

Passengers from one of Europe's most prestigious cruise lines have rated Kirkwall as their top Northern Europe and Scandinavian European cruise destination.

Every year, Viking Ocean Cruises, like many other cruise lines, analyse their guest feedback comments to gauge the quality of service and delivery of their destinations, and following the analysis of the 2018 itineraries, Kirkwall has been rated top destination from a total portfolio of 46 Northern Europe and Scandinavian destinations.

Viking Ocean Cruises only recently entered the sea cruise market as they have been operating their famous and celebrated river cruise market since 1997. Catering for the more discerning customer, they are viewed as one of the most prestigious cruise companies in the world. They provide river and ocean cruises, with operations based in Basel, Switzerland.

Michael Morrison is the Council's Business Development Manager for Marine Services: " Viking Ocean Cruises are one of our most regular cruise lines calling into Kirkwall and their outstanding vessels are a corner stone of our local cruise industry. For their guests to rate us so highly is indeed an accolade that all of us who deliver the marine tourism product in Orkney can be truly proud of. To receive a higher level of customer satisfaction that destinations such as Copenhagen and St Petersburg is indeed a tremendous achievement Kirkwall is the UK's cruise destination capital and this endorsement from Viking Cruises will motivate Team Orkney to continue to deliver the high quality of destination experience that Orkney is so very good at.

The 2019 Orkney season looks to be hugely successful, with 170 port calls planned compared to 140 booked for 2018 and already cruise ship port calls for 2020 are well over 100 port calls.

The 2019 season will also see considerable growth in the smaller explorer ship market with 71 vessels having under 500 passengers (54 in 2018) and less ships carrying over 3000 passengers (down from 8 to 4). The benefits of this change could be widespread across Orkney with smaller explorer vessels tending to favour an itinerary which is 'off the beaten track' and a willingness to explore options in the north and south isles of Orkney such as Sanday, Westray and Hoy. As a consequence of this, the economic benefit of cruise ship spend reaches a wider spectrum of tourism providers.