

# CANBERRA



## Canberra – Timeline

**1956:** P&O requested a number of British shipbuilders submit a tender for a new liner to operate on their UK/Australia service.

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**23 January 1957:** Harland & Wolff shipbuilders based in Belfast were awarded the contract. They had built a number of famous ships including *Titanic*, *Britannic* and *Olympic* for White Star Line. P&O announced the new ship would be 45,000 gross tons making her the largest ship built for the company.

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**23 September 1957:** The first keel plates were laid for Yard Number '1621' in slipway 14.

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**17 March 1958:** Sir Donald Anderson announced that ship number '1621' would be named *Canberra* an aboriginal word meaning 'meeting Place'.

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**April/October 1958:** A large interactive model of *Canberra* was displayed at the Brussels International Fair.

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**16 March 1960:** *Canberra* was launched by Dame Pattie Menzies, the wife of the Australian Prime Minister. She was then towed to Thompson Wharf for fitting out.

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**April 1961:** Completed her fitting out.

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**29 April 1961:** Underwent her builder's trials in Belfast Lough.

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**16 May 1961:** Left on her acceptance trials on the Clyde where she achieved a top speed of 29.27 knots.

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**19 May 1961:** *Canberra* was officially handed over to P&O.

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**23 May 1961:** Arrived at the newly-built cruise terminal at Southampton which was especially constructed for her and *Oriana*.

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**2 June 1961:** *Canberra* left on her maiden voyage carrying 2,238 passengers. Some of her passengers only travelled as far as Gibraltar or Naples, but there were nearly 900 emigrants on board setting off for a new life in Australia and New Zealand.

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**4 September 1961:** Arrived back at Southampton at the conclusion of her maiden voyage which took her to Sydney, Honolulu, Vancouver, San Francisco, Colombo, Aden, the Suez Canal and Naples. During that single voyage she carried 11,000 passengers and steamed some 42,000 miles.

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**April/June 1962:** During her fourth voyage, *Canberra* suffered problems with her boilers, the distilling plant and the main turbo generators. It was decided to cut the voyage short and instead of her usual return home via the Suez, she was ordered to transit the Panama Canal for the first time. At that time, *Canberra* was the largest ship to pass through the Canal.

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**June/July 1962:** Underwent an overhaul to sort out some recurring operating problems. She was fitted with two 5-foot extensions to her funnels to stop the perpetual problem of soot staining. The refit extended to the Pop Inn which was refurbished with the regrettable loss of the Hockley poker work panels.

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<b>July 1962:</b>	Set off on a cruise across the Atlantic to New York. It was the first time in 100 years that a P&O vessel called at that port.
<b>4 January 1963:</b>	Suffered an engine room fire which resulted in the ship being without power while she was in the Mediterranean. The blaze was under control within an hour and the ship made her way to Malta for repairs.
<b>21 January 1963:</b>	Returned to Harland & Wolff to replace the fire-damaged engine room equipment and given a general overhaul. The work was extensive and lasted nearly four months.
<b>24 May 1963:</b>	Sailed from Southampton following her release from the shipbuilders.
<b>May/July 1966:</b>	During the British seamen's strike, P&O was forced to cancel three of <i>Canberra's</i> voyages.
<b>1973:</b>	Due to the decline in the emigrant trade to Australia, <i>Canberra</i> was sent to New York where she was marketed for cruises, mainly to the Caribbean. This venture proved rather unsuccessful and, after only two voyages, <i>Canberra</i> was laid up at the mouth of the Cape Fear River for three weeks. Eventually she returned to New York and sailed on her last nine Caribbean cruises.
<b>1 June 1973:</b>	At a press conference following the end of her New York cruising season, it was announced that P&O intended to scrap the ship because she was not suitable for world-wide cruising.
<b>14 August 1973:</b>	Due to an upsurge in cruise bookings, P&O retracted their proposal to scrap <i>Canberra</i> and instead announced that she would take the place of <i>Orsova</i> in her 1974 cruising programme.
<b>1974:</b>	<i>Canberra</i> was converted to a one-class cruise ship during a ten-week refit which reduced her passenger capacity to 1,737.
<b>April 1982:</b>	Requisitioned for use in the Falklands War and converted into a troop carrier including a flight deck. She was fitted out at Vosper Thornycroft, Southampton in three long days.
<b>9 April 1982:</b>	Left Southampton following her conversion bound for the Falklands.
<b>11 July 1982:</b>	Arrived back at Southampton following her 94-day service in the Falklands. She was greeted by a fleet of small crafts in the Solent and huge crowds of well-wishers lining the quayside.
<b>July/August 1982:</b>	<i>Canberra</i> was re-converted to a cruise ship.
<b>11 September 1982:</b>	Left on her first post-Falkland cruise from Southampton.
<b>1986:</b>	Underwent a £3m refit at Lloyd Werft shipyard in Germany during which time she saw a number of her public rooms get a facelift. She also assumed the title 'Cock of the Fleet' and assumed possession of the Golden Cockerel after <i>Oriana</i> was retired.
<b>June 1994:</b>	To commemorate the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, the Royal British Legion chartered <i>Canberra</i> to carry veterans and their families.
<b>25 June 1996:</b>	P&O announced that <i>Canberra</i> would retire from service in little over a year.
<b>30 September:</b>	<i>Canberra's</i> final return to Southampton.
<b>10 October 1997:</b>	P&O announced that <i>Canberra</i> was to be scrapped in Pakistan. The ship left Southampton that night on her way to be broken up.
<b>31 October 1997:</b>	<i>Canberra</i> was beached at Gadani Beach, Pakistan for breaking up.