

Wellington Tourism Industry Gears up for Cruise Season

The arrival of the 2600 guest capacity Star Princess will kick off the 2009/10 cruise season in Wellington on Sunday.

Positively Wellington Tourism (PWT) Chief Executive David Perks says cruise passenger and crew numbers in the capital surged 61% to 102,000 in 2008/09, compared to 63,500 the previous summer. There will be fewer ships but similar visitor numbers this season, with up to 100,000 guests forecast and 47 vessels currently booked to stop by. Last year's season is estimated to have been worth \$32 million to Wellington.

The withdrawal of Millennium – which visited the city 13 times last summer – from Australasian waters this year, along with the re-routing of four South Pacific itineraries by Volendam, is being offset by increased visitation by Rhapsody, Dawn Princess and Sun Princess.

Wellington's operators and attractions had coped incredibly well with the huge increase in demand last year, Mr Perks says.

"The cruise sector has unique needs, with large passenger volumes and quick turnarounds. We've been working closely with the industry over winter to ensure Wellington businesses understand the changes in and demands of the market and can adapt accordingly. We want our visitors to have the best experience and our city to get the most value."

CentrePort Chief Executive Blair O'Keeffe says an upgrade of the walkway from the arrivals area to the CBD would further enhance cruise visitors' experience this season.

"Wellington is actually the most advanced provider of cruise facilities in the country. While the terminal is sited next to other port operations, the passenger experience CentrePort provides is second-to-none in New Zealand and is recognised by the cruise sector as being so."

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For more information please contact:

Angela Moriarty
Communications Manager
Angela.Moriarty@WellingtonNZ.com
04 916 1211
021 548 155

Following the success of last year's pilot of shuttle buses, Positively Wellington Tourism and Wellington City Council will continue to offer the service to cruise liners without their own transfer arrangements this year. A return ticket charge of \$5 per passenger will contribute towards costs.

The profile of cruise visitors this season looks set to reflect general industry trends, with more Australian passengers and a decrease in American visitors, Mr Perks says.

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Background:

Positively Wellington Tourism (PWT)

PWT is the regional tourism organisation for Wellington. It is a council-controlled organisation primarily funded by Wellington City Council through the Downtown Levy, a targeted rate paid by commercial ratepayers in downtown Wellington. PWT funding does not come from Wellington City Council general rates.

Tourism statistics

- The visitor sector contributes \$1.4 billion in expenditure per annum to Wellington's economy, an average of \$3.8 million per day.
- Visitor expenditure in Wellington accounts for approximately 10% of Wellington's regional domestic product.
- Wellington city has more than 8 million visitor nights per year. Some 2 million are commercial guest nights – 1.3 million by domestic visitors and 700,000 by international guests – the rest are spend visiting friends and relatives.

Cruise statistics:

	2007/08 (actual)	2008/09 (actual)	2009/10 (forecast)
Ship visits	37	58	47
Passenger and crew numbers	63,500	102,000	100,000

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