

**Media release**  
**12 August 2014**

## **Excellent outlook for cruise sector**

The cruise sector is looking forward to a record season in 2015-16 but is warning that effort will be needed to cement New Zealand's place as a cruise destination.

At Cruise New Zealand's recent annual conference in Napier, Chairman Graeme Marshall said there is still tremendous opportunity to grow cruising to New Zealand, with double-digit growth forecast.

Port bookings for the 2015-16 season indicated that New Zealand could expect close to 250,000 passengers to arrive, up from 203,000 in the 2013-14 season.

"If cruise was a country it would now rank third behind China among New Zealand's sources of international visitors. Even more significant is that these numbers are distributed across more than 10 destinations in this country," Mr Marshall said.

"However, New Zealand is a high cost destination for cruise lines. We need to continually look at costs and ensure that we remain easy to do business with. We are competing in a global marketplace and we risk losing market share to other international destinations."

There are also big challenges in providing infrastructure to enable increasingly large cruise ships to use New Zealand ports, he said.

The cruise sector expects that the widening of the Panama Canal will enable easier access for larger ships into this part of the world. And the deployment of very large vessels into Asia (particularly China) to satisfy huge market growth there will see these ships potentially brought in to Australasia during the northern winter.

"Failure to plan ahead could severely restrict New Zealand's future as a cruise destination," Mr Marshall said.

He also urged cruise destinations around the country to work more closely together to shape attractive itineraries for cruise lines and their passengers.

Passengers booked cruises based on their perceptions of the destinations, as well as the on-board experiences, so it was vital that New Zealand continued to be effectively marketed in their home regions.

Conference speakers from Crystal Cruises and Royal Caribbean Cruise Ltd highlighted that there are still plenty of opportunities for New Zealand tourism operators to benefit from the growing cruise market.

"There are opportunities to attract passengers for land-based tours before and after their cruises, which will allow them to experience other parts of the country," Mr Marshall said.



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Mr Marshall stood down as Cruise New Zealand chairman at the conference. The new Chairman is Environment Southland Maritime Manager Kevin O'Sullivan.

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