

HMS *Queen Elizabeth* at Gibraltar

The Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier HMS *Queen Elizabeth* arrived in Gibraltar on the forenoon of 9 February for her first overseas port visit.

The 65,000-tonne future flagship will be conducting a routine logistics stop having left her home in Portsmouth last week (w/e 3 February) for helicopter trials. These helicopter trials take place before the fixed wing F35 Lightning II trials later this year.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson commented: *'As the Rock casts its shadow over the flight deck of our world-class aircraft carrier, Gibraltar rightfully marks HMS Queen Elizabeth's first overseas stop as she refuels and takes on supplies before continuing her sea trials. I am sure our friends in Gibraltar will be proud to see our future flagship sail through British waters into their famous port.'*

Captain Jerry Kyd, the CO of *Queen Elizabeth*, added: *'It is a great privilege for me to be bringing our new aircraft carrier into Gibraltar for her first ever overseas port visit.'*

'Gibraltar is the perfect stop for HMS Queen Elizabeth as we conduct our flying trials in the waters off the Iberian Peninsula. And our visit also underlines the incredibly rich history and special relationship the Royal Navy and Royal Marines share with Gibraltar.'

'I am personally very lucky to have visited the Rock many times in my naval career, but well over a quarter of my sailors have not yet experienced what, for the Royal Navy, is something of an iconic run ashore.'

Since departing the UK for the first time since being commissioned into the Royal Navy, *Queen Elizabeth* and her ship's company of 1,000 men and women have been undergoing intensive training.

Under the guidance of the Royal Navy's Flag Officer Sea Training organisation, all those on board have been honing their skills in dealing with a series of lifelike exercise scenarios including fires, floods, man overboard drills and a simulated crash on deck.

HE the Governor of Gibraltar, Lieutenant-General Edward Davis reflected: *'From the moment Her Majesty appointed me as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Gibraltar I, and no doubt all Gibraltarians, have been eagerly awaiting HMS Queen Elizabeth's first visit to the Rock.'*

‘My eagerness reflects two things. First, my pride in one of the world’s most advanced aircraft carriers as a manifest demonstration of the British Navy’s ambition and resolve to ensure that our nation’s maritime and amphibious capability remains a decisive global force for good. And second, my confidence that HMS Queen Elizabeth’s entry into service will see Gibraltar continuing to prove its vital relevance as a mounting and sustainment base for global Britain’s contribution to international security.

‘I wish HMS Queen Elizabeth and her crew God speed as they make us all proud to be British.’

The Commander of British Forces in Gibraltar, Commodore Mike Walliker, said: *‘Today is a landmark day for Gibraltar and its long-standing and illustrious relationship with the Royal Navy.*

‘As Commander British Forces I am personally delighted to be able to welcome HMS Queen Elizabeth for her very first visit. It is utterly appropriate and no surprise that the Rock is the first port of call for the ship as she embarks on an exciting journey which has taken her from the builder’s yard to eventually assuming her rightful position at the vanguard of the British fleet.

‘There is never any doubt in a sailor’s mind that Gibraltar is the Mediterranean home from home of the Royal Navy, as the Rock has been for centuries now, and will continue to be the maritime gateway to everywhere.’

The ship was escorted in to Gibraltar by the Royal Navy’s Devonport-based Type 23 frigate *Somerset*.

Commander Tim Berry, the Commanding Officer of *Somerset*, said: *‘Escorting the largest and most technologically advanced carrier ever built for the Royal Navy past the Rock of Gibraltar is of course a huge privilege.*

‘Importantly, it also brings about a new focus for my ship that is both challenging and exciting. Carrier Strike will undoubtedly play a key role in supporting Britain’s global narrative well into the second half of this century and for myself and my ship’s company to be part of this vision is inspiring and very rewarding.’

On leaving Gibraltar *Queen Elizabeth* will return to sea to conduct helicopter trials with specially equipped Merlin and Chinook aircraft from the Aircraft Test and Evaluation Centre at MOD Boscombe Down. The data collected will be

analysed to work out their operating parameters at sea, ahead of fixed wing flying trials with the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter off the east coast of the United States in the summer.

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