

SIGNAL
FREE

Sail Away on a Tall Ship

BY GARY AND PAMELA BAKER



Majestic, romantic, inspiring—it’s hard to find the right words to describe the beauty and sight of a classic tall sailing ship. Named for their large masts and billowing sails, these ships explored the world during the golden “Age of Sail.” Explorers mapped the world and charted seas on tall ships. Trade routes were established and protected by them. Made of solid wood, tall ships were a powerful and historical force.

Today, tall ships still play an important maritime role. Festivals, races and cruises abound to satisfy their enthusiasts. But they’re also used in training future mariners and educating the public about maritime history. In Washington state, three tall ships are doing just that.

Lady Washington

Launched as part of Washington’s Centennial celebration in 1989, the modern-day Lady Washington is a carefully researched and constructed wooden-hull replica of a Revolutionary War vessel. Named after Martha Washington, the original was built in Boston in the 1750s. A pioneer in pan-Pacific trade, she was the first U.S. vessel to visit Japan and Honolulu.

Caribbean, Curse of the Black Pearl or the TV show *Once Upon a Time*.

Based in Aberdeen, Grays Harbor Historical Seaport (GHHS) operates Lady Washington. Her purpose is to promote and preserve maritime history and traditions through hands-on Sail Training and educational opportunities for children and adults.

GHHS offers field trips for K-12 through their Voyage of Explorers program. Students learn about navigation, the impacts of Pacific-American trade, and what life was like for 18th-century mariners.

Teachers can choose from two programs: a one-hour dockside session or a two-hour sailing experience. Friendly, knowledgeable deckhands engage students with the tasks and tools of tall ship sailing and educating aspiring mariners with real life experience on the water. The experiential program curriculum meets common core state educational standards for grades 4, 5 and 6.

Two Weeks Before the Mast (TWBM) is a 14-day “crash course” for anyone from teenagers to retirees who want to



Battle Sail

© Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, photo by Rick Horn



Lady Washington

© Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, photo by Rick Horn

Few tall ships can boast a “sprit” sail. Attached to a yardarm mounted on the bow, it rotates back and forth to catch the wind, serving as an auxiliary to the main sail. True to its era, Lady Washington uses a tiller to steer.

And she’s a celebrity, too. Over the years, Lady Washington’s appeared in television shows and motion pictures. You may recognize her from *Pirates of the*

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work as volunteer crew members.

Prior to sailing, participants complete an online program to learn the basics of tall-ship sailing. Onboard participants sail, help maintain the vessel, take part in daily shipboard tasks and help with the public and education programming.

GHHS administers The Seafarer Collective (TSC), which offers other comprehensive programs to prepare

students for a career on the water. Students can choose from entry level merchant mariner courses or the U.S. Coast Guard approved Able Bodied Seaman Certificate Course.

Lady Washington visits approximately 30 ports along the West Coast each year. Guests can buy tickets online for day sails or take a deck tour during pre-scheduled times.

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up girls in grades 7-12 with women mentors. The voyage teaches skills and confidence as leaders and sailors.

In Fantastic Voyage, a six-day program, teens take part in setting sail, steering the ship, maintaining the vessel, standing watch at night and learning about Puget Sound.

For 15- to 17-year-old teens who've previously sailed aboard the Adventuress, the apprentice program provides a great opportunity to become junior crew



Schooner Zodiac main salon

© Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism, photo by Jagger Hodges



Schooner Zodiac

© Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism, photo by Taylor Hodges

Adventuress

Originally launched in 1913, Adventuress was built for wealthy businessman John Borden II for an Arctic expedition. In 1914, Borden sold the yacht to the San Francisco Bar Pilots. She plied the treacherous Golden Gate waters for three decades and patrolled the coastline for the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II.

The Adventuress fell into a state of neglect until an entrepreneur from Seattle discovered her in Sausalito, California. After changing hands several times, the Adventuress found her way to Sound Experience, based in Port Townsend. With a mission of teaching environmental stewardship and protecting Puget Sound, the Adventuress is a platform where “youths of all ages” can take the helm and learn to sail as mariners did a hundred years ago.

The Adventuress hosts programs out of multiple ports in Puget Sound. Students learn about emerging issues in the Salish Sea, marine trades, marine ecology and becoming a mariner.

Over summer, teenagers can participate in all aspects of sailing a tall ship. Girls at the Helm, a four-day cruise, teams

members. These ship's apprentices lead watches, improve their deck skills and support the ship's environmental programs. Summer overnight trips last anywhere from three to six days. A limited number of scholarships are available for youth programs.

Women at the Helm gives women 18 and over the opportunity to sail with a crew of shipboard educators, explore Puget Sound and learn about the marine environment.

Road Scholar Intergenerational Voyages are open to ages 10 and older. Designed for grandparents and grandchildren, this affordable five-night cruise is offered three times this year.

An Annual Members Only Expedition is offered to members and includes three sails (3-hour expeditions) annually, discounted tickets for guests, a monthly newsletter and invitations to volunteer activities.

The Adventuress offers 3-hour public sails out of multiple ports in Puget Sound from April through October. In September, free dockside tours are available during the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival.

Schooner Zodiac

Schooner Zodiac, built in 1924 for the Johnson and Johnson pharmaceutical heirs, is a beautifully restored windjammer. The Johnsons used it to sail in the 1928 Kings Cup Race from New York to Santander, Spain, where they placed fourth.

During the Great Depression, the San Francisco Bar Pilots purchased her to work the rugged waters outside the Golden Gate. She was retired after 40 years, as the last American pilot schooner in 1972. Purchased and restored by a group of sailors, shipwrights, and historians with a passion for tall ships, Schooner Zodiac now sails out of Bellingham, Washington. In 1982, the Zodiac earned her listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Schooner Zodiac's mainmast towers over 12 stories high. She proudly boasts the largest working mainsail on the West Coast. A licensed captain, first mate and experienced team of volunteers operate her, along with assistance from two live-aboard interns. From April through October, she offers public and private charters, single-day, multi-day and evening sails through the San Juan and Canadian Gulf Islands.

Lovingly restored to when she was first commissioned, the Schooner Zodiac features varnished mahogany, oak and teak throughout her main salon and galley. Newly equipped with commercial appliances and spacious by most sailing ship's standards, the galley can serve dinner for up to 49 passengers. On overnight cruises, passengers sleep below deck in standard berths or private staterooms. The cruise price includes all meals prepared by the ship's onboard chef.

Designed to be a sail-training vessel, passengers help raise the 7,000 square feet of mainsail, foresail and staysail. Rotating through "sailing stations," passengers learn basic navigation, steer the ship at the helm under the captain's guidance, work the messenger post and take a turn at bow watch. Passengers are not required to take part in sail maneuvers, but helping sail this majestic vessel is half the fun!

And for tall ship enthusiasts who want more time on the Schooner Zodiac, opportunities are available to train and volunteer as a crew member. She also offers free deck tours at the Center for Wooden Boats in June and participates in the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival in September. 🚢

LEARN MORE

Lady Washington, historicalseaport.org

Adventuress, soundexp.org

Schooner Zodiac, schoonertzodiac.com

Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival,
September 6-8, 2019, woodenboat.org

Center for Wooden Boats, cwb.org

A volunteer helps to raise the levertail
sail on Schooner Zodiac

