

USS Midway History



The ship you will be visiting soon is called the USS Midway. The Midway is one of the longest-serving aircraft carriers in the United States Navy, operating from September 1945, just after World War II ended until 1992 when she was decommissioned. The USS Midway is now docked in San Diego Bay and has been transformed into one of the most-visited ship museums in the world.

It is interesting to learn how the Midway got her name. First of all, every Navy ship in the United States has a name beginning with USS, which stands for United States Ship. The Midway was named after an important battle during World War II. This battle, which took place on Midway Island in the Pacific, represented a decisive victory for the Allied forces. That's why the Navy chose Midway for the name of this ship.

One of the first things you will notice about the Midway when you arrive is the large 41 painted on the side of the ship. The Navy numbers its ships in order, as they are built. The very first aircraft carrier ever built in the United States was number 1, the USS Langley, built in 1922. The Midway, built in 1945, was number 41. The newest carrier now in use is the USS George H. W. Bush, number 77.



The next thing you will notice about the Midway when you drive up close to her is her size. She is HUGE! She is 1,001 feet long, which is about the length of 3 football fields. (The Titanic, by comparison, was just over 880 feet in length.) The Midway is as high as a 20-story building. And, she weighs almost 70,000 tons. She has two anchors, each weighing 20 tons, and four propellers, each one measuring 18 feet in diameter. The Midway could carry up to 80 planes. She has 3 elevators that were used to move planes from the flight deck to inside the ship. Each of these elevators could carry 110,000 pounds. The Midway's crew numbered 4,500 men.

In order to keep those men well fed, the Midway's 4 galleys (kitchens) had to serve over 13,000 meals a day.

Notice that the U.S.S. Midway is referred to by using the pronoun "she". That is common for ALL ships. It goes back to ancient times when sailors named their ships after the women they loved and left behind when they went out to sea. Don't be surprised if you hear a former Midway sailor say something like, "The Midway was my favorite ship. *She* was the greatest. I will remember *her* forever."

The USS Midway sailed in every ocean in the world and fought in the Vietnam War and in the First Persian Gulf War. Over the years, she was deployed to the North Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Western Pacific Ocean. Not just a warship, she was also involved in humanitarian efforts. In 1975, the Midway was off the coast of Vietnam to help evacuate South Vietnamese people fleeing from those who had taken over their country. In 1991,



when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines, the Midway delivered emergency supplies and rescued stranded American military personnel.

Some say that because of her proud career and service, the Midway is "magic".



In 1992, after a career that lasted 47 years, the Midway was

finally decommissioned. She was getting old and there were newer, more modern ships that had been built to take her place. During those 47 years, over 200,000 men had served on the Midway. She had received many awards for outstanding service. Many people wanted to honor the Midway's fine history instead of seeing her rust away and get turned into scrap metal. So, for 12 years, a group of citizens in San Diego met with lawmakers, Navy officials, environmentalists, and city officials to make plans for bringing the Midway to San Diego and turning her into a museum. Finally, in June of 2004, the USS Midway Museum opened its doors. Since that day, over 4,000,000 guests, including 150,000 students from San Diego and beyond, have come on board to explore and learn. We look forward to the day when you arrive with your class to experience the "Midway Magic"!

Grades 6-8