



# Girvan Cruise Visit Experience



**Organisation:** Girvan Tourist Information Point (TIP)

**Location:** The Town House,  
25 Knockcushan St, Girvan,  
South Ayrshire, KA26 9AG

**Business Type:** Constituted  
volunteer group

**Social Media:**

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/GirvanTouristInformation>

**Contact:** GirvanTourist@gmail.com



## BACKGROUND

In 2023, Girvan welcomed its first cruise ship visits, with four Silver Seas vessels anchoring offshore during spring. Due to the harbour's size, around 200 guests were tendered ashore, but the community had only three weeks' notice before the first visit, making preparation challenging and limiting benefits to the town.

Most guests were taken on excursions with little clarity on whether they would stay in Girvan. The Girvan TIP organised a volunteer-led welcome, sharing local information and encouraging exploration. While businesses extended their hours, most visitors joined planned tours, bringing minimal economic benefit to the town.

## MARKET

In 2024, Girvan introduced community-led activities to engage cruise guests and visitors, offering unique "money-can't-buy" experiences. Highlights included live folk music at the TIP, whisky and gin tastings with music in the Community Garden, and tours with RNLI volunteers. Staggered schedules ensured smooth events, and while free, donations were welcomed.

## OUTCOMES

### Visit 1:

- High guest participation in local events led to significant sales of local crafts
- The Community Garden events and RNLI tours received strong support, generating income
- Local businesses, including cafés and shops, experienced increased footfall and record sales.

### Visit 2:

- A storm delayed the return of over 100 passengers to the ship. Girvan volunteers coordinated last-minute dining & entertainment arrangements at local restaurants with live music and tastings.
- A potential crisis into a highlight, with cruise guests praising the community's hospitality.

### Visit 3:

- Inclement weather prevented guests from coming ashore, but a young local piper performed for the shore crew, and a video of the performance was shared with guests as a virtual welcome.

## SOLUTIONS

**Establishing Key Partnerships:** The Girvan TIP identified a contact at Excursions Ltd, the company managing Silver Seas' guest activities, and learned of three additional cruise visits planned for 2024.

While initial attempts to promote local activity packages were unsuccessful, a breakthrough occurred when the TIP established a relationship with the Senior Operations Coordinator at Excursions Ltd.

Over the winter, this partnership allowed for collaborative planning and the development of community-led experiences to better integrate cruise guests into the town's offerings.



**FEEDBACK**

We received this feedback from the Senior Operations Coordinator following the local support -

*“Good morning Susanne I just wanted to reach out and say a massive than you to you all for rallying round and helping us out with Silver Endeavour guests when we were unable to get the guests back on board. The help and knowledge of the volunteers was crucial, it was so lovely to hear that everyone rallied round the help, including the RNLI, Harbour Master, local cafés and pubs. What an amazing community Girvan has! Thankfully all guests were back on board by 8pm last night and they have safely made their way to the Isle of Man.”*



**CONCLUSIONS**

The cruise visits in 2024 marked a turning point for Girvan. The community benefited economically, with increased sales for local businesses and significant donations to local organisations. Civic pride soared as international visitors left positive feedback, and social media reactions highlighted the town’s welcoming spirit.

**Community Cohesion:**

The initiative united local businesses, organisations, and volunteers, fostering stronger relationships and civic pride.

**Unique Visitor Experiences:**

Authentic activities like live music, tastings, and RNLI tours created lasting memories, setting Girvan apart from other ports.

**Mutual Benefits:**

Collaboration with operators enhanced visitor satisfaction while boosting the local economy.

**Economic Benefits:**

Increased footfall and record sales showcased the potential of cruise tourism for small-town economies.

**Sustainable Tourism:**

By prioritising local resources and community-led efforts, Girvan demonstrated a balanced approach to tourism.

**Crisis Management:**

Girvan’s adaptability during challenges, such as a storm, left a positive impression on visitors and strengthened ties with operators.

**Raising Girvan’s Profile:**

The initiative built Girvan’s reputation as a welcoming, culturally rich destination.

**Replicable Model:**

The success of these efforts offers a template for future tourism ventures.

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