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## **INDEPENDENCE SEAPORT MUSEUM OFFERS VISITORS NEW PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTING PHILADELPHIA'S MILITARY HISTORY**

*Uncover U.S. Navy history on the Delaware River and beyond this holiday season*

**Photos:** [HERE](#)

**Philadelphia, PA | October 19, 2023** – [Independence Seaport Museum](#) (ISM) is celebrating the fall and winter seasons with special programming and events to provide guests with exciting opportunities to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. Throughout November and December, ISM offers special seasonal programming revealing the rich history of the Delaware Waterfront and hidden military stories. Guests can also plan visits and book self-guided or guided tours throughout the holiday season, including Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.

Patrons can explore one of the largest maritime art and artifact collections in North America displayed in their award-winning exhibits before heading outside to tour their historic ships, [Cruiser Olympia](#) and [Submarine Becuna](#). ISM is a critical component of Philadelphia's waterfront renaissance and is a popular, year-round, family-friendly destination along Penn's Landing.

### **Upcoming Seasonal Programming & Events**

Each fall and winter, the Museum provides special seasonal programming to encourage visitors to dive deeper into its historic ships and exhibitions.

On Saturday, November 18, ISM hosts two free engagements on Cruiser *Olympia* that bring real stories from Philadelphia's past to life. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., experience the turbulent politics of 1930s Philadelphia brought to life in [For Liberty in Spain](#). During the event, ISM visitors learn about how the Republican forces of the Spanish Civil War received support from the international labor movement, including many Philadelphia unions that raised money to support their efforts. Activists from the city also traveled overseas to fight on the front lines against Spanish Dictator Francisco Franco's Nationalists or serve in the American Medical Bureau.

That same afternoon, from 2 to 3 p.m., guests can attend on the latest **Captain's Corner**, a free afternoon talk series that offers in-depth conversations on American history, with the National Museum of the Marine Corps curator Kater Miller. The afternoon lecture, [Baseball and Diplomacy: USS Olympia's Baseball Team and Building International Relationship with Asia](#), explores the USS *Olympia* and the U.S. Navy and Marines' earliest baseball games in Asia, as the sport exploded in popularity abroad in the 1890s.

On December 16 at 2 p.m., National Museum of the Marine Corp Exhibit Curator Mike Westermeier hosts another **Captain's Corner** titled [United States Marine Corps Assault on Fort Sumter, 1863](#). During his presentation, Westermeier discusses the United States Marine Corps' assault on Fort Sumter in 1863 and provide details of this lesser-known battle of the American Civil War and the experiences of the Marine prisoners of war who were captured.

### **Remembering Philadelphia's Naval History**

Each year, on November 11, at 10 a.m., ISM, along with its partner, [The Chapel of Four Chaplains](#), hosts its free annual **Veterans Day Ceremony** aboard Cruiser *Olympia* to reflect and give thanks to our veterans and those currently serving in the armed forces. ISM named **Ed Berna** of the American Legion post 405 as the featured speaker for the upcoming ceremony. The museum welcomes members and families to attend the Veterans Day Ceremony before exploring its historic ships and exhibitions to learn about the U.S. Navy and its ties to Philadelphia.

In [Patriots & Pirates](#), visitors learn how Philadelphia played a key role in founding the U.S. Navy and how sailors had to combat pirates during the early days of the American Republic. The exhibition features harrowing first-hand accounts of this era, including a letter sent to the U.S. Congress in 1793 by Americans held hostage by pirates, requesting their return. The exhibition also details the lives of early Navy heroes such as Captain John Barry (known as the Father of the American Navy) and Captain Stephen Decatur, who led a mission to destroy the USS Frigate *Philadelphia* after Barbary pirates had captured it. Historical artifacts like Captain Barry's personal octant and Captain Decatur's hat and buttons from his naval uniform are on display.

In the coming centuries, Philadelphia remained significant to America's naval force as a major shipbuilding hub. *Patriots & Pirates* highlights this history through a model of the Navy's first frigate constructed in Philadelphia, the *USS United States*, and the replica 102-foot vessel Schooner *Diligence*. The replica was constructed by staff and volunteers from [The Seaport Boat Shop](#), a traditional boat shop located inside the Museum, and was based on a real ship from Captain Barry's squadron.

In the Richard C. von Hess Foundation Gallery, guests explore [At the Water's Edge: Working and living along the Delaware River](#) ("At the Water's Edge"), an exhibition detailing the history of Philadelphia's waterfront that's told through a series of artifacts, rare prints, artwork, and historic documents. View an image of Battleship *Idaho* Under the Covered Shipways at New York Shipbuilding in Camden, New Jersey, before it was deployed to serve in World War II. While New York Shipping is no longer active, the image serves as a reminder of how busy the Delaware River was and continues to be for commercial use. Visitors can also get a close look at a Sea Chest that belonged to Captain John Green, who led a voyage to China aboard the *Empress of China* in 1784. The piece represents a period in history when America and China became active trading partners. *At the Water's Edge* runs through May 2025.

The award-winning exhibition, [Tides of Freedom: African Presence on the Delaware River](#), is set to reopen on ISM's second floor on November 3 after being relocated to accommodate changes to the museum's building. Curated by the Lasry Family Professor of Race Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Tukufu Zuberi, the exhibition shares first-hand accounts detailing the history of enslavement, emancipation, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights in Philadelphia. Visitors can learn about patriot and highly-respected sailmaker James Forten, the ships African Americans built at a local segregated shipyard during World War II, and explore the concept of freedom through the lens of the African experience on the Delaware.

### **Experience Life at Sea Aboard ISM's Historic Ships**

The Museum is proud to be continuing its efforts to educate the public about its historical vessels docked along the landing. Nearby the Museum are [Cruiser Olympia](#), the oldest floating steel warship, and [Submarine Becuna](#), a World War II-era Balao-class submarine.

ISM began its stewardship of *Olympia*, a National Historic Landmark, in 1996 and has since overseen restorations that made it possible for the historic ship to remain open for touring visitors. Guests can explore on their own or reserve guided tours with Museum staff to learn about *Olympia's* 26 years of service, which includes her rise to fame serving as Commodore (later Admiral) George Dewey's flagship during the Battle of Malina Bay. Following the end of World War I, the vessel was chosen to return the remains of an unknown American soldier to the United States. In 2021, ISM commemorated and honored the [Centennial Anniversary of the Return of the Unknown Soldier](#) aboard Cruiser *Olympia* by unveiling a permanent [historical marker](#), which is located where the coffin was laid during its transport in 1921.

*Becuna* also brings a storied history from her 25 years in the U.S. Navy. The submarine completed five wartime patrols in the Pacific Theater of World War II and earned four combat stars for her service. In 1951, she underwent modernization as part of the United States Navy's Greater Underwater Propulsion & Power Program (GUPPY) and was refitted with a Guppy 1A modification. She remains the only Guppy 1A-type submarine anywhere in the world. The submarine became a museum in July 1976 as part of Philadelphia's Bicentennial Celebration and became a part of ISM's collections in 1996.

### **Visiting Independence Seaport Museum**

ISM offers [four admission bundles](#) to provide visitors with flexible options for visitors to learn, discover, and explore at affordable prices. The **General Admission Ticket Package** comes with a self-guided experience among the Museum's award-winning exhibitions and aboard the historic ship Cruiser *Olympia*. For those only looking to tour the historic ships, the **Climb Aboard Package** offers self-guided access to Cruiser *Olympia* plus guided tours of the ship's Engine Room and Submarine *Becuna*. Visitors who purchase the **Explorer Package** can explore the entire Museum and *Olympia* on their own before taking a guided tour of *Becuna*. For the complete ISM experience, the **Admiral Dewey Package** offers self-guided access to the Museum building and Cruiser *Olympia*, a guided tour of Submarine *Becuna*, and a guided tour of Cruiser *Olympia's* Engine Room. Learn more by visiting ISM's admissions and add-ons page [here](#).

Before leaving ISM, visitors are encouraged to stop by the gift shop to find the perfect souvenir for the nautical lover in their life. Featuring a curated selection of items made by local artisans, with themes ranging from nautical to the City of Brotherly Love, there's something for everyone. For **Museum Store Sunday** (November 26), the store offers a special 20% off all ISM branded merchandise, plus any Cruiser *Olympia* or Submarine *Becuna* items. All gift shop proceeds are re-invested in the ISM's programs, historic ships, and collections.

During the holiday season, the museum is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve (December 24) and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on New Year's Eve (December 31) and New Year's Day (January 1). ISM is closed for Thanksgiving (November 23) and Christmas Day (December 25).

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### **About Independence Seaport Museum**

Independence Seaport Museum encourages visitors to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. Stewards of Cruiser *Olympia* and World War II-era Submarine *Becuna*, ISM is home to a boatbuilding workshop, interactive exhibitions, and one of the largest collections of historic maritime artifacts in the world. Visitors can explore the historic and beautiful Delaware River first-hand by renting a boat from the Museum or by participating in one of our kayak excursions. The Independence Seaport Museum is the premier, year-round destination on the Penn's Landing waterfront. Visit daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and see our full schedule of programs and events at [phillyseaport.org](http://phillyseaport.org).