

UK return for Red Arrows after 11-country overseas tour

AFTER

8,000 miles, jets from the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team have returned home from an overseas tour promoting the best of British.

The

Red Arrows' distinctive Hawk aircraft arrived at the team's base of RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, earlier today (Saturday).



Eleven

countries were visited in five weeks, with the world-renowned display team helping to showcase UK excellence in engineering, innovation, creativity and education to millions of people.

The

landing at RAF Scampton also marked a close to the Red Arrows' 2017 campaign –

its 53rd season – during which 70 displays were flown at home and overseas.

Wing

Commander Andrew Keith, Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, said: "The tour was a great demonstration of a key role of the Red Arrows – that of national ambassadors, powerfully supporting and promoting UK interests.



"We

were privileged to fly to a range of countries across Europe and the Middle East with hundreds of thousands of people either seeing these performances live or learning more about the team and the UK through the resulting media coverage.

"Everywhere

the team flew we were very well-received and the tour highlighted the strong, important and often longstanding ties the UK and our Armed Forces have with counterparts overseas."

The

tour was staged in support of the GREAT

Britain campaign – the Government's most ambitious international marketing campaign, showcasing the very best of what our whole nation has to offer in order to encourage the world to visit, study and do business with the UK.



The deployment began just a few days after the Red Arrows' last UK airshow of the summer season and began with a flypast over the Cannes Yachting Festival – supporting British industry exhibiting at the event.

After France, Athens Flying Week was the destination with the Red Arrows performing displays on back-to-back days. Moving to Jordan, the Squadron was honoured to complete a flypast over eight national landmarks, including Petra.

The first display in Saudi Arabia by the Red Arrows in a decade was then staged in Jeddah, to help mark the Kingdom's National Day, before a move to Kuwait – only the third time the team has performed there.



Doha's skyscraper-lined Corniche provided the next venue for a display and also a special mixed formation flypast with a Qatar Airways Airbus A350, celebrating the airline's 20th anniversary and also highlighting the airliner's British-made Rolls-Royce engines and wings.

Muscat, Oman, was the sixth show location and then the team performed in Karachi – the first time the Red Arrows had displayed in Pakistan for 20 years, broadcast live on national television.

The last public display of the deployment and the 2017 season was in Bahrain, against a perfect blue sky.



Beginning the flight home earlier this week, there was a rare chance to fly with the Royal Saudi Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Saudi Hawks. It saw 16 Hawk jets – seven belonging to Saudi Arabia and nine of the Red Arrows – in the sky over Riyadh.

The aircraft arrived back to RAF Scampton this afternoon following a transit through Europe, refuelling at locations in countries including Cyprus, Greece, Italy and France.

But

the aerial performances were only part of the campaign. A comprehensive programme of ground activity was staged in each of the tour locations, including industry events, school visits and presentations to business leaders.

More than 2,000 students were met by members of the Red Arrows team.



Wing

Commander Keith said: "The flying we are able to do is obviously very spectacular but perhaps the most rewarding aspect of a tour such as this is meeting people at all of the varied events and activities which form the foundation of the deployment and where we can promote the UK face-to-face.

"It's

very humbling to be able to visit a school or invite young people to see our British-built aircraft and inspire them to consider what can be achieved through teamwork and education."

In

addition to the Squadron's fast-jet pilots, many of the Red Arrows' highly-trained support personnel, including engineers, photographers and administrators, accompanied the tour, as well as specialists drawn from other areas of the Royal Air Force, including logisticians and medical staff.



Much

of the team's kit and equipment was moved by C-17 Globemaster, one of the Royal Air Force's capable transport aircraft.

Wing

Commander Keith said: "The tour was a very good example of the RAF's expeditionary qualities and experience as well as the dedication and excellent

teamwork by everyone involved in the detailed planning and bold delivery of the deployment, both from home in the UK and overseas."

Now

back in the UK, preparations are already underway for the Red Arrows' 54th season in 2018 – the Royal Air Force's 100th anniversary year.



For

more information about the team, follow @rafredarrows on Twitter, see the latest images posted on Instagram by following @rafredarrows, like RAF Red Arrows on Facebook or visit www.raf.mod.uk/reds

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