

Tourism boost for Edinburgh

Coach loads of Dutch and Germans arriving by sea have given Edinburgh's tourism industry an unexpected boost, according to new figures from leading cruise ferry operator DFDS Seaways.

Nearly 60% of German and Dutch passengers sailing in to the UK on the DFDS Seaways Newcastle-Amsterdam ferry bypassed England to choose Scotland as their final destination.

Passenger traffic was boosted in particular by German coach operators who ferried more than 17,000 German tourists – the bulk of them coach parties – north of the border, helping to create a 'new alliance' between Scotland and Germany.

The daily DFDS Seaways Newcastle-Amsterdam route provides a vital link for tourism and business on both sides of the North Sea and 2010 saw a record 555,000 passengers use the service, including thousands of Scots using the ferry to Amsterdam as a gateway to Europe's motorways.

Analysis of the passenger statistics has revealed that Holland and Germany are the main source markets for tourists heading to Scotland. The largest growth sector is the 65+ German coach market.

Coach groups from Germany accounted for some 17,500 passengers – up from 12,500 in 2009 – using the route, while another 3000 passengers arrived by coach from Holland with 6000 more Dutch visitors taking hotel or self-catering package trips. Around 35,000 Dutch and Germans also booked independent trips to Scotland with a vehicle.

Around 69% of travellers took part in self-drive/self-catering touring and rural based holidays, although Edinburgh city breaks and short breaks to the Highlands (especially for whisky tours) and Loch Lomond were also popular.

The average German and Dutch passenger visited 3.6 areas per visit. Areas such as the Lothians, Borders and Fife have grown in popularity over the past few years, allowing the benefits of increased interest in Scotland to spread across a wider geographical area.

That's seen the invasion of continental travellers via the DFDS Seaways' route bring a major economic boost to a range of Scots towns and regions, with the average German traveller spending €1502 during an average stay of 10 days.

John Crummie, Passenger Director for DFDS Seaways, said: "Historically, Scotland has enjoyed an 'auld alliance' with France but these figures show Scotland is forging a new alliance with Germany and the Netherlands.

"We have seen an increasing trend over the last few years of German and Dutch people travelling on our Amsterdam to Newcastle route to make Scotland their final destination.

"We are very pleased to see the valuable contribution the DFDS Seaways Newcastle to Amsterdam route is making to Scotland's tourism economy, and in particular those towns and regions outwith the cities.

"From our passengers' feedback, we hear that Scots help make trips for our Dutch and German passengers really special. Scots are always friendly and willing to help tourists get the best out of any trip to Scotland.

"Our German visitors, in turn, tell us they like using the ferry as its safe, reliable and comfortable with good motorway connections to east and west Scotland.

"We are always looking for new ways in which to promote Scotland to our passengers and try to innovate and vary the products and packages we offer every year. We have worked very closely with VisitScotland to promote Scotland as a holiday destination for several years now.

“As well as attracting continental travellers, the DFDS Seaways’ Newcastle to Amsterdam route has also proven popular with Scots using it to reach a variety of destinations across Europe.

“Last year Scots passengers – many of them discovering the route for the first time – provided a major boost to our travel figures, with a substantial percentage of the 555,000 travellers originating in Scotland.

“While 2010 was a record year for our route, we see no reason why this trend cannot continue into 2011 and beyond.”

With DFDS Seaways’ ongoing marketing links with VisitScotland, it is predicted that around 80% of individual German travellers will visit Scotland in 2011.

Aoife Desmond, Visit Scotland’s International Marketing Manager for Europe, said: “Tourism is Scotland’s most important industry, bringing £11 billion into the economy and supporting over 270,000 jobs. Good transport links are crucial for growth.

“DFDS Seaways has been a key partner in Visit Scotland’s European Touring campaign. Last year’s campaign generated £97m for Scotland, so our joint efforts to encourage Dutch and German visitors to Scotland are really paying off. We are delighted to be working closely with DFDS Seaways in 2011 to keep up the momentum built last year.”

*The 2010 passenger figures for the Newcastle-Amsterdam service show an increase of 4.3% in passenger numbers compared to 2009 and are the second consecutive year of record breaking passenger volume growth.