



What was the *Marée Rouge* really like? Take this virtual tour for a glimpse into history!

The *U.S.S. Niagara*, a working brig similar to the one captained by Isabella and Jean-Michel in its home port in Erie, Pennsylvania at the Erie Maritime Museum. For more information, visit <http://www.brigniagara.org/>

The *Niagara* is one of the few working brigs in the world. Here are a few stats...



- Length: 123 feet
- Beam: 32 feet
- Arms:
 - 18, 32-lb carronades
 - 2, 12-lb long guns
- Crew: 155 officers & crew
- Height (mainmast): 118 feet
- Displacement: 297 long tons
- Commissioned: 1813

Source: Erie Maritime Museum

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<http://www.pantherbay.com>

The Niagara is very close to the dimensions of the *Marée Rouge*



- The *Niagara* was designed for 155 officers and men, similar to the number of pirates the would have crowded onto the *Marée Rouge*;
- Think of how crowded this deck would be with 200 pirates on board!

While the deck seems crowded with ropes, each one had a specific function critical to making sure the warship could maneuver effectively at all times and under all circumstances



- Note the tiller on the right. Vessels of this size often didn't have wheels for steering the ship. The tiller would be manned by 2-3 men during rough seas

These
carronades
required a lot of
men to fire
them....



- Each gun had a 7 man crew
- Each gun had a “gun captain” who was responsible for aiming, firing, and supervising the loading of the cannon
- Marines were stationed at each hatchway to make sure no one abandoned their post!



Specific jobs included...

- Siting and firing the gun;
- Swabbing the gun barrel;
- Ramming shot and gunpowder down the barrel;
- Bringing new shot and powder from the magazine below decks (the job of the powder monkey);
- Running the gun out the portals after it was reloaded and ready to fire;

Life on board a sailing warship was cramped and uncomfortable



- Ordinary seamen slept in hammocks.
 - There wasn't enough space to sling all hammocks, so they would trade off space depending on the watch
- Officers slept in cabins
- Often, seaman would sleep on deck where it was cooler
- Duck when visiting! The clearance is less than 5 feet.

Officers were better off than ordinary seamen, but not by much

- The officers quarters were toward the rear (stern), close to the rudder.
- The top picture is the officer's ward room which would serve as:
 - A dining area for officers
 - The surgeon's table for tending the wounded during battle
- The bottom picture is a door to one of the officers staterooms-the cabins where they would sleep.



The fighting top



- These are also known as a crow's nest
- The *Niagara* was in port for standard maintenance when we visited
- The bottom picture shows a seaman working from one of the fighting tops
- The top of the main mast reaches 118 feet

Sources

- Personal visit and photos by S.R. Staley on May 21, 2006;
- <http://www.brigniagara.org>
- Walter Rybka and Wesley Heerssen, *U.S. Brig Niagara Crew Handbook*, 5th edition, February 2005 (Erie, Penn.: Flagship Niagara League, Inc.)