

ROYAL NAVY

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ET(WE) Ricky Cox



ELBE TOAST FOR ILLUSTRIOUS AS SHE VISITS HAMBURG^{13/12/2011}

HMS Illustrious has paid her first visit to an overseas port in more than two years – reward for her completing two months of gruelling training. The carrier has visited Hamburg, fresh from passing Operational Sea Training which means she will be the nation's on-call helicopter carrier in the New Year.

Fresh from passing the stern test of training, the men and women of HMS Illustrious have been treated to a visit to one of Europe's great metropolises: Hamburg.

The carrier has spent four days at the Überseebrücke in the heart of the German port's regenerated harbourland – the first overseas visit for Lusty in more than two years.

The high-profile trip up the River Elbe was reward for completing Operational Sea Training off Devon and Cornwall last week.

The two-month workout in the hands of the Flag Officer Sea Training organisation means Illustrious is ready to assume the vital duty of Britain's on-call helicopter assault ship in the New Year.

That's in the future. For now the ship's enjoying German hospitality.

As well as the chance to experience the range of cultural activities that the always-welcoming city has to offer, the visit has provided the opportunity for the crew to showcase HMS Illustrious to a wide range of

visitors, including staff and guests of the British Embassy in Berlin and high-ranking members of Germany's Armed Forces.

There was also the opportunity for around 1,000 Hamburgers to visit Lusty (whose nickname was handily translated for Germans) when she opened her gangway to the public on Sunday.

Although this is the first visit for the ship, it's the second time in 12 months that Illustrious' Commanding Officer Capt Jerry Kyd has visited Hamburg.

At the end of 2010, the Hanseatic city was the very final overseas port visited by his previous command, HMS Ark Royal, before she decommissioned.

It was cold and snowy then. Twelve months on it was cold and wet. It didn't dampen spirits.

Indeed, there were many sailors on board for whom the visit to Hamburg was their first trip to a foreign country in a British warship, among them 23-year-old ET(WE) Ricky Cox from Colchester.

"I am very excited to be visiting Hamburg. The opportunity to travel and see different countries was one of the reasons I joined the Royal Navy.

"We've been training very hard over the past few months and although I've been busy hosting some of the German visitors, I am really pleased to have the opportunity to enjoy Hamburg."

Capt Kyd added:

"Hamburg is a proud and vibrant maritime city and a perfect place for Illustrious to visit, not least since we have spent the last months training at sea alongside three ships from the German Navy, which yet again underlines the close connection and interoperability our two countries mutually enjoy.

"This visit allows us to show off our ship and her capabilities and is a perfect way to end what has been an extremely demanding year for my superb crew.

"They have worked tirelessly to bring this aircraft carrier out of refit in Scotland, to today, where she is now operationally ready to be deployed around the globe as required and face the inevitable challenges that will come their way. I am so proud of them."

Lusty is due back in Portsmouth for the first time in more than two months on Friday, after which the ship's company will enjoy some well-deserved Christmas leave.

IMAGE GALLERY

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ILLUSTRIOUS VISITS HAMBURG



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