

Boston welcomes Italian Tall Ship into harbor

By **Cristela Guerra** Globe Staff, July 18, 2017, 3:43 p.m.



The Tall Ship Amerigo Vespucci entered Boston Harbor on Tuesday. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The Tall Ship Amerigo Vespucci will be open for free public tours during her stay from Tuesday to Saturday.

It was last seen at Sail Boston in 2000 and first appeared at the event in 1992.

An 86-year-old official training ship of the Italian Navy, she is a full-rigged, 330-foot ship with a crew of 400 people. First launched in 1931, the ship has been used to train junior officers. Its motto, inspired by the Italian Renaissance scientist and artist Leonardo da

Vinci, is: “Not who begins, but he who perseveres.”

Public Information Officer Lieutenant Umberto Castronovo said the ship earned its honorary title of “most beautiful ship” in 1962. An American vessel passed the Amerigo Vespucci in the Mediterranean Sea. Using lights, the American sailors signaled a question across the water: “What’s your name?” The sailors aboard the Italian vessel responded. That’s when the Americans signaled back: “You are the most beautiful ship in the world.”

“Our purpose and business is to represent the Italian flag,” Castronovo said. “The ship represents the essence of our nation’s excellence.”

From the moment the ship docked in Boston, all aboard knew their assignment. It’s like a factory, Castronovo said. Some cadets cleaned the floors. Others painted and polished until everything shined. They were expecting a visit from the Italian ambassador Tuesday afternoon, Castronovo said. Though topside the ship looks classic, below deck it’s completely modern.

“It’s beautiful. It’s really beautiful,” said John Broderick, 70, who traveled from Quincy with his wife, Barbara, 72. Both were hoping to get aboard the ship Tuesday morning.

He enjoys the Tall Ships for their history. Nearby, Joe Pace, owner of J. Pace & Son, a grocery, deli, and cafe, was offering to serve the crew food while they were in town. Pace immigrated to the United States from Italy when he was 9 years old.

It’s gestures like that that distinguish Boston, said Dusty Rhodes, Sail Boston project director. She said Boston is world-renowned as a hospitable port city.

When ships approach a new city, Rhodes said the crew, in full uniform, will line the vessel facing the port they’re entering while singing their nation’s national anthem.

Boston is the seventh port in the Amerigo Vespucci’s six-month transatlantic journey. It began in April in her home port of La Spezia. The ship will travel to New York and four

more ports before returning back home.

Castronovo is looking forward to seeing his wife and two little ones back home in the fall.

“It’s our job,” he said. “My wife married a sailor.”



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