# Tragic death sparks investigation into violent chaos aboard MSC Virtuosa booze cruise



# Chaos Aboard the MSC Virtuosa: A Tragic Turn on a Cruise

What was intended to be a peaceful two-night cruise from Southampton to Bruges quickly devolved into chaos when a violent altercation led to the tragic death of a 60-year-old man. Witnesses aboard the MSC Virtuosa reported an atmosphere rife with drunkenness and rowdiness, exemplified by an influx of stag and hen parties that marked the excursion.

A 21-year-old passenger, who preferred to remain anonymous, recounted her experience of the first day. As they boarded around 2 pm, the serenity of a sunny voyage crumbled into disorder. “We got to the pool about 3 pm and people who were already on the boat were in drunken arguments and scraps,” she explained. Even as staff continued to serve alcohol, the atmosphere became increasingly volatile, with cheers and chants giving way to fights just hours into the voyage.

The evening took a shocking turn around 8:30 pm when James Messham, a beloved grandfather and former stuntman known for his participation in Europe’s oldest motorcycle stunt show, the Messhams Wall of Death, died following an altercation. Despite attempts made by an Army medic aboard the ship to save him, Messham succumbed to his injuries, prompting a homicide investigation led by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary.

The aftermath of this incident has raised serious concerns about the safety protocols onboard the ship. Although the MSC Virtuosa has been part of a previous incident, where a woman tragically fell overboard, this recent violence marks a concerning trend. Local authorities described the murder as an isolated incident, but the conditions and lack of control during the cruise have sparked discussions about the suitability of such 'booze cruises' for family-friendly environments.

The family of Mr Messham, who was also known as a 'proper gent' and 'salt of the earth' by friends and family alike, is understandably devastated. Friends shared heartfelt tributes on social media, emphasising his generous spirit and commitment to both his family and the stunt show that had become a family legacy since its inception in 1929.

The cruise’s notoriety has continued to grow, with reports emerging that celebrities such as Harry Clark from the reality show *The Traitors* were also passengers on board. Clark expressed his shock and sorrow over the incident, extending his condolences to Mr Messham’s family. Other witnesses likened the chaotic scene to a “modern Wild West,” highlighting the unpredictable environment created by excessive drinking.

As investigations continue and ship staff cooperate with authorities, questions remain about the adequacy of measures taken to ensure passenger safety, particularly during events that attract significant numbers of revelers. The MSC Virtuosa has gained attention not just for its luxury offerings but now risks its reputation further as a site of tragedy.

The incident serves as a stark reminder of the potential dangers associated with such vessels, challenging the image of cruise ships as idyllic vacation experiences. As these investigations unfold, it is crucial for cruise lines to re-evaluate their policies and strategies to prevent future occurrences of violence aboard.

In the wake of this tragedy, the focus shifts not only to justice for Mr Messham and his family but also to ensuring a safe, enjoyable experience for all future passengers on the seas.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.forbes.com/sites/lewisnunn/2023/10/12/msc-virtuosa-to-star-in-new-channel-5-drama/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8j7v22d40eo), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/12/woman-dies-falling-off-cruise-ship-channel-islands/)

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

## References

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694085/Passenger-cruise-ship-man-murdered-carnage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - A 21-year-old passenger aboard the MSC Virtuosa recounted a chaotic two-night cruise from Southampton to Belgium, describing scenes of drunken brawls and fights breaking out almost immediately after boarding. The trip, filled with stag and hen parties, was described as a 'booze cruise' to Bruges. The alleged murder of 60-year-old James Messham, a grandfather and former stuntman, occurred around 8:30 pm on the first evening, leading to a homicide investigation by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary. The incident has drawn attention to the ship's safety protocols and the behavior of passengers during voyages.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8j7v22d40eo> - On October 12, 2024, a woman in her 20s died after falling overboard from the MSC Virtuosa near the Channel Islands. The French coastguard received a distress signal around 2:00 BST, prompting a search operation involving a French navy helicopter, lifeboat crews from Alderney and France, and a Channel Islands air search plane. Despite rescue efforts, the woman was pronounced dead by medical personnel. The incident is under investigation by French police, with assistance from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/oct/12/woman-dies-overboard-cruise-ship-channel-islands> - A woman in her 20s died after going overboard from the MSC Virtuosa off the Channel Islands on October 12, 2024. The French coastguard received a distress message shortly after midnight, leading to a search operation involving a French navy helicopter, lifeboat crews, and a Channel Islands air search plane. The woman was located and hoisted from the sea but was later pronounced dead by medical personnel. French police are leading the investigation into the incident.
* <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lewisnunn/2023/10/12/msc-virtuosa-to-star-in-new-channel-5-drama/> - MSC Virtuosa is set to star in Channel 5's new drama series, 'The Good Ship Murder,' premiering on October 13, 2023. The eight-part series features Shayne Ward as cruise ship singer and ex-detective Jack Grayling, and Catherine Tyldesley as first officer Kate Woods. Together, they solve a series of murders aboard the ship as it sails across the Mediterranean. The series showcases various ports, including Lisbon, Valencia, Barcelona, Le Havre, and Valletta.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/12/woman-dies-falling-off-cruise-ship-channel-islands/> - A woman died after falling overboard from the MSC Virtuosa near the Channel Islands on October 12, 2024. The French coastguard received a 'man overboard' distress signal from the cruise ship early on Saturday morning. A French navy helicopter, an RNLI lifeboat, and a Channel Islands air search plane were involved in the rescue mission. Despite efforts, the woman was pronounced dead after being hoisted from the water. The incident is under investigation by French police.
* <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/woman-dies-after-falling-overboard-from-luxury-cruise-ship-off-channel-islands-6778113> - A 28-year-old woman died after falling overboard from the MSC Virtuosa cruise ship near the Channel Islands on October 12, 2024. The French coastguard received a distress signal after the woman went overboard near Les Casquets rocks, west of Alderney. Rescue teams, including a French navy helicopter, lifeboat crews, and a Channel Islands air search plane, were dispatched. Despite efforts, the woman was pronounced dead after being hoisted from the water. The incident is under investigation by French and British authorities.