

Solid cruise 2024 cruise season for Britain as port calls and embarkations increase again

Figures released by Cruise Britain show that the cruise sector continues to grow with increases in call numbers and embarkations from British ports.

In a first for Britain, over 2500 calls were welcomed across the year, with May seeing the highest monthly figure. Growth rates for embarkation were particularly marked with the number of guests embarking on their cruise at a UK port exceeding 1.6 million for the first time; this record year shows 9.9% growth and topples 2023's previous record.

In terms of transit passengers enjoying a day ashore in the UK, ports welcomed over two million guests, a slight consolidation over 2023 which was a year which saw exponential growth. With each transit passenger being worth a conservative average of £80 to the local tourism economy every time they step ashore, the visitor figure for 2024 means a vital tourism injection of around £170 million to Britain's coastal economies. This is in addition to the economic benefit brought through cruise line and port operations. In a boost to the inbound tourism economy, figures show that over three-quarters of transit passengers were overseas visitors with key markets continuing to be the USA and Germany.

Ian McQuade, Chair Cruise Britain said: "57 ports welcomed a cruise ship in 2024, which is in line with historical figures. Cruise Britain works with the large majority of these ports and we see the dedication, professionalism and investment that is evident across the country. In addition, our service providers are the backbone of the delivery of every call and of the successful guest experience. The number of ships calling into the UK has reached 134 which represents around a third of the world's ocean-going cruise ship fleet".

McQuade added: "Britain and Ireland cruise popularity goes from strength-to-strength with the diverse multi-country story of discovery really resonating with visitors, whether they be international guests, as the vast majority are, or UK residents exploring their own country. And with the imminent first anniversary of the MOU with Cruise Ireland, we see an increased opportunity to drive growth in the British Isles cruising region. As an association, we have been working with all regions and nations to demonstrate the value of cruise tourism to stakeholders; and working with cruise operators to ensure the success of their UK programmes. Looking ahead, we expect that the current season will continue to build on the strong 2024 figures."