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Cruising creates 4.7m CAD of economic impact in Thunder Bay

Region continues to benefit from growth in Great Lakes cruising

[THUNDER BAY, ON] – Tourism Thunder Bay announced today that cruise passenger spending generated over 4.7m CAD in direct economic impact for Thunder Bay in 2024. This spending supports shops, restaurants, transportation providers, tour operators, and other small businesses in Thunder Bay and elsewhere around the Great Lakes, underscoring the growing economic importance of cruising to the region.

Thunder Bay Figures

In 2024 over 6,000 passengers visited Thunder Bay, up from 5,000 in 2023. Four cruise ships made 16 vessel stops, all contributing to the 4.7m CAD figure.

“In addition to welcoming thousands of visitors and generating millions in economic impact, Thunder Bay has benefited from significant media exposure generated by the expedition cruising market,” **said Paul Pepe**, Manager of Tourism Thunder Bay, during a ship-side news conference held at the Port of Thunder Bay. “This tells our city and region’s stories to a global audience in a way that elevates our destination awareness for cruisers and non-cruisers alike.”

Regional Passenger Visits

Across the Great Lakes, the season numbers mirrored the projected figures, as more than 21,000 passengers made 600 visits to Great Lakes ports in 2024, nearly double the number from a decade ago.

Regional Economic impact

The economic impact of all Great Lakes visits totaled over 205m USD, an increase of nearly 50% from 2022. This number is driven by the upward trend in passenger numbers, port visits, shoreside spending, and Great Lakes cruises' growing domestic and international appeal.

Ships on Great Lakes

With American Queen Voyages leaving the Great Lakes in 2024 to focus exclusively on its core river cruising business, the region welcomes Ponant’s *Le Champlain* to the Great Lakes in 2024.

The Great Lakes have welcomed new ships every year since 2016, and that streak will continue in 2025 as Victory Cruise Lines returns its *Victory I* and *Victory II* to the waters. Cruise lines operating on the Great Lakes in 2024 included Pearl Seas Cruises, Viking Cruises, St. Lawrence Cruise Lines, Ponant, Hapag-Lloyd, and Plantours Cruises.

“More passengers, more port visits, a growing price premium for Great Lakes cruises, and an increased daily spend rate by passengers are all contributing to an expected overall increase in the total economic impact of Great Lakes cruising next year,” **added John Schmidt** at today’s event in Thunder Bay. Schmidt is the Program Manager at the Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, which facilitates the Cruise the Great Lakes program.

“As the season statistics indicate, the Great Lakes captivate cruise passengers with natural beauty and rich experiences,” **said Anne Sayers**, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Chair of Cruise the Great Lakes. “This year, shoreline communities welcomed more cruisers with even more opportunities to explore vibrant streets, unexpected attractions, and local flavors. In just a decade, the number of cruise passengers has more than doubled, and Great Lakes ports are bustling with the promise of even more visitors in the years to come.”

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About Cruise the Great Lakes

www.cruisethegreatlakes.com

Cruise the Great Lakes is the region’s cruise marketing program focused on attracting more passengers. It is a forum to unite the States, Provinces, cruise lines, ports, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, associations, and others to work toward shared goals.