



Photo credit: Poole Harbour Commissioners

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Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' 'Boudicca' pays tribute to 250 courageous D-Day veterans, on The Royal British Legion's historic 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance'

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is proud to have played its part in hosting 250 D-Day veterans – plus their carers and companions – on a poignant pilgrimage around the UK and Normandy, France, on The Royal British Legion's 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance' aboard *Boudicca*, from 2nd to 9th June 2019.

Fred. Olsen's *Boudicca* – resplendent in The Royal British Legion's recognisable red poppy décor – set sail from Dover on 2nd June 2019, taking the veterans to Dunkirk, Poole, Portsmouth and Le Havre, where they attended a series of commemorative events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings on 6th June 1944.

Suffolk-based travel specialists, Arena Travel, partnered with The Royal British Legion on the historic Voyage – with whom they have been an official travel partner since 2013 – and contacted local Suffolk cruise line Fred. Olsen, due to the number of veterans to be transported and the high costs and lack of availability of hotels in and around Normandy.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines – who joined *Boudicca* for the Voyage – said:

“It has been an incredible honour to play our part in The Royal British Legion's commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy. It has been a very moving and emotional experience for all concerned, and our staff have thoroughly enjoyed having these courageous D-Day veterans on board and sharing in their stories and memories.

“We would like to thank Arena Travel and The Royal British Legion for choosing Fred. Olsen as their partner in this most important of projects, to show our national and international respects. We would also like to commend all the ports of call for their warm welcomes to the veterans and to our ship, and it has been overwhelming at times just how much people have got behind the Voyage to show their pride and gratitude to these D-Day veterans, to whom we owe so much.”

Bob Gamble, The Royal British Legion's Assistant Director for Commemorative Events, said:

“D-Day 75 was a momentous occasion and the Royal British Legion is proud to have put the veterans at the heart of everything we did. The events they took part in allowed the whole world to pay tribute to their bravery and sacrifice. We would like to thank all our partners who helped take the veterans back to Normandy on what was a historic and deeply moving voyage. Now they are safely back home, the Legion will still be there for them whenever they need us.”

Steve Goodenough, Managing Director of Arena Travel – who was also aboard *Boudicca* for the duration of the Voyage – said:

"Arena Travel were very proud to operate the 'Voyage of Remembrance' in partnership with Fred. Olsen. This momentous Voyage took 250 D-Day veterans and their travelling companions to international commemorations in Southsea and in Normandy.

"The logistics of organising national coach travel for 500 people to join the cruise and arrangements whilst ashore, as well as managing the on board programme, was a challenge that I am pleased our team delivered excellently. It was a genuine honour to have facilitated this voyage on behalf of The Royal British Legion for the veterans."

The 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance' was one of the most poignant and moving journeys that Fred. Olsen's *Boudicca* has ever undertaken. In Dover, veterans received a very special send-off, with the '40s-themed 'Swingtime Sweethearts' performing in the Cruise Terminal, which was decked out with flags and bunting, together with a display of military vehicles greeting veterans as they arrived. Military re-enactors also gave a flavour of the era, and the talented Dover Sea Cadets marched and performed a number of evocative wartime songs.

As the ship sailed out of Dover, veterans received a surprise performance by superstar Sir Rod Stewart – currently on tour around the UK – who sang his iconic seafaring anthem, 'Sailing', out on deck. Accompanied by his wife Lady Penny Lancaster – [taking exclusive photographs for HELLO! Magazine](#) – Sir Rod and Lady Penny spent a great deal of time chatting with veterans and learning their stories, as they had for the 70th D-Day anniversary, five years ago.

Following a call at Dunkirk, France – which played an important role during the war – *Boudicca* continued to Poole, where it became the largest ship ever to call at the Port, on its maiden call. Along the quayside, the Ministry of Defence hosted a series of military-themed events, entertainment and activities, and 40 Commando Royal Marines came on board to display their weaponry to veterans.

The following day, veterans attended the national commemorative events in Portsmouth, where many were able to meet the current Heads of State of the nations that participated in the D-Day operation. President Trump, President Macron, Prince Charles, along with many other leaders, joined the veterans for tea after the official event, and a number of veterans got to meet and shake hands with Prime Minister Theresa May. A 30-minute fly-past and aerial display by the famous RAF Red Arrows followed the event.

Upon departure from Portsmouth, *Boudicca* was escorted by a Royal Navy frigate, along with four smaller Navy vessels, into the Solent, where a flotilla of Royal Navy vessels and personnel were waiting to salute the ship – including the Navy's newest flagship, *HMS Queen Elizabeth*, where Prime Minister Theresa May joined them out on deck. The city of Portsmouth also paid its own tribute, waving off the veterans on their way to France with 'THANK YOU' spelt out in giant letters on the shore as *Boudicca* sailed past.

Boudicca then stood off the coast of Ventnor, Isle of Wight before sunset – accompanied by a Royal Navy escort warship – for a sombre 'Moment of Reflection' on deck, led by The Royal British Legion's National President, Lt General James Bashall CB, CBE, before the ship headed for Normandy.

The following day, *Boudicca* arrived in the French port of La Havre, from where a convoy of 14 coaches, escorted under VIP blue lights by the French Gendarmerie, took the veterans to the Bayeux Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, where they were able to pay tribute to the soldiers who fought and died during the invasion of Normandy and the subsequent advance into France. Here, the Prime Minister, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall were able to meet and talk to the veterans personally.

After an overnight stay in Le Havre, veterans had the opportunity to visit the 'Operation Overlord' beaches, 'Sword', 'Gold' and 'Juno', as well as Pegasus Bridge, the British Normandy Memorial and the Arromanches Military Museum. Back on board *Boudicca*, veterans were entertained by the impressive '40s-themed 'D-Day Darlings', runners-up in 'Britain's Got Talent'.

A sumptuous Gala Dinner on the final evening, en route to Dover, was the culmination of this commemorative sailing, with a rousing performance by Captain David Cole OBE and The Central Band of The Royal British Legion, and a closing finale by the 'D-Day Darlings' and *Boudicca* Show Company.

*During the Voyage, veterans and their companions were treated to a wide range of entertainment on board, from celebrity acts, such as Lance Corporal Richard Jones, the only magician to ever win 'Britain's Got Talent', and Peter Snow, renowned historian, as The Royal British Legion's Guest Speaker. His son, fellow historian Dan Snow, also broadcast live from *Boudicca* in Portsmouth, as anchor for 'The One Show'.*

The Royal British Legion's 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance' was offered free of charge to D-Day veterans and their companions, funded by the UK Government's LIBOR grant, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence.

Photo caption:

Fred. Olsen's cruise ship *Boudicca*, carrying 250 D-Day veterans and their companions, is welcomed into Poole on 4th June 2019, on The Royal British Legion's historic 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance'. [Photo credit: Poole Harbour Commissioners]

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Note to Editors:

For further information on Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, visit the website at www.fredolsencruises.com

For further information on the 'D-Day 75 Voyage of Remembrance', visit Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' website at <https://www.fredolsencruises.com/royal-british-legion-d-day-voyage>

Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

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