



Saga and Viking ships at Portsmouth International Port. Courtesy Martin Davies/Portsmouth International Port

## Epic 78-day voyage kicks off 2023 cruise season for Portsmouth

2023 will see Portsmouth International Port host more maiden calls and welcome back iconic cruise lines, as it continues to cement its place as the first choice for luxury, boutique and expedition cruise brands.

The initial release of the 2023 cruise schedule will see many cruise passengers begin their journeys in the city, or alternatively stop in Portsmouth to experience the wide range of world-class attractions on offer.

It all kicks off on 5 January with an epic 78-day cruise aboard Fred Olsen's *Balmoral*. This once-in-a-lifetime journey will give passengers a rare chance to capture the rugged, icy landscapes of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Other scenic cruising highlights include the Patagonian Fjords in Chile, the rocky headland of Cape Horn and the world-renowned Panama Canal.

The schedule also features multiple calls from iconic British cruise line Saga, as they begin using

Portsmouth as a seasonal home port. *Spirit of Adventure* will make numerous visits to the city following her fantastic naming ceremony at the port in 2021, along with her sister ship *Spirit of Discovery*.

Guests will be able to explore a myriad of exciting global destinations, including South America, New England and the Caribbean. There are also cruises to the Mediterranean and the Republic of Ireland for those looking to stay closer to home, which means there is something for everyone.

The schedule includes maiden visits for a wide range of cruise lines and ships, including Tui's *Mein Schiff 3*, which at 293 metres long will break the record for largest ship at the port. The 2,500 passengers on board from Germany enjoy Portsmouth's superb range of attractions for the day, before departing in the evening. The ship will visit the port on 26 May, 8 July and 1 August.

Another maiden call will be from Viking's latest vessel Viking Neptune, which is the first cruise ship to be equipped with a prototype hydrogen fuel system, for onboard power. This kind of innovation fits perfectly with the port's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030, and emission free by 2050.

Other maiden visits include from Ambassador's *Ambition*, Residences at Sea's *The World*, Silversea's *Silver Endeavour*, Oceania's *Riviera* and Hurtigruten's *Spitsbergen*.

Andrew Williamson, passenger operations manager at Portsmouth International Port said:

"We can't wait to get started with the 2023 cruise season, as the travel industry continues to recover following the global pandemic. We've been working very hard behind the scenes to show the cruise industry what we and the city have to offer, and they like what they have seen, leading to a bumper number of scheduled calls this year. With such an exciting range of luxury, boutique and expedition vessels visiting the port in 2023, the only way is up for Portsmouth."

The port is also building a carbon neutral extension to their terminal building, after receiving £11.25m funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This will be ready for a grand summer opening in 2023.

Due to an increase in cruise ships calling at the port the transformation is necessary to create capacity to manage an anticipated additional 250,000 passengers a year, in addition to the port's current two million.

It will create over 2500 jobs nationally, including 550 in the city. Cruise ships are forecast to increase in Portsmouth in the coming years, with each call expected to generate up to £1.5m through port charges, passenger and crew spend on local goods and services such as hotels and attractions, and also supplies to the ship.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Leader of Portsmouth City Council said:

"Portsmouth International Port is a vital economic driver for the city, which also makes a valuable contribution towards essential council services. As a city we've invested in the port, extending the cruise berth and supporting them with their development plans. The terminal extension will mean that not only do we have some of the best facilities around for cruise passengers, but also means that our existing ferry customers also have the room to grow.

"Combined with ambitious plans for shore power and to be the UK's first zero emission port by 2050, Portsmouth International Port continually strives for ambitious, sustainable development in the coming years".

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