



Join our farewell mini-cruise with P&O's Pride of Bilbao

A four day/three night tour Mon 13 to Thurs 16 Sept 2010



ABOVE: P&O's 37,583ft *Pride of Bilbao* was built in 1986 as *Olympia* by Oy Wärtsilä, Turku, Finland and can carry 580 cars and 77 lorries on her vehicle decks.

After 17 years of operation, P&O Ferries is closing its Portsmouth-Bilbao service in late September, but there is still time to enjoy a farewell mini-cruise with route vessel *Pride of Bilbao*, a long-established favourite with travelling readers.

We set off from Portsmouth during the evening of Monday 13 September, returning on Thursday 16 September with a full on board Cruise Club programme and a choice of options for time ashore during a stay of more than five hours in Spain.

Pride of Bilbao, the largest ferry sailing from a UK port when opening the service in 1993, has carried *Ships Monthly* groups on several occasions, and this final mini-cruise offers a choice between overnight accommodation in outside or inside en-suite cabins with three carvery dinners and three full English breakfasts.

After arrival in the port of Santurtzi on Wednesday, P&O offer optional excursions during a morning stay in Spain, including a Bilbao city coach tour or drive along the Basque coast to the village of Castro Urdailes, both bookable at the on board information desk during the southbound sailing.

Bilbao can also be easily and cheaply reached using local rail services running from Santurtzi into Estacion de Abando. The station is close to the Arenal Bridge, leading to the Bilbao Old Town and Siete Calles, the Seven Streets district in one direction - and the main shopping streets Lopez de Haro and

Gran via Don Diego are in the other. It is also an easy walk along the banks of the river to view the impressive Guggenheim Museum, opened in 1997.

Close to Santurtzi, the world's oldest transporter bridge crosses the Rio de Bilbao from Portugalete to Las Arenas and can also be easily reached from the port.

This will be our 51st Cruise Club programme and as always Russell Plummer will be your host and tour organiser, supported by a member of the *Ships Monthly* editorial team.

TOUR PRICES

Shared two berth inside cabin	£230 per person
Shared two berth outside cabin	£240 per person
Sole use of two berth inside cabin	£260 per person
Sole use of two berth outside cabin	£285 per person

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:

Pride of Bilbao round trip mini cruise Portsmouth to Santurtzi, Bilbao, and return; accommodation in en-suite cabin of chosen grade; three carvery dinners and three breakfasts; Cruise Club on board programme including bridge visit (weather permitting); souvenir itinerary.

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:

Travel to and from Portsmouth; parking at the Ferry Port; beverages with dinners; on board expenses; shore excursions in Spain; travel insurance (compulsory - see separate note overleaf).



ABOVE: The reception area on board *Pride of Bilbao* is where guests can book shore excursions to either the city of Bilbao or a coach trip along the coast.



ABOVE: The incredible Guggenheim Art Gallery was opened in 1997 and is well worth a tour when visiting Bilbao.

Enjoy one of P&O's last sailings to Bilbao

OUR ITINERARY

Monday 13 September: Meet at Portsmouth Continental Ferry Port at 1900 to board *Pride of Bilbao* for carvery dinner before departure at 2115. On this and subsequent evenings, there will be an onboard entertainment programme including live music with current release films screened in the ship's cinemas.

Tuesday 14 September: After breakfast, our programme during a day at sea includes a Cruise Club presentation in one of the vessel's tiered seating auditoriums, followed by a bridge visit. Bookings for shore excursions will be available with dinner served in the evening.

Wednesday 15 September: Breakfast will be available before arrival



ABOVE: Weather permitting, *Ships Monthly's* guests will be able to visit the ship's bridge while *Pride of Bilbao* is at sea.

in Santurtzi at 0830 local time. Enjoy an organised excursion, or join us to take the train into Bilbao. *Pride of Bilbao's* return journey departs at 1415 and carvery dinner will be served in the evening.

Thursday 16 September: Following breakfast we hope to arrange another Cruise Club audio-visual gathering previewing the arrival of P&O's new vessels *Pride of Britain* and *Pride of France* for the Dover-Calais route. The tour ends with *Pride of Bilbao* arriving in Portsmouth at around 1715 (local time).

PRIDE OF BILBAO was built as *Olympia* and delivered to Rederi AB Slite of Sweden, in 1986, and together with sister ship *Mariella*, introduced by SF Line of Finland a year earlier, were the world's largest car ferries when taking over the Viking Line 'Capital Cities' service between Helsinki and Stockholm. They ran together until the Slite company got into financial difficulties over a new building and *Olympia* was chartered to P&O to open a year-round Portsmouth-Bilbao service shortly before Slite was declared bankrupt.

After launching the Spanish route as *Pride of Bilbao* in May 1993, and also providing one weekend round trip from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, the vessel was bought from Slite's liquidators by the Irish Continental Group during 1994 and re-registered in the Bahamas, before later entry into the British bareboat register. The charter to P&O was unaffected but a succession of five or three year extensions, including a return to Bahamas registry in 2008, concludes in October. P&O announced earlier in the year that they will not be seeking a further extension and the route is to be closed, with the vessel returning to Irish Ferries parent, ICG.

The Bilbao service, now operating to a rolling schedule of departures every third day, is P&O's only remaining Portsmouth service after the Cherbourg route closed at the end of 2004 with that to Le Harve finishing at the end of September 2005.

PASSPORTS AND INSURANCE

All tour participants must be in possession of a valid passport and include details of passport number and expiry date on the tour booking form. You are also required to give a signed undertaking that you have, or will arrange prior to departure, adequate travel insurance for the duration of the itinerary.

BOOKING YOUR TOUR

To book for this tour please complete the official form and forward with a payment cheque in favour of Charisma Agency to CMT (Tour 51), 30 South Street, Stanground, Peterborough, Cambs PE2 8ET. This tour is based on a minimum of 25 travelling and will not proceed unless this number has been reached by 23 August. In such circumstances payment cheques will be returned un-cashed.

TOUR ARRANGEMENTS

Once again this is a tour arranged for the *Ships Monthly* Cruise Club by Russell Plummer of Charisma Media & Travel, an independent non-bonded operation existing solely to arrange tours for ship lovers. This itinerary is subject to booking and travel conditions of P&O Ferries.

PORTSMOUTH PARKING

Long stay parking is available in a multi storey car park at Portsmouth Continental Ferry Port. Prior booking is not necessary and the cost for the duration of our tour will be £40. For rail travellers, Portsmouth and Southsea station is approximately 20/25 minutes walk from the Ferry Terminal and local buses, departing from Commercial Road opposite the station, stop close to pedestrian access to the Terminal complex.

CONTACTS

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