

Isles of Scilly records 100% cruise port call success in 2026

The Isles of Scilly – the UK’s tropical island destination – have welcomed 46 cruise ships carrying 19,000 passengers during the 2026 season – with not a single cancellation due to weather.

The final cruise of 2026 took place on Tuesday, 15th September when Fred Olsen’s Bolette anchored in Crow Sound and passengers spent the day ashore on St Mary’s and Tresco.

While cruise lines traditionally regard tender ports of carrying a greater risk of cancellation in poor weather, Scilly’s unique geography and local expertise are helping challenge that perception. The islands, off the coast of Cornwall, UK, have two dedicated cruise ship anchorages, meaning there is generally a sheltered option depending on the prevailing conditions. Local tender boats are also able to operate in conditions that can be more demanding for a cruise ship’s own tenders.

Crucially, cruise ship captains and operators increasingly contact port agency and excursion management providers before making a cancellation, seeking advice based on real-time weather conditions rather than relying solely on a forecast.

“This local knowledge can make a significant difference,” explained Tom Jackman, Managing Director of Scillonian Marine Consultants. “Back in May, one of the smaller cruise ships called at Scilly despite forecast conditions showing winds of more than 20 knots and a predicted swell of over four metres.

“While the forecast could have suggested a cancellation, the ship was able to anchor in a position where there was almost no swell, and the visit went ahead as planned. Understanding the capabilities of individual ships, their tender arrangements and the conditions at each anchorage enables us to provide an informed and honest assessment.”

There were two maiden cruise calls to the Isles of Scilly this year. SeaDream Yacht Club brought SeaDream II to the islands, while Vestland Classic included Scilly as part of the 70th anniversary cruise celebrating Nordstjernen, with both calls taking place on the same day earlier in September.

With SeaDream I already booked to visit next September, the islands are hoping to build on this year’s success and attract more cruises and luxury vessels.

Mr Jackman added: “While we can’t control the weather, we can control how we prepare for it. A 100% success rate for our 46 cruise ships is a fantastic achievement and demonstrates the importance of Scilly’s two anchorages, the capabilities of our local tenders and, above all, the value of local knowledge.

“Cruises are a hugely important part of our visitor economy and we hope this success encourages more cruise lines to consider our beautiful islands in future. Passengers can visit St Mary’s, go on excursions and wildlife spotting trips and of course visit the world-famous Abbey Garden on Tresco. We are working hard to grow this sector of the market and establish the Isles of Scilly as a must-visit destination on the UK cruise map.”