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## VIPs join Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines on board *Balmoral* at the Port of Tyne to celebrate first-ever cruise season from Newcastle in 2016

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines was delighted to welcome a delegation of VIPs on a visit to its 1,350-guest flagship, *Balmoral*, at the Port of Tyne on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, as part of her ten-night 'Around the UK' cruise. Fred. Olsen will be basing *Balmoral* at the Port of Tyne from May to August 2016, for her first-ever cruise season from Newcastle. In fact, this will be the first time that the ship has operated from any port other than Southampton.

The VIP Reception on *Balmoral* was hosted jointly by Fred. Olsen and the Port of Tyne, and dignitaries attending included the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Newcastle, the Mayor and Mayoress of Gateshead, and the Honorary Consuls for Finland and Germany, as well as a number of key travel agents and media partners. Whilst on board *Balmoral*, the VIPs were treated to a Champagne welcome and presentations in the ship's main show lounge, followed by a delicious afternoon tea, complete with a spectacular ice carving!

*Balmoral*'s move to Newcastle will mean that Fred. Olsen will be almost doubling its capacity from this important, strategic region next year, and will be offering its loyal guests in the North East an even greater number of cruise departures than ever before, with a choice of 11 in total.

The visit was intended to give key stakeholders in the North East a feel for the relaxed, 'home-from-home' atmosphere of Fred. Olsen's fleet of four smaller, more traditional ships, and to help to promote cruise opportunities within the region.

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

"We are delighted to welcome such prestigious visitors on board *Balmoral*, the flagship of our fleet, and we would like to thank the Port of Tyne for their hospitality.

"This visit to *Balmoral* is an important opportunity for us to give our partners in the North East the chance to find out more about cruising with Fred. Olsen from 'right on your doorstep', from the Port of Tyne, and also how we might be able to help to benefit local businesses.

"The Port of Tyne is 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. 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 amongst the bestsellers in the North East."

Susan Wear, Director of Corporate Affairs Director at the Port of Tyne, said:

“Last year, there were 31 cruises from the Port of Tyne and we’re expecting a record 41 next year.

“The impact on the economy of that is so important. It’s the money tourists spend when they’re here. £55 million goes into the local economy from cruise and ferry passengers and that supports 1,800 tourism jobs.

“Fred Olsen’s decision to base *Balmoral* here is helping us to grow the market and it’s a real vote of confidence in the port.”

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. To demonstrate its commitment to its growing share of the cruise market in the North East, Fred. Olsen has made a considerable investment in adding its unique branding to the Port of Tyne’s International Passenger Terminal.

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 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.

*Balmoral*’s cruise season from Newcastle will commence on 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

Fred. Olsen’s 880-guest *Boudicca* returned to the Port of Tyne on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015 to begin her cruise season for this year, 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.

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

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

## Contacts



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