

Clear sailing on eastern seaboard



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Crew of an OpSail tall ship stand tall during the Parade of Sail into Norfolk, Va., in June 2012. (LORI KNOWLES/Special to QMI Agency)

It happens once every 10 years, spectacular tall ships with billowing sails and multiple masts glide smoothly into harbours along the U.S. eastern seaboard.

More than 4,000 international officers, cadets, crew and dignitaries from more than 15 nations moor their massive ships, let down their sails, lower their gangways and let the public stream onboard for a look.

OpSail 2012, a tall ships festival taking place through June and early July in ports including Baltimore, Boston, Norfolk, New York and New London, features free ship tours, fireworks, parades of sail, air shows, festivals and loads of street food.

Begun in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, Operation Sail (OpSail) was created to promote goodwill and cooperation among countries and celebrate maritime history. The 2012 edition of OpSail officially marks the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and commemorates the writing of the Star Spangled Banner.

Besides tall ships from Spain, Portugal, Norway and Ecuador, OpSail 2012 features naval ships and submarines from both the U.S. and Canada, including HMCS Moncton and HMCS Goose Bay.

For more information and a sailing schedule, see OpSail.org.