

## Virgin Voyages says “sea you soon” to Portsmouth

Virgin Voyages’ ‘Resilient Lady’ set sail from Portsmouth for the final time this year, marking the end of a spectacular summer season, with over 25,000 passengers travelling from the city.

Dubbed the global brand’s UK home port, Portsmouth has become the first in the world to welcome all three Virgin Voyages ships since the new line burst onto the scene in 2021 with a new adults only approach to cruising.

Over 25,000 passengers travelled through Portsmouth International Port in the last month, marking the biggest turnaround calls to date. August also marked one year of the council-owned port’s new carbon-neutral terminal extension opening. The new terminal allows the port to manage thousands of passengers alongside regular ferry sailings, and has been put to good use with 2024 set to be the busiest yet for cruise calls.

Cllr Steve Pitt, Leader of Portsmouth City Council said: “Every cruise call to the port is highly valued and a great boost to the city. I know a lot of our residents have been lucky enough to enjoy Resilient Lady’s voyages from Portsmouth to Europe this summer, and her sailings are always an impressive sight in the harbour.

We’ve been investing in the port over the last few years and the strong relationship we have built with international cruise brands is bringing regular business into the city. We are proud that Virgin Voyages see Portsmouth as their home and look forward to welcoming them back in the future and providing shore side electrical power to ‘plug in’ their ships when they return in 2025.

The port’s success is the city’s success, and we are proud to be the UK’s most successful local authority owned, which is also gaining global recognition.”

Resilient Lady’s impact on the city can be measured in both economical and sentimental value, with each call generating an estimated £1.5million as a result of passenger spend in the city. This profit goes directly back into council services and boosting local tourism. The 278m long ship also made a lasting impression during her first departure, sailing past Portsmouth’s iconic Victorious Festival with a blue ‘Pompey’ illuminated on the side of the vessel.

James Ralls, director of Victorious Events said: “The Virgin sail past was an amazing moment and gave over 60,000 festival-goers a really special Portsmouth experience. It highlighted the festival’s unique seafront location, which sets us apart from others and topped off a brilliant day for the city.”

The series of calls also included a special celebration voyage with Richard Branson onboard to mark Virgin’s 50 year anniversary, and a special comedy cruise headlined by comedian Russell Howard. 2025 will see the return of Virgin Voyages first ship the Scarlet Lady, which will be sailing out of Portsmouth in August.