# Passenger accounts detail distressing scenes on P&O Iona following suspected norovirus outbreak



Passengers on the P&O Iona cruise ship have described distressing scenes following a suspected norovirus outbreak that left some onboard ill, reportedly resulting in instances of vomiting in various areas, including restaurants and outside cabins. The cruise ship, which departed from Southampton on February 15 for a seven-day tour of Northern Europe, has been carrying approximately 5,000 passengers.

On Thursday, February 20, the ship's captain addressed passengers, informing them that several guests had reported falling ill and advising those with symptoms to return to their cabins and seek assistance from the medical centre onboard. Matt Bowater, a 45-year-old passenger from Birmingham, recounted his experience in an interview with the Express, describing conditions that he labelled as a 'nightmare'. He noted that hygiene issues appeared to be prevalent even before the outbreak, stating, "I filled out a feedback form on the second day. I explained the buffet food was lukewarm...they even ran out of cutlery." He emphasised that bins near hand sanitation stations were frequently overflowing.

While P&O Cruises confirmed that the reported gastrointestinal symptoms were impacting fewer than 1% of the guests onboard, Bowater's account highlighted that the situation was concerning. He mentioned that some areas of the ship had been cordoned off due to the illness, and sick bags were left on staircases, indicating that the outbreak was serious enough to warrant immediate action. Passengers were told to wash their hands regularly, and messages urging them to report any symptoms were displayed on in-cabin televisions.

In response to the outbreak, P&O Cruises stated that they adhere to stringent health protocols and have worked with various health authorities to implement robust measures aimed at protecting the well-being of all onboard. A spokesperson commented on the incident, saying, “P&O Cruises works with global, national, and regional public health authorities on approved, stringent, and proven protocols across our ships in order to protect the health and wellbeing of all on board.”

Despite the disruptions caused by the outbreak, including the cancellation of entertainment performances and some passengers expressing concern over the number of crew members available to manage the ship's vast guest list, Bowater maintained a desire to cruise again in the future. "It hasn’t put me off cruising. I definitely want to do it again," he stated, although he qualified that he would choose a different ship or travel during a less busy period.

P&O Cruises has assured its guests that those unable to participate in shore excursions due to illness would receive full refunds, and they reinforced the availability of medication through its medical centre, with emergency support accessible at all hours. Despite the chaotic circumstances, the cruise operator defended the quality of their service and commended their crew, stating they are "immensely proud of our fantastic crew members, the majority of whom have worked with us for many years."

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cruisemapper.com/news/14471-norovirus-outbreak-aboard-iona> - This URL corroborates the norovirus outbreak on the P&O Iona cruise ship, including the ship's itinerary and the measures taken by the crew to contain the outbreak.
* <https://www.financialexpress.com/life/norovirus-outbreak-hits-pampo-cruise-passengers-drop-like-flies-all-you-need-to-know-3757798/> - This article supports the details of the norovirus outbreak, including symptoms and the impact on passengers, as well as P&O Cruises' response to the situation.
* <https://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21622-norovirus> - This URL provides information on norovirus, its symptoms, and how it is spread, which is relevant to understanding the nature of the outbreak on the P&O Iona.
* <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/norovirus-outbreak-on-p-o-cruise-ship-passengers-report-symptoms-3815243> - This article confirms the norovirus outbreak on the P&O Iona and mentions P&O Cruises' policy regarding refunds for missed shore excursions due to illness.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/travel/articles/1771111/po-cruise-norovirus-outbreak-iona-ship> - This URL includes an interview with a passenger, Matt Bowater, who described his experience during the outbreak, highlighting hygiene issues and the impact on passengers.
* <https://www.sky.com/news/travel/2025/po-cruise-ship-hit-by-norovirus-outbreak-12956038> - This article reports on the norovirus outbreak aboard the P&O Iona, including the number of passengers affected and the measures taken by P&O Cruises to address the situation.