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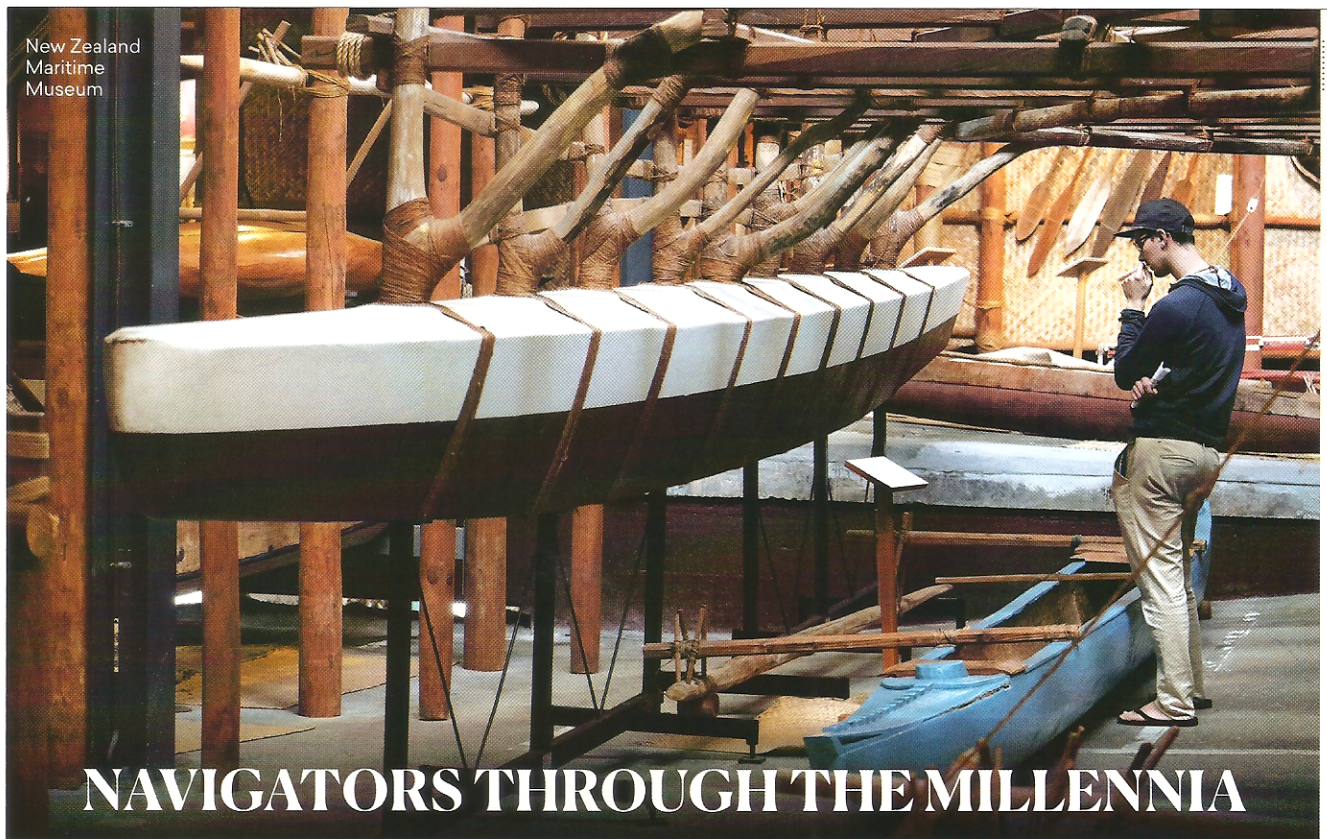


Chart a course for the world's best maritime museums. BY RICHARD VARR

FROM THE VIKINGS AND GREAT European explorers to 20th-century sailing vessels and warships, maritime museums tell the stories of colonization, trade, and war that have shaped the world as we know it today. Detailed below are some of the best museums worth a visit during your next stop in popular ports of call.

### From Briny Depths to Full Glory

Seeing *Vasa* up close takes your breath away. Salvaged from the cold, briny depths that preserved it for 333 years, the wooden warship is the world's only salvaged 17th-century vessel, now housed in Stockholm's cavernous **Vasa Museum**. In 1628, the pride of the Swedish navy's maiden voyage sadly ended almost as soon as it began in Stockholm's harbor, with the top-heavy gunship keeling over after a mighty windblast puffed its sails. *Vasa* quickly sank as water entered through its lower gun ports. Today, rope ladders again stretch up its masts, and imposing figurines of carved warriors and grinning lion heads reveal — despite the doomed voyage — the prowess of Sweden's navy.

Stockholm's **National Maritime Museum** features navigational instruments, figureheads, paintings, artifacts, and more than 1,500 model ships. A key exhibit is the original cabin and elaborately carved transom of King Gustav III's 1778 schooner *Amphion* with its sun-crowned emblem and four windows.

### The Vikings

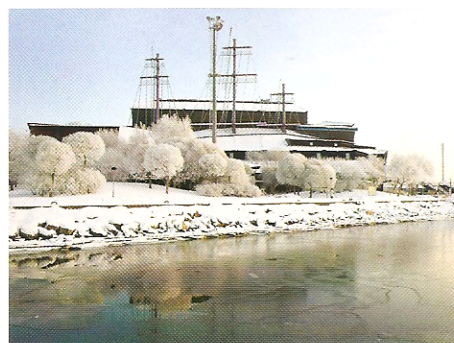
Upon seeing the single-masted *Sea Stallion* with its imposing broad-striped sail, you might think you've stepped back to when Vikings traversed the northern seas. The longboat, seating 60 oarsmen, is actually a modern-day reconstruction of the *Skuldelev 2*, a Viking warship whose fragmented yet remarkably preserved hull sits within the **Viking Ship Museum** in Roskilde, Denmark, a suburb of Copenhagen. The hull is one of five Viking ship hulls on display, all retrieved from a shallow fjord near Skuldelev in 1962 after sitting in the murky bottom for a thousand years. The boats were purposely sunk with stones to block invaders.

Other reconstructed Viking vessels include a cargo ship and fishing boats, all whisking passengers on rides along the fjords.

In Norway, Oslo's **Viking Ship Museum** houses three preserved vessels dug out from 1,000-year-old burial mounds, where Viking leaders or chieftains were entombed within the ships.

### The Great Explorers

Portugal's Belém waterfront can be called a museum within itself. This Lisbon neighborhood is where some of the greatest explorers departed on their journeys to the New World. Carved in splendid Manueline-style architecture, **Jerónimos Monastery** is the sacred site where seamen like Vasco da Gama prayed before setting sail, and where Da Gama was eventually entombed. Two waterfront towers stand as tributes: the 170-foot-tall **Monument to the Discoveries**, carved with likenesses of influential navigators and explorers, and the 500-year-old **Belém Tower** with its Moorish watchtowers.



Clockwise from left: Maritime Museum of San Diego; Neptune steering the *Royal Barge* at Amsterdam's National Maritime Museum; Nelson's Trafalgar uniform at Britain's National Maritime Museum; Vasa Museum in Stockholm

In the monastery's western wing, Lisbon's **Maritime Museum (or Navy Museum)** showcases paintings, models of ships and galleons, and statues of the great explorers. Exhibits include the wooden Archangel Raphael figurine that da Gama took with him on his voyage to India and an original, exquisitely decorated wood-paneled cabin from Queen Amélia's royal yacht.

Paintings, model ships, and artifacts in Amsterdam's **National Maritime Museum** showcase Dutch journeys to the East and West Indies. Berthed outside, the *East Indiaman Amsterdam*, with its gold-trimmed stern windows, is an exact replica of the ship that sank in 1749 in the North Sea. Inside the museum, the 56-foot *Royal Barge* is lavishly decorated with a golden statue of Neptune clutching his three-pronged trident

### England's Legacy on the Seas

Liverpool's **Merseyside Maritime Museum** tells the story of the horrific sinking of *RMS Lusitania* during World War I, as this British

port city was *Lusitania's* final destination and home to many of its perished crew. Passengers' letters, artifacts, and an impressive ship model help tell the story of how a German submarine torpedoed the unarmed ship off the shores of Ireland, leaving nearly 1,200 dead.

A longtime center of maritime activity, London's Greenwich borough is home to Britain's **National Maritime Museum**. Its colossal 2 million-piece collection includes manuscripts, maps, ship models, figureheads, navigational instruments and artworks. Paintings feature a portrait of Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson, whose death at the Battle of Trafalgar is depicted in J. M. W. Turner's largest painting. Battle artifacts include Nelson's Trafalgar uniform and a cannonball wedged into a piece of wood.

### Navigating the Pacific

The **Maritime Museum of San Diego** highlights the local navy base, but is perhaps best known for its dozen or so historic vessels. Most notable is the 1860s *Star of India*, the world's oldest active sailing ship. *HMS Surprise* is

a replica of the 24-gun, 18th century British frigate. And the *B-39* is a real-life Soviet-era diesel-and-electric submarine that sailed the oceans for more than 20 years.

The name of the **New Zealand Maritime Museum Hui Te Ananui A Tangaroa** includes a Maori title, and Polynesian and Maori boats and navigation comprise one of the museum's key exhibits. Through model boats and more than 130 watercraft, the museum showcases early European settlement and immigration, whaling life, and modern day trading and shipping. Maritime enthusiasts can even catch a ride on the fully restored heritage scow *Ted Ashby* for Auckland harbor voyages.

In Sydney's **Australian National Maritime Museum**, the Navigators exhibit features an artifact from British Captain James Cook's sloop *HMS Resolution*, as well as displays tracking the voyages of sailors and settlers from Asia and Europe. For a glimpse of what life was like for Cook and his crew, walk aboard the replica of his *HMB Endeavour* berthed outside, and marvel at the pulleys and masts supporting 28 sails. ●