



Traffic Up for Norway

Norway is expecting 1,766 cruise calls this year, up from 1,738 last year, and 2.7 million passenger visits, up from 2.5 million. And things continue to look good for the future, according to Sandra Diana Bratland, CEO of Cruise Norway, the marketing organization that ties together Norwegian ports and service suppliers.

"Ports are reporting back that they already have numerous requests for calls in 2017 and 2018 and even beyond," Bratland told *Cruise Industry News*. "Being a safe corner of the earth, we continue to focus our marketing on being a nature-based destination," she continued. "Our goal is to increase the number of calls and passengers to our diverse ports."

Fjords

Most of the traffic increase this year is to so-called Fjord Norway, with slightly lower numbers in northern Norway and the southeast, where Oslo is seeing a decline. But it is not across the board, as in the north Nordkapp and Tromsø are maintaining their traffic level, as is Kristiansand in the south.

In Fjord Norway, Flam is seeing a huge increase. Bratland attributed this to the destination's product offering, including its scenic rail tour, the close cooperation between the port and the destination, and marketing.

She said that the North Cape is a must see so it is only natural that they retain their number of calls. Also, last year the *Costa neoRomantica* sailed to northern Norway, calling at Bodo, Leknes, Sortland and Narvik, but is not there this year, which may explain some of the drop off. Winter cruises have also leveled off after a strong growth period.

The British market pioneered winter cruising to Norway, but for 2017 AIDA will be sailing its first winter cruise.

Pullmantur pulled its turn-around operation in Lakselv when a promised floating pier did not materialize, citing that they could not operate turn-around operations by tender. Meanwhile, Lakselv



Welcoming ships to Arendal, aka Arendelle, is Gordon Fuglestad, cruise manager and assisting harbor master, and hostesses in traditional dress.

is working to find a solution and Bratland said she was hopeful to see new turn-arounds in the near future.

Bratland suggested that Oslo has taken a hit partially because of the SECA and higher fuel prices, and possibly the pilot cost sailing up the Oslofjord. She added that the port and Visit Oslo are working on a new strategy aiming at attracting more visitors. She said the Norwegian capital has a lot to offer as a modern, vibrant, green capital with cultural, gastronomic and architectural highlights and said she is confident the calls will pick up again.

Turnarounds

In addition to calls, Norway also hosts turnarounds that numbered 38 last year from Bergen, the North Cape, Stavanger, Trondheim, Tromsø, Oslo, Alta, Narvik and Longyearbyen. Among the turnarounds this year, Viking Ocean and Hapag-Lloyd will both turn in Bergen and Pullmantur in Trondheim.

Bratland said that ports were continuously working to improve their berths and other facilities. More ports also offer discounts based on ships' ESI (environmental ship index) scores.

• Among the examples she mentioned, in Fredrikstad work is underway to enable ships up to 300 meters in length to dock.

• Stavanger has reduced its port and mooring charges by 10 percent for 2016. The port was also among the first to introduce environmental discounts.

• Geiranger is featuring electric cars for rent. Additional RIB boats (rigid inflatable boats) are also available for excursions. The Norwegian Fjord Center has been extended and upgraded with several new presentations, including "how to live with tsunami risk."

• Flam will have a new electric sightseeing vessel going into service this summer, accommodating up to 450 passengers.

• In Bronnoysund, cruise passengers can experience 1,000-year-old local food traditions.

• The Svalbard Cruise Network has been established in Spitsbergen with 24 members, including the port, airport, tour operators, transport companies, attractions and suppliers. The goal is to develop and market Isfjorden and Longyearbyen as a cruise destination.

"Cruise tourism is very important to Norway as it counts for around one third of all incoming tourists," Bratland said. "Our objective is to make calls a positive experience for the ship, passengers, crew and the local community and the many local suppliers that rely on the cruise ships to make a living." ■