

Strong transition year heralds record 2023 cruise season for Britain

Figures released by Cruise Britain today show that the cruise sector's post-Covid 'year of transition' was a success for ports and service providers around the UK and has provided the strongest possible springboard for a projected record season in 2023.

2019 was the UK's previous record season and 2022's 2176 cruise calls only showed a drop of 12% on that record year. In terms of transit passengers enjoying a day ashore in the UK, ports welcomed nearly 1.4 million guests, around 80% of the 2019 figure. With each transit passenger being worth an average of £70 to the local economy every time they step ashore, the visitor figure for 2022 means a tourism injection of around £100m to Britain's coastal economies. The 2022 embarkation figure of 1.04m passengers setting sail from a UK port constitutes a rebound to 94% of 2019 figures.

'2022 was the first full year of cruise activity since the pandemic and really built upon the unprecedented success of the 2021 domestic season. What we are seeing now are the rewards for an industry that has consistently worked together to recover, regenerate and develop', said Ian McQuade, Chair, Cruise Britain. 'Whilst Round Britain and Ireland cruise popularity continues to grow, we have now seen the successful return of itineraries where British port calls are part of a multi-country story of discovery'.

'Looking ahead to this year, we see a very robust projected growth of 8% in terms of port calls across the UK. Some regions such as the South West, North West and Scotland are reporting likely figures in excess of this national growth rate' added McQuade. 'This is a fantastic projection and the strength of the immediate growth trend is testament to the increasing popularity of Britain as a cruise destination. We really can offer a port for every cruise ship currently sailing - from expedition ships to boutique and mid-range vessels up to the largest afloat'.

In 2022, cruise passengers arrived for the day or embarked through 58 cruise ports aboard 107 individual ships, from Kirkwall and Aberdeen in the north to Guernsey in the English Channel, with the vast majority of ships calling on multiple occasions. 52 different cruise lines were welcomed and ships visited UK ports as diverse as Belfast and Bristol, Portland and Portsmouth, Douglas (Isle of Man) and Dover, and many more.

'The UK offers an incredibly diverse cruise holiday experience for guests and this is one of the most powerful reasons for the growth projections that we are seeing' commented McQuade. 'Cruise Britain and all its members continues to work with cruise lines, industry partners and stakeholders, and government to support the development of cruise as a resilient and profitable sector of the travel industry'.