

# back ONBOARD

## HISTORIC SHIPS ARE ANCHORED AND READY TO WELCOME YOUR GROUP

BY ROBIN ROENKER

**T**here's just something about a boat. Stepping aboard one, whether it's 200 years old or 80, transports you to another place: a world of voyagers, long-ago cargo shippers or fishers, or brave sailors and submariners.

Across the U.S., maritime attractions celebrate and preserve the proud history of American shipping and sailing, often offering opportunities for visitors to tour, explore and even stay overnight on some of the most historic ships in the country.

Make plans to set sail toward one of these iconic maritime attractions, where your group can experience the magic and mystique of ships that have mastered the seas.

### MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM

MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT

The Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut, is home to four National Historic Landmark vessels: the Charles W. Morgan, an 1841 whaleship; the L.A. Dunton, a 1921 fishing schooner; the Emma C. Berry, a fishing sailboat built in 1866; and the Sabino, a 1908 steamboat. All but the Berry allow visitors aboard for self-guided exploratory tours.

The attraction is also home to an expansive indoor museum space as well as a re-created 19th-century seaport village, assembled from authentic 1800s shops and businesses that were transported to Mystic from locations across New England. There, interpreters illustrate trades such as ship carving and harpoon-making that would have existed in an early American seaport.

Additionally, the on-site shipyard is home to a collection of more than 500 boats, "everything from large whaling ships to kayaks and canoes," said Dan McFadden, director of communications for the Mystic Seaport Museum. Many of these vessels are available as rentals so visitors can explore their talents at seafaring themselves. "You can sign out a rowboat or a sailboat and be your own captain on the Mystic River," McFadden said.

The site also features an active ship-preservation operation, so even land-loving visitors can get a glimpse of professional shipwrights as they repair historic vessels to their former sailing glory.

MYSTICSEAPORT.ORG

### HISTORIC SHIPS IN BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE

The USS Constellation, built in 1854 as the last sail-only warship designed by the U.S. Navy, sits prominently in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. But it is not the only historic vessel displayed there.

Visitors with tickets to the Historic Ships in Baltimore attraction can tour not only the USS Constellation but also the World War II-era submarine the USS Torsk; the 1930s-era U.S. Coast Guard Cutter 37; and the Lightship 116 Chesapeake, a 1930s-era vessel that provided ship guiding services in areas where a lighthouse was not feasible.

Groups of at least 20 can book overnight programs where visitors sleep either in hammocks aboard the USS Constellation or in authentic submarine berths or ship bunks on the USS Torsk or the Coast Guard Cutter 37. Attendees are treated to a "historical snack" — think crew-appropriate stew and hardtack — and guided activities throughout the evening that expand on the ship's history and maritime role.

Even if you don't opt for an overnight visit, daytime hands-on group tours that allow visitors to participate in historical maritime activities are available.

"Our slogan is 'hands-on learning,'" said Brian Auer, the site's operations director. "Rather than coming to a traditional historic site where you might watch the blacksmith do some work, if you come aboard the USS Constellation, you're going to get to participate in, for example, lowering the anchor or taking part in a drill to learn how the cannons operated or how the sails were turned."

HISTORICSHIPS.ORG

### JAMESTOWN SETTLEMENT SHIPS

JAMESTOWN, VIRGINIA

At the Jamestown Settlement, a living-history museum of 17th-century Virginia history and culture in Jamestown, Virginia, guests can climb aboard authentic re-creations of the three settlement ships — the Susan Constant, the Goodspeed and the Discovery — that delivered the first permanent English colonists to Virginia in 1607.

"Although our ships are re-created ships, they are still working vessels," said Kaia Moseley, the ships' interpretive supervisor at Jamestown Settlement. "So while they are not 400-year-old ships, they are real ships that are floating and can sail — and sometimes do sail."

The Charles W. Morgan, a 19th century whaling ship, is one of numerous historic sailing vessels visitors can see at Mystic Seaport Museum.

Courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum





USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park

Courtesy USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park



Raising a sail on the Godspeed at Jamestown Settlement

Courtesy JF



Mystic Seaport

Courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum



On the bridge of the USS Alabama

Courtesy USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park

Near the ships' pier, costumed historical interpreters are posted at various stations to "interact with visitors, offer opportunities for hands-on activities and answer questions, allowing visitors to compare and contrast various aspects of maritime history, from technology to life on board the ships," Moseley said.

Guests can climb into the ships' bunks, participate in staff-led cargo-loading maneuvers and learn about the ships' steering and navigation mechanisms. Many visitors are surprised at the size of the vessels: "Almost everyone expects them to be larger than they are," Moseley said.

After exploring the ships, visitors can enjoy the rest of the Jamestown Settlement attraction, which includes a replica fort that depicts the 1610-14 time frame and immersive gallery exhibits that spotlight the lives of America's first English colonists and the Powhatan Indians who were already living in the area.

At various stations through the settlement, historical interpreters are on hand to demonstrate toolmaking and musketry techniques as well as period cooking methods, among other aspects of early Colonial life.

JYFMUSEUMS.ORG

## USS ALABAMA BATTLESHIP MEMORIAL PARK

MOBILE, ALABAMA

Visitors to the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile, Alabama, can tour the expansive outer deck and inner compartments of the USS Alabama, a WWII warship that earned nine battle stars and helped lead the American fleet into Tokyo Bay at the close of the war.

Dubbed the "Heroine of the Pacific," the USS Alabama took part

in campaigns near Guam, the Philippines and Okinawa, among other locations.

Today, visitors to the ship can immerse themselves in newly expanded exhibits that strive to tell what life was like on board for her sailors.

"What a lot of people don't understand is that battleships were really floating cities," said Rhonda Davis, the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park's director of sales and marketing. "The sailors had their battle stations, but they also had workstations. Perhaps they were working at the butcher shop or were cooks in the galley. They may have been assigned to the blacksmith shop or the machinists' shop or were barbers or tailors."

Newly installed exhibits in public walkways on the ship showcase recently rediscovered archival photos, helping tell the lived experience of the ship's crew as they went about their daily lives at sea.

"What we do is really try to tell the story of the crewmen in all aspects of their time on the ship," Davis said. "It's allowing us to tell the history of the ship in a much more three-dimensional way."

While at the site, visitors should also make time to explore the nearby WWII-era USS Drum, a National Historic Landmark ship and the oldest American submarine on public display anywhere in the world.

USSALABAMA.COM

## USS MIDWAY MUSEUM

SAN DIEGO

In San Diego, the USS Midway Museum is a must-stop for maritime and military aviation fans. The USS Midway stands as the longest-serving aircraft carrier of the 20th century, and today it is home to more than 30 restored aircraft and nearly 10 acres of exhibits and displays.



An Independence Day celebration at the USS Midway Museum

Courtesy USS Midway Museum



Historic Ships in Baltimore

Courtesy Historic Ships in Baltimore



Exploring the USS Cobia at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum

Courtesy Wisconsin Maritime Museum

The aircraft, housed on the ship's main deck, and the interior hangar exhibits span decades of U.S. military aviation history, from WWII through the Korean and Vietnam wars to modern-day jets and helicopters.

Self-guided audio tours are available, as are docent-led, guided group tours for up to 60 people. The onboard film "Voices of Midway" tells the story of the historic WWII battle for which the ship is named.

Visitors can also get a sense of life for the crew on the USS Midway by trying out the bunks to discover what it might have been like to sleep under the busy flight deck.

The newly renovated on-site cafe located off the hangar deck offers grab-and-go salads and sandwiches, making it easy for groups to incorporate lunch into their overall experience.

MIDWAY.ORG

## WISCONSIN MARITIME MUSEUM

MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc highlights the state's rich maritime heritage, the region's Great Lakes shipping history and the city's role as a key WWII submarine builder. The USS Cobia, a National Historic Landmark, is on display there and has been restored to its original 1945 configuration.

A guided tour of the submarine, which served six Pacific patrols during WWII, is available, as is a self-guided audio tour. Though the USS Cobia wasn't built in Manitowoc, it is similar in style to the 28 WWII-era submarines that were built in the city.

"Everything [on the USS Cobia] looks the same as it would have during the war," said Emily Shedal, development coordinator for the



A group selfie at the USS Midway Museum

Courtesy USS Midway Museum

Wisconsin Maritime Museum. "The tour starts in the forward torpedo room, then takes you through the officers' country into the control room, then to the mess hall and where the crew would sleep, and finally, through the engine rooms and the aft torpedo room."

The museum offers special, private group tours, including a three-hour Nook and Cranny behind-the-scenes tour of the USS Cobia, as well as a special Sub BnB overnight stay experience for groups of up to 65 attendees.

"You get the submarine to yourself, you can watch a submarine-themed movie in the theater, and then you sleep on board," Shedal said. "It's been a really popular option."

WISCONSINMARITIME.ORG