



by

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The definition of Tall Ships is somewhat loose and includes sailing vessels ranging from two masted Schooners to full rigged ships of two, three, and four masts, so I checked with an expert. “For many people a tall ship can be of any length and as long as it is a traditional vessel it would be a tall ship. I have heard that the term was coined by the poem “Sea Fever” by John Masefield. ‘And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by” So yes, being a tall ship does involve more than having sails. It is about preserving a traditional way of life.” Adria Lande, Education Coordinator, American Sail Training Association.

Tall ship is a somewhat informal collective term for some kinds of sailing ships. Contrary to other sailing ship classification terms, tall ship does not describe a particular kind of sailing ship identified by a sail plan – both barques and brigantines, for instance, are tall ships. A tall ship is a large traditionally rigged sailing vessel. Although many larger fore-and-aft rigged boats (especially schooners) call themselves tall ships, most people reserve the term for vessels with at least some square-rigged sails that require the crew to go aloft to handle them. Tall ships generally have more than one mast, and can also be differentiated from modern sailing vessels by their topmasts and topsails. Due to the additional crew and rigging required to carry topmasts and the ability to construct taller masts of aluminum and steel, separate topmasts are generally cost prohibitive on modern designs.

Today there are several hundred Tall Ships sailing around the globe. Many of these vessels exist to preserve both a bit of History as well as a set of skills many hundreds of years old. Quite a large fraction of these ships carry out training programs allowing anyone who has the inclination, to experience hands on sail training cruises ranging from a few days to several weeks. In addition, some vessels undertake voyages of exploration and science. The fleet of Tall ships is growing throughout the world. For example, in the UK, sea trials of Matthew - a replica of the vessel John Cabot sailed in his voyage of discovery to Newfoundland are being completed. Construction has begun on a replica of FRIEND-SHIP - a three masted merchant vessel - for Salem Massachusetts.

While the technology of the sailing ship might be ancient, today's vessels ride on the crest of modern computer, communications, and navigation technology. Today you can find one or more personal computers aboard many of these ships, along with modems, and fax machines. Log into any WEB browser and you will find web pages on HMS Rose, HMS Bounty, USB Niagara, Providence, Spirit of Massachusetts, Lady Washington and dozens of other Tall Ships.

In the 1300's, England dominated the ship building industry. Ship builders used the term frigate to describe a kind of galley that was sailing in the Mediterranean. Eventually the term frigate came to describe "any medium sized, fast sailing ship of moderate armament." In the waning years of the 19th Century steam ships were coming to life. In the shipyards of Europe the windjammers were born, so named because they were thought too large and clumsy to sail neatly into the wind but instead had to be "jammed" into the wind. When people think of tall ships they often picture a large ship with many sails, the Windjammer.

In 1869 the Suez Canal opened. The canal was too narrow and shallow for Clipper ships to navigate. This slowly caused the Clippers to quit ocean trade routes.

Windjammers are descendants of the clipper ship, built of iron and steel rather than wood. The difference between the two ships were dramatic. In addition to the windjammer's sails being smaller, a fourth mast was added, sometimes as many as five masts were built. Where the clipper had a single topgallant, the windjammer divided that sail in two, an upper topgallant and a lower topgallant. Windjammers did not use a studding sail. [http://home.flash.net/~dadis/ships/ships.htm#N_1 <http://www.faq.s.org/ftp/pub/pub/usenet/news.announce.newgroups/rec/rec.boats.tallships>]

Tall Ships has proven to be a popular small category with collectors. The art work is often beautiful and the sight of such a ship challenging the seas stirs something within many of us.

Currently, there is no listing of Tall Ship covers. I have 1,728 in my collection, all shapes and sizes. I'm sure there must be bigger collections, as Tall Ships are a fairly common sight on seafood restaurant covers, etc.

