# Lerwick businesses hit as Costa Favolosa passengers explore despite viral outbreak fears



Businesses in Lerwick are reeling after cruise ship passengers were permitted to explore the town despite the potential presence of a viral sickness onboard the Costa Favolosa. The situation came to light when tourists arrived on Tuesday, only to be informed that some passengers were quarantined after exhibiting symptoms of gastroenteritis. With the ship accommodating nearly 4,000 passengers, concerns were raised as visitors began to mingle in the streets long before local authorities were notified of the health risks.

The alarming turn of events prompted Sonia Robertson, managing director of bus company R. Robertson and Son, to halt planned excursions after witnessing one passenger become “violently sick” while aboard one of their buses. Robertson's decision was driven by the immediate health implications for both her staff and the broader community. “Something like this could cripple the whole company and affect a lot of our staff and services,” she remarked.

Local business owners echoed Robertson's sentiments, with café owner Celia Smith voicing her frustrations about the lack of communication regarding the illness. She noted that the café was only made aware of the sickness through “word of mouth” from tour guides and considered closing down entirely to prioritise public safety. Smith described the atmosphere as reminiscent of the early Covid-19 days, stating they had to disinfect everything almost immediately after customers left the premises.

The incident has sparked outrage over what many see as a “complete disregard for the local community’s safety.” Smith pointed out that nearly 3,000 passengers were allowed to roam freely in Lerwick, a decision that raised questions about the health safety protocols in place.

In a counter-narrative, Costa Cruises asserted that local health authorities had cleared passengers for disembarkation. However, both NHS Shetland and Lerwick Port Authority maintained they were unaware of any illness aboard the Costa Favolosa prior to the ship’s visit. NHS Shetland reported being informed of the situation only later that afternoon, casting doubt on the cruise line's claims and pointing to potential communication failures. It appears the cruise operator may have mistakenly informed a health board in a different jurisdiction, raising concerns about the coordination of outbreak response measures.

The prevalence of gastroenteritis outbreaks on cruise ships has been well-documented, emphasising the importance of rigorous health monitoring and reporting to local authorities. Recent data indicates that such illnesses remain a persistent risk within the industry, necessitating strict precautionary measures to safeguard both passengers and the communities they visit.

Given the growing scrutiny on public health standards aboard cruise ships, the fallout from this incident is likely to draw further attention to the protocols in place. The ramifications for local businesses, already struggling in the wake of the pandemic, could be significant as they grapple with the fallout of poor communication and inadequate health measures.

The ongoing discourse around cruise ship safety and its community implications is critical as tourism rebounds. With experiences like those in Lerwick highlighting systemic issues within the cruise industry, the need for improved transparency and coordination with local health authorities has never been clearer.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2
2. Paragraphs 3, 4
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraph 6
5. Paragraph 7
6. Paragraphs 8, 9
7. Paragraphs 10, 11

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6763175/lerwick-cruise-sickness-tourists/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cruisemapper.com/wiki/1056-cruise-ship-norovirus-outbreaks> - This article provides a comprehensive list of norovirus outbreaks on cruise ships in 2025, detailing the cruise line, ship, sailing dates, and the number of passengers and crew affected. It highlights the prevalence of gastrointestinal illnesses on cruise ships and the importance of monitoring and reporting such outbreaks to health authorities.
3. <https://www.cruisemapper.com/accidents/Costa-Favolosa-599> - This page details various incidents involving the Costa Favolosa, including a significant COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. It describes the ship's quarantine measures, the evacuation of ill passengers and crew, and the challenges faced during the pandemic, emphasizing the vessel's history of health-related incidents.
4. <https://www.cruisehive.com/cdc-reports-two-more-cruise-outbreaks-heading-into-2025/155874> - This article reports on two cruise ship outbreaks reported to the CDC in early 2025, including one on Holland America Line's Eurodam. It discusses the number of passengers and crew affected, the symptoms reported, and the measures taken by the cruise lines to address the outbreaks, highlighting the ongoing challenges of managing gastrointestinal illnesses on cruise ships.
5. <https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2024/09/10/passengers-sent-back-ship-hours/> - This news piece reports on an incident in September 2024 where passengers aboard the Costa Favolosa were asked to return to the ship hours early due to high winds and rain in Lerwick. It describes the situation from the perspective of local authorities and the impact on the community, providing context to the ship's operations in the area.
6. <https://www.maritimebell.com/costa-toscana-implements-safety-measures-after-illness-cases> - This article discusses the implementation of safety measures aboard the Costa Toscana following reported cases of gastrointestinal illness in December 2024. It outlines the steps taken by Costa Cruises, including disinfection procedures and enhanced hygiene protocols, to prevent the spread of illness among passengers and crew.
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/vessel-sanitation/cruise-ship-outbreaks/index.html> - This official CDC page provides information on gastrointestinal illness outbreaks on cruise ships, including details about recent outbreaks, causative agents, and actions taken in response. It emphasizes the importance of reporting and monitoring such illnesses to maintain public health safety.