



# news

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## **BC PORTS ACHIEVE NEW MILESTONE FOR CRUISE VISITS**

*Victoria, Prince Rupert and Nanaimo set record for cruise passenger visits and ship calls.*

Vancouver, B.C. - The 2005 cruise season featured a record number of ship calls and passenger visits for BC ports and destinations, continuing the upward trend of the cruise industry along the west coast and its increased significance to local economies. Total economic impact in 2005 for British Columbia was estimated at \$1.29 billion.

Overall cruise visits to BC coast ports hit an all-time high of 520 ship calls with 1,296,871 revenue passengers, representing an overall increase of 4.8% over 2004.

“What we’re seeing right now is a diversification of cruise products in the region with much more exposure for ports throughout British Columbia as the result,” said Greg Wirtz, Chair of Cruise BC and Manager, Trade Development, Cruise for Vancouver Port Authority. “While Vancouver faces stiff competition for homeport business from U.S. ports, the overall market continues to grow with new port-of-call opportunities for Vancouver, Victoria and emerging cruise destinations such as Prince Rupert, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Port Alberni.”

Highlights of the 2005 cruise season include important new benchmarks for several BC cruise destinations:

- The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority hosted 142 ships calls, carrying 294,596 revenue passengers, representing a 12% increase in passengers over 2004.
- The Port of Prince Rupert has rapidly developed into a key destination for cruise tourism with a total of 75 ship calls and 96,000 revenue passengers in 2005, after just two years of operations at the new Northland Cruise Terminal. “Development of the upland area, growth in tourist services for our passengers and an expanded range of shore excursion programs all attributed to very high levels of guest satisfaction,” said Don Krusel, President and CEO of Prince Rupert Port Authority.”
- Nanaimo Port Authority hosted 33 ship calls and 14,610 passengers. “This has been a phenomenal year of growth for Nanaimo,” noted Doug Peterson, Manager of Marketing and Sales at NPA. “Our ship calls tripled this year and passenger numbers increased dramatically due to the new Celebrity cruises that focused on BC ports as the main destination. Our ability to prove that we could handle such a significant increase and receive very favourable feedback from passengers, crew and cruise line representatives at the same time, bodes well for future cruise activity in Nanaimo.”

- Vancouver Port Authority recorded 910,172 revenue passengers on 272 vessel calls through the Port of Vancouver in 2005. The Port of Vancouver was recently named the most passenger-friendly cruise port in North America by London-based Berlitz travel publishing company, with top marks for user friendliness and luggage handling.
- Campbell River and Port Alberni – both in the process of developing a market for cruise business – made great progress in 2005. Darryl Anderson, President and CEO of Port Alberni Port Authority noted the success of the Cruise BC initiative in developing local market opportunities. He stated that "Port Alberni based tourism operators have hosted numerous cruise ship guests during Vancouver Island ports of call". Lise Steele, Tourism North Central Island remarked for Campbell River that construction on their new dock was underway and they were looking forward to welcoming cruise visits in the fall of 2006.

The success of the 2005 cruise season was also attributed to new itineraries featuring six cruises to various BC ports in September and October aboard Celebrity Cruises' vessel Mercury. The itineraries included ports of call at Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Prince Rupert. As a result of the program's first year of success, Celebrity Cruises will again be offering the cruises in the Fall of 2006. A survey of passengers aboard these cruises demonstrated top marks for BC ports and destinations, with nine out of 10 passengers rating their overall cruise experience at 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 as poor and 5 as excellent). Nearly 80% of respondents indicated that their experience generally exceeded their expectations.

"Passengers clearly enjoyed their visit to BC communities and provided insight into their favourite activities including shopping, sightseeing as well as more active excursions like whale watching and golf. This research will be used to help us continue to develop Canada's Inside Passage with BC ports becoming cruise destinations in their own right rather than as a stop-over to Alaska," said Wirtz.

Formed in 2002, Cruise BC Association is a partnership between BC ports, destination marketing organizations, Western Economic Diversification Canada and the BC Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts. Working together and collaboratively with cruise lines, Cruise BC has been successful in developing the tremendous potential that exists to make Canada's Inside Passage and BC cruise ports world class destinations.

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