

Itinerary for a Chaperone-Led Tour

Ships: Form Follows Function

How to Use This Guide:

Even though interpreters are present in most exhibits, we recommend that teachers and chaperones employ strategies of “guided exploration” to arrive at conclusions to the questions listed below. By exploring the exhibits and reading labels rather than simply asking for answers from museum staff right away, students tend to interpret the information in a deeper and more integrated way. Some exhibits are quite small. To make the most of your exploration, the exhibits can be visited in any order.

Humans have depended on the sea for food, transportation and sport for thousands of years. Over time ships have been developed from primitive canoes to glorious sailing vessels. The invention of steam power and engines (and, more recently, nuclear power) enabled the construction of liners, tankers, container ships and submarines. Historic vessels are being preserved here at Mystic Seaport Museum. Their designs and functions represent a variety of enterprises carried out at sea, on rivers, and wherever there are bodies of water.

The Enduring Understanding:

As world trade evolved over hundreds of years, so did the design, size, building materials and function of watercraft. Crews who live and work on board, sometimes for years, form isolated communities whose interdependent members contribute essential skills.

The Charles W. Morgan (#33)

Of all the ships and exhibits at MSM, the most treasured is this wooden whaling ship built in 1841. You may also learn more about the business and process of whaling by visiting the Voyages exhibit and the Whaleboat Shed.

- Why did the *Charles W. Morgan* hunt whales?
Profit, of course!
- Can you find the parts of the ship where blubber was processed into whale oil?
The blubber room, below decks, and the try-works, forward.
- Where was the whale oil stored?
In casks in the hold (the very bottom of the ship).
- As you move through the ship, note differences in living conditions for the men fore vs. aft.
- What was the financial impact of whaling in America?
Whaling capital was invested in upcoming industries like textile manufacturing and railroads. Whale oil was widely used as a lubricant and light source during and after the Industrial Revolution.

The Australia (#12)

This coastal schooner carried freight along the coasts of North America and had a long and varied history before she was donated to MSM in 1961. For 10 years she served as the dormitory in the Museum’s sail training program. The *Australia* is now an exhibit of ship construction. Walk through this beached vessel and examine her bones!

- Take note of signs with names for the many parts of a ship’s “skeleton.”
- Do wooden ships have knees?
Yes! See if you can find them.
- What is a keel?
The backbone of the ship.
- Become aware of the dramatic effect of rot on wood.
- If this ship was in your yard, would you repair it or let it rot away? Why?

The Joseph Conrad (#18)

This beautiful three-masted training vessel, built in Denmark in 1882, trained 4,000 young men to become sailors before she was sold. Go on board and look around.

- Why is the wheel in the back of the vessel?
The wheel is attached to the tiller, which is attached to the rudder. The rudder is attached to the stern (back) of the ship and steers the ship.
- Standing at the wheel – facing the bow – what is the object directly in front of you?
A binnacle, which houses the compass.
- Look up at the rigging and notice the drastic difference between it and the *L.A. Dunton*'s rigging. Why is there such a difference?
The Conrad is a three-masted square-rigger. The Dunton is a two-masted schooner. The Conrad was built as a naval training ship, so speed wasn't as much of a priority. The Dunton, however, was built to be light and fast.
- Visitors are not invited to go below on the *Conrad*. Can you figure out why?
The Conrad is the Seaport's floating dormitory for our campers.
- Which materials were used to build this ship?
Wood and metal.

The L.A. Dunton (#4)

This schooner is one of hundreds of fishing vessels that sailed the North Atlantic, fishing for one of New England's most important resources, the codfish. Go onboard and learn how cod were caught.

- What was one of the methods of preserving the catch?
Originally, splitting, drying and salting the fish which were then stacked in the pens below decks. In the 20th century, ice became the predominant preservation method.
- What is a dory?
A small, fast boat used to set out the lines and catch the fish. Several dories would be launched from the ship at a time.
- Why was cod fishing so dangerous?
Harsh weather, slippery conditions, fog, treacherous waves, and very sharp fishing implements made for a tricky working environment.
- How long were fishermen out at sea?
Months. Trips became shorter with the use of blocks of ice.
- Compare life on board for cod fishermen with that of whalers.

The Benj. F. Packard Ship's Cabin (#46 – 2nd Floor)

The *Benj. F. Packard* was a three-masted cargo vessel more than twice the size of the *Charles W. Morgan*. These ships, called "down easters," were built in the late 1800s to carry cargo around the world. The *Packard* no longer exists but you can visit the restored after cabin where the officers lived.

- What cargoes were shipped on the *Packard*?
Mostly grain; sugar and coal as well (bulk cargo).
- Study the model of the ship and locate the wheel on it.
- Did captains bring their families on voyages?
Occasionally, but they were the only crew allowed to do so.
- What happened to the ship?
She was used as a 'pirate ship' at Playland in New York. After sustaining massive damage in the hurricane of 1938, she had to be sunk. Mystic Seaport was able to salvage and restore the cabin.

Related Demonstrations

See "Today's Activities" sheet for times and locations of demonstrations related to Ships.

Vocabulary

Aft	refers to the rear part, or stern, of a ship
Fore	refers to the front part, or bow, of a ship
Rigging	line, wire, chain etc. used to support a ship's masts and handle sails
Yard	a spar on a mast from which sails are set

Further Reading

Kalman, Bobbie. *Historic Communities* series

Peterson, William. *Mystic Built*.

Story, Dana A. *The Building of a Wooden Ship: "Sawn Frames and Trunnel Fastened."*

Tryckare, Tre. *The Lore of Ships*.