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Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines increases its commitment to Newcastle with Balmoral's first-ever cruise season in 2016

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines has made the strategic decision to base *Balmoral* - its 1,350-guest flagship - in Newcastle for the first time ever, from May to August 2016.

Fred. Olsen has over 100 years of heritage in running passenger services from the Port of Tyne, and has been operating regular cruise calls from Newcastle since 2006. Since then, Fred. Olsen has seen bookings departing from the

Port of Tyne soar, with its Norwegian Fjords cruises selling out in record time.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said:

“We are very excited to be basing *Balmoral* in Newcastle from May to August in 2016, as it means that we are almost doubling our capacity and offering our loyal guests in the North East an even greater number of cruise departures than ever before, with a choice of 11 in total. Bookings for 2016 have shown that, so far, our 14-night ‘The Wonders of Spitsbergen’ and 11-night ‘Icelandic Wildlife, Falls & Hot Springs’ cruises are bestsellers.

“The Port of Tyne is also ideally placed for our ever-popular Norway, Scandinavian and Baltic itineraries, and we can save up to three days’ cruising time sailing from Newcastle to Norway than from Southern ports.”

The appealing combination of choice and value offered by Fred. Olsen has already seen many first-time cruisers and repeat customers from the North East region make the decision to use their local port and sail from the Port of Tyne.

Research shows that guests from the North East rate the choice of destination as the most compelling factor when booking a cruise with Fred. Olsen. As a result, in 2016, guests can choose from a wider selection of destinations sailing directly from the Port of Tyne, including the cooler climes of Norway, Scandinavia and the Baltics, to the warmer shores of the Canary Islands, Madeira, the Azores, Portugal, Morocco and Spain.

In 2016/17, Fred. Olsen's *Balmoral* will be setting sail from Newcastle for the first time ever, with a record 11 departures, representing a 45% increase in capacity from the Port of Tyne.

Balmoral's cruise season from Newcastle will commence on 21st May 2016, with a five-night ‘Norwegian Festival & Fjords’ cruise. Other departures include a ten-night ‘UK Castles’ sailing, which offers guests the chance to visit Balmoral and Braemar Castles - both of which lend their names to Fred. Olsen ships - and an 11-night ‘Spain, Portugal & Guernsey’ getaway.

Andrew Moffat, Chief Executive Officer, Port of Tyne, said:

“The Port of Tyne’s cruise operations continue to grow and it is great news that Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines are expanding their itineraries and basing their flagship at the Port from next year.

“Fred. Olsen is one of many leading cruise lines operating from the Port of Tyne and, in 2015, the Port has 27 cruise calls planned during the year. 2016 promises to be a record year for cruise calls.”

Fred. Olsen's 880-guest *Boudicca* is today [7th May 2015] heralding the first of its calls into the Port of Tyne for 2015, on an 11-night 'Floral Britannia' itinerary. This floral-themed sailing, which departed from Dover on 28th April 2015, will take in some of the best and most spectacular gardens and attractions in the UK, including the world-famous Alnwick Castle in Northumberland - where 'Harry Potter' was filmed - and its intriguing 'Poison Garden'.

Boudicca will return to the Port of Tyne to begin her cruise season on 26th July 2015, setting sail on a total of eight cruises, including a 16-night 'Canaries, Madeira & the Azores' sunshine escape, a nine-night 'Norwegian Fjords' cruise and a 13-night 'Scandinavia & St. Petersburg' departure.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines operates four smaller, more intimate ships - *Balmoral*, *Braemar*, *Boudicca* and *Black Watch* - and offers cruises to over 200 destinations around the world, from ten convenient, regional UK ports, including the Port of Tyne.

The Port of Tyne’s International Passenger Terminal (based in North Shields, eight miles from Newcastle City Centre) welcomes around 620,000 passengers each year. Passenger shipping generates around £60 million for the North East economy each year, supporting over 2,000 tourism-related jobs.

For further information on Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, visit the website at www.fredolsencruises.com To find out more about the Port of Tyne, go to www.portoftyne.co.uk

Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

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