

SUPERJUMBO FLYPAST FOR QE2

Contributed by HolidayInsiders Reporter
Wednesday, 26 November 2008
Last Updated Thursday, 27 November 2008

An Airbus A380 superjumbo will perform a flypast as part of the welcome for the QE2 when it completes its final voyage today.

Launched by the Queen in 1967, the QE2 will be docking at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates where the 70-tonne vessel will remain as a floating hotel and leisure attraction.

The A380 flypast will be carried out by the Emirates airline and the ship will also be greeted by a flotilla of local craft led by a Royal Navy frigate.

Hundreds of spectators are expected to watch the ship's arrival in the Middle East after a final voyage that began at Southampton on November 11.

All those in Dubai will be hoping that the QE2's arrival will be trouble-free following the vessel's ignominious arrival at Southampton when the ship briefly went aground on a sandbank off the Isle of Wight as it sailed into its home port for the last time.

The ship was pulled clear by tugs and a day of celebration, which included a visit to the ship by the Duke of Edinburgh, went ahead as planned.

The QE2 finally set off from Southampton with fireworks flashing and thousands watching at points along Southampton Water.

Last year it was announced that QE2 owner Cunard was selling the vessel for about £50 million to Dubai World, the parent company of property company Nakheel.

Nakheel Hotels' QE2 Enterprises' chief executive Manfred Ursprunger said: "Such a prestigious ship undoubtedly merits a grand welcome.

"We are delighted with the public's response to the welcome flotilla - with more than 60 vessels registered to take part - and can now expand the welcome party into the skies.

"The arrival of QE2 in Dubai will be a proud moment for Nakheel and one that will form part of the ship's rich history."

Once refurbished, QE2 will be set afloat on the eastern side of the trunk of Palm Jumeirah - the world's biggest man-made island - at the end of a specially-designed pier.

The QE2 entered passenger service in 1969 and served as a troop ship in the Falklands War in 1982.

The vessel has been around the world 25 times, crossed the Atlantic more than 800 times and carried more than 2.5 million passengers including kings and queens, prime ministers and presidents, astronauts and many international celebrities.

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