

Arrival of MSC Sinfonia marks start of SA cruise season

The arrival of international cruise liner, MSC Sinfonia, at the Port of Durban has marked the official start of the South African 2017/18 cruise season. The cruise liner, carrying 2,300 European and South African passengers, was welcomed with a tug spray, marimba band and traditional dancers.



MSC Sinfonia arrived at the Port of Durban on 30 October. (Image Supplied)

Growing cruise sector

The Port of Durban is scheduled to receive 13 cruise liners this season – up from eight which called at the port during the 2016/17 season. Transnet National Ports Authority's Port Manager for the Port of Durban, Moshe Motlohi, said: "It gives us great pleasure to welcome MSC Cruises and MSC Sinfonia back to her South African home port each year. We are also delighted to welcome some new operators and vessels to the port this season. These 13 vessels represent 11 cruise line companies that have shown confidence in Durban as a route this season – up from seven in 2016/17."

The 13 passenger liners scheduled to call at the Port of Durban this season are: Albatros (Phoenix Reisen), Boudicca (Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines), Crystal Symphony (Crystal Cruises), Europa 2 (Hapag-Lloyd Cruises), Insignia (Oceania Cruises), Le Lyrial (Compagnie du Ponant), Nautica (Oceania Cruises), Seabourn Sojourn (Seabourn Cruise Line), Serenissima (Noble Caledonia), Seven Seas Navigator (Regent Seven Seas Cruises), Silver Spirit (Silversea Cruises), MSC Sinfonia (MSC Cruises) and Seven Seas Voyager (Regent Seven Seas Cruises).

The global luxury cruise sector is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry and has the potential to grow the economy and create jobs. Internationally the cruise market has grown from five million passengers to over 20 million passengers over the last 17 years.



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Passenger numbers at the Port of Durban have grown from 171,510 in 2015 to 209,712 in 2016. The port witnessed an increase of 22% in 2016 compared to 2015.

Durban a popular destination

Durban is a popular destination owing to its pleasant climate and beaches, close proximity to the two World Heritage Sites (Isimangaliso Wetland Park and Drakensberg), shore excursions, land programmes and promotion of wildlife experiences at nearby luxury game lodges.

Last year MSC Cruises Marketing Director, Alan Foggitt, said the cruise company would be replacing MSC Sinfonia in the 2018/19 season with the larger MSC Musica. MSC had also secured a new destination in northern Mozambique to include in its regional cruise schedule.

The South African cruise season typically runs from late October/early November to early May.

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