



Ship Fact Sheet



CATHAY (1925)

Base data at 12 March 1925. Last amended April 2009

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1925-1942
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Barclay, Curle & Co Ltd
Yard	Whiteinch, Glasgow
Country	UK
Yard number	602
Registry	Glasgow, UK
Official number	148843
Signal letters	KSHB
Call sign	GCDF
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage*	15,104 grt
Net tonnage*	8,696 nrt
Deadweight	11,220 tons
Length	166.64m (546.9ft) loa, 159.11m (522.2ft) b/p
Breadth	21.39m (70.2ft)
Depth	14.02m (46.0ft)
Draught	9.185m (30ft 1 ³ / ₄ in)
Engines	Quadruple-expansion steam engines
Engine builders	Barclay, Curle & Co Ltd
Works	Glasgow
Country	UK
Power	13,437 ihp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	16 knots
Passenger capacity	203 first class, 103 second class
Cargo capacity	12,808 cubic metres (452,380 cubic feet) including 5,557 cubic metres (196,270 cubic feet) insulated
Crew	278 (17 officers, 29 petty officers, 47 seamen, 16 engineers, 38 firemen, 131 saloon crew)
Employment	UK/Australia service

Career

- 1923: Ordered.
- 31.10.1924: Launched by Lady Inchcape, wife of P&O's Chairman. (On the same day her sister *Comorin* was launched from the same yard by Mrs Alexander Shaw, one of Lady Inchcape's daughters).
- 12.03.1925: Ran trials and delivered as *Cathay* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £736,040. Unlike her sisters *Chitral* and *Comorin*, she was not later fitted with exhaust turbines to boost her speed even though she lacked the reserves needed for the mail service. She was noted for the completeness of her ventilating system and decoration, supervised by her lady sponsor and another of her daughters, the Hon. Elsie Mackay. Her second funnel was a dummy.
- 27.03.1925: Maiden voyage to Australia, the advent of the 'C's enabling the resumption of a fortnightly service.
- 1925: Lengthy lawsuit after an oil fuel leak damaged a cargo of meat.
- 1932: Began making calls at Bombay. She also made the occasional run on the Far Eastern route, with the introduction of the *Strath's* on the Australian service.
- 11.1933: Re-measured. Tonnages now 15,225 grt, 8,746 nrt.
- 14.12.1933: Lost a screw while trying to make up time between Colombo and Fremantle, and had to wait in Australia while a new one was brought out in *Strathnaver*.
- 25.08.1939: Requisitioned by the Admiralty for service as an Armed Merchant Cruiser, and converted at Bombay. Her second (dummy) funnel was removed and eight 6-inch and two 3-inch guns were fitted. She undertook patrol and escort duties between Bombay and Durban.
- 07.1941: Took on board 900 survivors of the RAF troopship *Anselm* torpedoed off the West African coast, who had initially been rescued by the survey ship HMS *Challenger* which became grossly overloaded.
- 05.02.1942: Returned to P&O and refitted as a troopship by Bethlehem Steel Corporation at Brooklyn.
- 30.04.1942: Entered service as a troopship.
- 07.11.1942: Disembarked troops west of Algiers as part of the first convoy for the North African landings.
- 11.11.1942: Bombed from 1330hrs by German aircraft whilst discharging troops at Bougie, which was within range of airfields in Sicily and Sardinia. She was finally abandoned at 1900hrs after being hit four times and, at about 2200hrs, a delayed action bomb exploded in the galley starting a serious fire.
- 12.11.1942: An ammunition explosion at 0700hrs blew off her stern, and by 1000hrs she had sunk on her starboard side, completely gutted. Part of her crew were billeted on the British India Steam Navigation Company's ship *Karanja* until she too was bombed, and were then taken off by P&O's *Strathnaver*.

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