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Port NOLA Marks Ninth Year Surpassing One Million Cruise Passenger Movements

NEW ORLEANS — The Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) closed calendar year 2025 with 1,067,407 cruise passenger movements, marking the ninth year the port has exceeded one million annual passengers (excluding 2020 and 2021 due to Covid) and reinforcing its position as one of the nation’s leading cruise destinations.

Port NOLA’s sustained growth comes amid strong cruise-industry momentum nationwide and positions the Port for significant future expansion, driven by the return of Royal Caribbean and the deployment of a larger Carnival Cruise Line vessel in the coming years.

“Consistently surpassing one million cruise passenger movements speaks to the strength of New Orleans as a global cruise destination and the collaborative efforts that make this success possible,” said **Beth Branch, President and CEO of the Port of New Orleans and CEO of the New Orleans Public Belt (NOPB) CEO**. “Cruising is a vital economic engine for our region, and with expanded service and larger ships on the horizon, Port NOLA is well positioned to deliver even greater value to Louisiana and the Gulf South.”

Cruise Industry Growth Reflected at Port NOLA

U.S. cruise ports continue to surpass pre-pandemic passenger levels, and Port NOLA remains at the forefront of that resurgence. In 2024, the Port recorded more than 1.2 million cruise passenger movements, and momentum continued in 2025.

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In March 2025, Port NOLA achieved its highest single-month total ever, with over 165,000 passenger movements, reflecting both increased capacity and strong consumer demand.

A Unique Cruise Market Advantage

Port NOLA stands apart nationally as the only U.S. port offering both ocean-going and river cruising, creating a diverse cruise portfolio that supports year-round activity and strengthens the regional tourism economy.

Key trends shaping cruise passenger movements at Port NOLA include:

- Historic growth: Cruise business reached new highs with more than 1.2 million passenger movements in 2024 and a record-setting more than 165,000 movements in March 2025.
- Significant tourism impact: Cruise activity contributes approximately \$445 million in total direct and indirect economic impact, reinforcing cruising as a major economic engine for the region.
- Port NOLA's cruise business contributes significantly to the state and local economy- offering a unique "two vacations in one experience" where 90% of cruise guests come from out-of-state, with 70% of those guests spending one or two days in New Orleans. This translates into 300,000+ hotel room nights.
- Drive-market strength: New Orleans remains a premier "drive-to" cruise market, drawing passengers from across the Gulf South with convenient access, world-class hospitality, and iconic cultural attractions.
- Growth in river cruising: As the nation's sixth-largest cruise port, Port NOLA's unique combination of river and ocean cruises enhances passenger choice and supports consistent, year-round visitation.

Looking Ahead

With the return of Royal Caribbean service and the introduction of larger, next-generation vessels from Carnival Cruise Line, Port NOLA is poised for continued growth well into the future. Expanded cruise offerings will bring even more visitors to experience New Orleans' unmatched culture, cuisine, and hospitality while delivering lasting economic benefits to the region.

"Reaching this milestone for the ninth time reflects both strong demand and the confidence our cruise line partners continue to place in Port NOLA," said **Steven Gauthier, Port NOLA Vice President of Cruise**. "As we welcome the return of Royal Caribbean and prepare for increased capacity from Carnival, we anticipate meaningful growth in passenger volumes over the next several years."



About Port NOLA: *The Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) is a modern multimodal gateway for global commerce and an in-demand cruise port — delivering seamless, integrated logistics solutions between river, rail and road. Port NOLA is a diverse deep-water port uniquely located on the Mississippi River near the Gulf of Mexico -- with access to 30-plus major inland hubs such as Dallas, Memphis, Chicago and Canada via 14,500 miles of waterways, 6 Class I railroads and interstate roadways. Strategic alignment with the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, a Class III connecting railroad, strengthens Port NOLA's position as an integrated hub and supports the Port's mission of driving regional economic prosperity.*

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