

# CRUISE CONTROL

## THOMSON CRUISES HAS CHOSEN THE PORT OF TYNE AS ITS ONLY UK DEPARTURE POINT FOR CRUISES DURING SUMMER 2017.

Travel giant Thomson Cruises has returned to Port of Tyne as its only departure point in the UK this summer.

Holidaymakers are able to start and finish their cruise at Port of Tyne, heading to a choice of 23 countries and 112 points of call. During the summers of 2017 and 2018, a total of 33,000 passengers are expected to cruise from Port of Tyne with Thomson.

The impressive figures come as part of a wider investment in the cruise market from Thomson, which has steadily added to its fleet as part of its growth strategy.

Neil Duncan, General Manager, Planning and Trading, Thomson Cruises, says: "It's no secret that our strength has historically been in the fly-cruise sector, taking our customers to the Med in the summer and the Caribbean and Canaries in the winter.

"As we grew our capacity, the plan was always to return to UK cruising and to widen our destination portfolio for customers. We're seeing really strong sales for the rest of the summer. Our itineraries from Newcastle are some of our most popular. There was definitely pent-up demand among customers for Newcastle departures."

The Thomson Celebration has already set sail on a number of itineraries from Port of Tyne, including the Norwegian Fjords, Scandinavia and the Baltic region.

Such is Thomson's confidence in Port of Tyne that capacity is being increased. "It's a very slick operation at Port of Tyne, and very customer focused," says Neil.

"Newcastle is also in a great location to allow easy access to fantastic destinations in Northern Europe, like Scandinavia, Iceland and the Baltics.

"Now that we've dipped our toe back in the water in the UK for 2017, we'll be making a bigger splash during 2018 by bringing the TUI Discovery to Newcastle.

"That is proof of the pudding when it comes to how committed we are to Port of Tyne. TUI Discovery is one of our bigger ships, with 600 more berths than the Celebration. That we are increasing capacity out of Newcastle with one of our flagship ships says it all."

Sailing out of Port of Tyne allows Thomson to tap into a wide customer base, with holidaymakers travelling south from Scotland and north from Birmingham to sail from Newcastle.

"We have a very loyal customer base out of Port of Tyne, taking in the Midlands, North East, North West, Scotland and South West," explains Neil. "Good transport links mean our customers find Newcastle an easy option to start and end their cruise."

While the cruise market is a relatively small player in the tourism industry as a whole, it is increasingly taking a bigger share of the market. According to latest statistics from the Cruise Lines International Association, ocean cruises are up 6.7 per cent to a record 1.9m passengers.

Industry analysts have commended efforts to increase passenger awareness of cruise holidays as well as significant investment in new ships.

"It's a very slick operation at Port of Tyne, and very customer-focused. Newcastle is also in a great location for fantastic destinations in Europe."

**Neil Duncan**  
General Manager, Planning and Trading, Thomson Cruises

There is also an increasingly diverse choice of itineraries as Thomson experiences increased interest in cruises, including from younger customers. This, says Neil, is partly down to the on board value provided by food, drink and gratuities included on the Discovery and Explorer Fleet, and the fact that on board prices are in Sterling at a time when the Euro and Dollar are strong against the Pound.

Thomson's success from Newcastle is part of wider growth in the cruise market at Port of Tyne. Andy Foster, Commercial Manager, Port of Tyne, says: "In 2013, we had 30 cruise calls a year, and that figure now stands at 53. We've had a lot of experience in ensuring that everything runs smoothly, including the logistics of getting hundreds of passengers and pieces of luggage on board, as well as supplies such as fresh drinking water.

"We're not only spreading the message about what the Port of Tyne can do, but also about what the region as a whole has to offer. Many holidaymakers are choosing to stay in Newcastle or the North East the day before or after their cruise, providing a boost to the region's economy. Our expertise, facilities and location are making the Port of Tyne a very attractive place for holidaymakers and cruise companies alike."

**53**

CRUISE CALLS SCHEDULED FOR 2017 AT THE PORT OF TYNE

**33K**

PASSENGERS EXPECTED TO CRUISE INTO AND OUT OF THE PORT OF TYNE WITH THOMSON IN 2017

*Pictured right: Passengers and crew enjoy the sights at the Port of Tyne as the Thomson cruise ship Celebration arrives in the North East in June 2017*

