

Aberdeen's cruise sector growth to deliver £4.5million regional windfall

In a major economic boost for local businesses and communities, the Port of Aberdeen will host 50 cruise calls in 2024 bringing £4.5m in regional benefit; projections exceed 100 calls by 2027, delivering a potential £20m.

The number of cruise calls has grown by over 130% since 2022, rising from 21 to 50* so far in 2024. This has increased guest numbers from around 3,000 up to 34,000 expected this year, buoyed by the arrival of larger ships at the port's new Aberdeen South Harbour.

With each cruise call to Scotland generating an average spend of £134 per passenger, the potential boost to the regional economy is significant. In 2024, this could total over £4.5 million and potentially exceed £20 million in subsequent years if guest numbers reach 150,000.

The port will welcome a new size and scale of cruise ships this year, including the Costa Favolosa, a 290m-long ship with a capacity exceeding 4,000 guests and crew. Joining her are maritime giants such as the 253m-long AIDA Sol and AIDA Diva, alongside exclusive vessels like the returning Sea Cloud Spirit and other boutique ships. Details of Port of Aberdeen's 2024 cruise calls are now available on Port of Aberdeen's website.

Bob Sanguinetti, CEO, Port of Aberdeen said: "With South Harbour complete, we are fully focused on consolidating and accelerating growth in this key sector. This will be largely driven by increasing the number of larger cruise ships visiting the region and we're having positive discussions with existing and prospective customers to secure this business.

"We're confident that our world-class facility, coupled with the amazing destination, will position Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire as one of the UK's top cruise destinations."

Kevin Stewart, SNP MSP for Aberdeen Central, said: "I am delighted that Aberdeen will be hosting 50 cruise ships in 2024. This is a testament to the work being done by the Port of Aberdeen, the VisitAberdeenshire team and others.

"We have already seen the positive impact that cruise ships have had on our local economy and, at a time where city centres are struggling, a potential £4.5 million boost will be huge for the Granite City. Aberdeen has a huge amount to offer and it is no surprise that we are becoming one of the top destinations for cruises in the UK."

Local businesses and attractions are gearing up for another busy year of increased footfall from cruise calls. Success stories from 2023 include the expansion of Aberdeen Whisky Shop to accommodate whisky tasting for cruise tourists and St Machar's Cathedral, which experienced a 40% uplift to 42,000 visitors, along with a 50% increase in donations and shop takings.

Sarah Brown, Minister of St Machar's Cathedral, said: "We are delighted to welcome visitors from the newly arrived cruise ships to Aberdeen. It is great to see busloads of faces light up as they encounter our unique space and chance to encounter God in this special place in the history of the church and city. We hope as more people come, the better our welcome will become through our conversations together."

'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteers, essential in guiding and informing guests about the local offerings,

will be back on the quayside in 2024. The VisitAberdeenshire programme, supported by Aberdeen Inspired and Port of Aberdeen, delivered over 300 volunteer hours last summer from around 20 engaged, energetic and enthused individuals with a shared passion for their region.

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire, said: "The growth in calls for 2024 is a vote of confidence in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire as an emerging cruise destination. VisitAberdeenshire is scaling up its work to enhance the welcome offered to passengers, the readiness of local suppliers and to secure more business from cruise operators and shore excursion companies."

Under the 'CruiseAberdeenshire' initiative, Port of Aberdeen is collaborating with VisitAberdeenshire, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen Inspired, Aberdeenshire Council, and VisitScotland to attract more cruise lines and enhance visitor experiences.

Information sessions will take place at South Harbour and online from 2pm-4pm on February 21st and 28th to brief stakeholders on the 2024 cruise season and how local businesses can capitalise on the growth in cruise tourism. The events are free to attend, and registration is open on Eventbrite.