

NEWS

# 2020 to smash cruise ship records



2020 is set to break cruise ship records, with 99 vessels expected to dock.

Photo: Submitted

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SAINT JOHN • Port Saint John's 32nd cruise season is set to break all its previous records.

In 2010, the port had its biggest year in terms of passenger visits, welcoming 76 ships and 205,883 visitors. This year, the city's end-of-season total is 82 ships carrying about 199,000 passengers, according to Paula Copeland, director of communications for Port Saint John.

In 2020, the city expects to smash records for both the number of cruise ships to port and visitors. There are currently 99 vessels carrying 239,000 passengers and 90,000 crew expected to flow through the port, Copeland said, adding that they are still awaiting confirmation for some so there could be fluctuation between now and next season.

"Next year is anticipated to be our best year ever."

The first ship is set to arrive on April 24, she said, with the last ship scheduled for Nov. 3.

Deputy Mayor Shirley McAlary first heard the news on Monday while welcoming a ship that had never before docked in the city, as whenever a new cruise vessel comes in the captain is presented with a plaque, she said.

It was there that she was told by a Port Saint John official that 2020 would see 99 ships roll through.

"[It's] wonderful news for the city," McAlary said, adding she thinks the visits do a lot for Saint John. Vacationers bring their experiences home with them and spread the word about the new locations they visited, she said.

"It's not just the people that are on the cruise ship, it's who they communicate with when they leave here," she said, adding that overall the city is very fortunate to have them.

A lot of people are also coming from the New England area, meaning they live a short drive away from Saint John, said Victoria Clarke, executive director of Discover Saint John.

"We see return business from them ... we see them in the months and the years following, coming back as repeat visitors."

Clarke said she doesn't think there's a better day than when she sees three huge cruise ships docked at once, letting off thousands of people in a city of just over 60,000.

"It's pretty extraordinary, and we all feel it," she said.

Danielle Timmons, vice-president of Aquila – a company that does tours with every cruise ship that visits the city – said excitement is building.

"We're getting more cruise ships, and the cruise ships that are coming are getting bigger," Timmons said.

The increasing number of people flowing into the city from the sea have "not really" put a strain on their resources, she said, adding they work hard to recruit new guides every year. In 2020, they will probably look to hire 10 to 15 guides, instead of their usual five to 10. Between this year and last year, they've hired between 15 and 20 language guides, she said.

In addition to more ships, Copeland said the cruise ship season is also lengthening. Whereas the peak periods are September and October for the fall foliage, they are beginning to pick up more in the summer months, she said.

Though busy days bring operational challenges, she said overall "it's like a well-oiled machine."

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