insight into the area's culture and lifestyle.

VisitAberdeenshire's 'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteer programme continued to go from strength to strength. The programme's 42 volunteers contributed 1,250 hours throughout the season, providing a warm quayside welcome and helpful advice to cruise guests. This earned the scheme an Aberdeen City & Shire Thistle Award for the Best Community Tourism Initiative and the Lord Provost's Volunteering Award for 2026. Alba Bagpipes added a traditional Scottish welcome, with pipers and dancers greeting cruise guests.