

## Sister ships make double cruise call at Portland

It was a double celebration when Portland Port welcomed two ships from the AIDA cruise line on the same day for the first time.

Sister vessels AIDAsol and AIDAluna made history as the first ships from AIDA to call simultaneously at the port.

The milestone came during Portland Port's 30th anniversary year and as a bumper cruise season gets underway. Coincidentally, it is also AIDA's 30th anniversary this year.

Dignitaries from Portland Port and AIDA exchanged plaques to mark the occasion, while many of the ships' 4,388 passengers headed off on excursions and complimentary shuttle buses.

Ian McQuade, Portland Port commercial director and chair of trade association Cruise Britain, said: "It was another first on a day to remember.

"We welcome AIDA's ships and passengers on a regular basis but this was the first time that two of its vessels called together.

"It was a wonderful sight to see the sister ships sail into Portland Harbour and its passengers disembark, including many setting off on our complimentary shuttle buses to stops on Portland and in Weymouth.

"AIDA has been a strong supporter as we have built the port's cruise business to the point where we are hosting 52 separate calls this year with more than 100,000 passengers, injecting circa £10m into the local economy.

"We are grateful for its support and we were thrilled to be able to celebrate the double call in our 30th anniversary year."

The AIDAsol arrived at Portland from Fishguard in Wales on the penultimate stop of a nine-day round trip. The AIDAluna called at the port on a 14 day round-trip from Hamburg.

Dorset Volunteer Ambassadors helped welcome passengers at Portland and the Weymouth Ukuleleans serenaded them as they returned from trips before the Nothe Fort Artillery Volunteers fired a three gun salute to mark the ships' departures.

Typically, about 45% of visiting cruise guests go on an organised excursion to various attractions throughout Dorset, and beyond to Stonehenge, Salisbury and Bath.

The majority of the remaining guests avail themselves of the port's complimentary shuttle bus service, either choosing to stay on Portland or travel into Weymouth.

Ian said: "Cruising continues to grow in popularity.

"A great deal of work is dedicated behind the scenes to attracting and accommodating cruise ships, which provides a valuable boost to local businesses in off-peak months as well as at the height of the season.

"Feedback from cruise lines and passengers is consistently positive about the area, the warm welcome they receive and the attractions on offer."

The £10m injected into the local economy annually is based on statistics from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) trade body for spend per head of passenger.

It includes expenditure in shops, bars, cafes, tourism attractions along with transport and tours.

In addition, further expenditure comes from the crew that are given time off when in port along with berthing revenues through the port itself and businesses in the local supply chain.

Portland Port opened a £26m deepwater berth in 2023, allowing it to welcome larger vessels, including ships up to 350m in length on opposite berths on the same day.

The port opened as a commercial business in 1996 following its closure as a Royal Naval Base.

Visit <https://www.portland-port.co.uk/cruise/> for more about Portland Port's cruise business.