

## Portsmouth's cruise year kicks off with UK first for Viking Cruises

Portsmouth International Port has welcomed their first maiden call of the year, and a UK first, when Viking Cruises' brand new Viking Vela sailed into the city.

The latest ship to join the ocean fleet, Viking Vela entered service at the end of 2024 and gives a taste of Scandinavian luxury to her passengers.

Guests onboard the brand-new ship enjoyed a seven-day cruise from Barcelona, before their penultimate stop in Portsmouth, which offered the chance to explore the city and surrounding attractions. Today also marked the start of the Shaping Portsmouth's 2025 cruise passenger programme, with volunteers on hand to meet and greet passengers and help guide their time in the city.

Cllr Steve Pitt, Leader of Portsmouth City Council said: "Viking Vela marks the first inaugural call of 2025 for Portsmouth, as the port begins its busiest year yet for cruise.

"The Viking brand has become a regular caller and perfectly fits the mould of small-to-medium-sized luxury cruising that the port specialises in. Guests are guaranteed exclusive treatment when they come to Portsmouth and a warm welcome from our local cruise ambassadors who share the best ways to make the most of their visit to the city."

A traditional plaque exchange between Viking Vela Captain Rune Loekling and deputy port director, Ian Diaper, took place onboard and celebrated the ship's first visit to Portsmouth.

Cllr Steve Pitt, Leader of Portsmouth City Council also said: "It's amazing to think how many Portsmouth plaques are now navigating the world aboard the thousands of ships that have visited us over the years, with many many more to come."

Viking cruises is a regular caller to Portsmouth, with the port welcoming several of their ocean fleet, and famously hosting the naming ceremony for Viking Venus in 2021.

Wendy Atkin-Smith, managing director of Viking UK said: "We took delivery of the Viking Vela, our newest ocean ship, in early December 2024. During her inaugural season, the Viking Vela has been in sailing itineraries in the Mediterranean and has now reached Northern Europe – Portsmouth will be her first ever port of call in the UK.

With its rich history which dates back to the Roman Empire, Portsmouth features on several of our itineraries and is a very popular destination with our culturally curious guests. We know the Viking Vela will receive a very warm welcome as always and we are looking forward to welcoming her to the UK."