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Port toppled from passenger top spot

by Sam Lennon

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Dover is no longer the busiest passenger port in the world, it is Helsinki, a news report says.

The Finnish news agency STT says that in 2017 11.8 million people used the port of Helsinki while in Dover it was 11.7 million.

It says the main reason is the flourishing ferry services between Finland's capital and the Estonian capital Tallin.

A major factor behind the swell of passengers is that Finns are sailing over for cheaper booze.

A 24-pack of strong beer in Estonia costs 14 euro but 49.60 in Finland and alcohol in Finland is 72% more expensive than the European Union average.

A DJ on Finnish radio has remarked that Dover would be beaten hands down if the count was of beer cans rather than people.

The sea distance between the two capitals is 50 miles, through the Gulf of Finland, compared with 21 between Dover and Calais.

However, the crossing between Finland and Estonia is made simpler because both countries are in the Schengen, so there are no customs and ID control formalities, although passengers need a passport or EU identity card.

STT (Suomen Tietotoimisto) says that Tallin has also had growth, with 10.5 million passengers using its port last year.

Helsinki had, until now, been the second busiest passenger port in Europe with about 11 million passengers in 2013.

The agency adds that in Dover, meanwhile, the number of passengers has been falling, with 14 million using the port annually a decade ago.

People can bring back as much alcohol to Finland as they can carry but it must be for their own use, not for selling on.

Dover MP Charlie Elphicke said: "It seems the lure of cheap Estonian booze has led to a boom in the number of Finns using the port of Helsinki.

"This underlines why so many people would like to see a return of duty free sales at Dover after Brexit to boost our ferry industry.

"The Port of Dover is already seeing record levels of freight.

"It would be great to see tourist numbers increase too."

HELSINKI



Status	Capital of Finland
CITY POPULATION	642,045
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES	Helsinki Cathedral
FERRY SERVICES FOR TALLIN	Tallink & Silja Line, Eckerö Line, Viking Line
CROSSING DISTANCE	50 miles
OTHER FERRY ROUTES	Stockholm and Mariehamn, Åland Islands
PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY	Islands, inlets and peninsulas
AVE LOW JAN TEMP	-6.5°C
RECORD LOW JAN TEMP	-34°C

DOVER



Status	Gateway to Europe
TOWN POPULATION	31,022
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES	White Cliffs, Dover Castle
FERRY SERVICES	P&O Ferries and DFDS
CROSSING DISTANCE	21 miles to Calais
PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY	Chalk cliffs and valleys
AVE LOW JAN TEMP	3.3°C
RECORD LOW JAN TEMP	-5°C

FREIGHT AT RECORD LEVELS FOR FIFTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

The Port of Dover continues to be a giant in terms of freight.

Volumes have reached record levels for the fifth consecutive year.

The Port handled 2,601,162 lorries in 2017, up on the previous record by almost 10,000 units. It brings the total increase over the last five years to just under 650,000 units or 33%.

This continued growth, says chief executive Tim Waggott, is proof that Dover continues to be the port of choice for hauliers travelling to and from Europe, the UK's largest trading partner.

Dover handles up to 17% of the UK's entire trade in goods worth an estimated £122 billion last year.

Dover Harbour Board says that as Europe's busiest



The quantity of freight passing through the Port of Dover has reached record levels for the fifth year in a row

ferry port, there remains no substitutable capacity elsewhere in the UK to handle Dover's trade volumes.

Mr Waggott said: "We offer supply chains the shortest sea crossing between the UK and the Continent and will continue to be the most efficient strategic choice for hauliers.

"The recent year-on-year increases in freight traffic through the Port and continued growth projections further highlight that this key trade route connecting Ireland, the UK and the rest of Europe is vital to the UK's economic prosperity as well as the rest of the EU."