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OUT GOING

'Pirates' invites you to shiver your timbers

By Wendi Whitmore

May 25, 2006

Ever had a secret fantasy of being a pirate and storming a ship to steal the loot? Now may be your chance at the Maritime Museum's "Pirates of the Pacific" exhibit opening this weekend aboard the museum's HMS Surprise, a replica of an 18th-century Royal Navy frigate.

"People will get to learn things they've always wanted to know about piracy, like, is it really true? Do people have to walk the plank? Do pirates really say 'arrgh!'" says Michael Shanahan, director of marketing and communications for the museum. "Pirates were a worldwide phenomenon, but people aren't as familiar with the fact that they did exist in the Pacific."

One was William Dampier, who was once in the Royal Navy but court-martialed for cruelty and wreaked havoc in the Pacific. A complicated man, Dampier was also known to be sophisticated with a love for geography and natural science.

"Pirates of the Pacific" will illustrate piracy in the world's largest ocean with a combination of artifacts, pictures and hands-on exhibits.

The Saturday morning opening will begin with a boarding party storming the ship. Dress in costume and meet on the Star of India at 9:30 a.m. (Real swords must be secured so they can't be drawn and only replica firearms are allowed.)

Opening day will include staged sword fights by bands of pirates, face painting and music by the Westlin Weavers. The ship will fire off its swivel gun – a small mounted cannon – as part of the festivities.

DATEBOOK

"Pirates of the Pacific"

9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday through October 2007; Maritime Museum of San Diego's HMS Surprise, 1492 N. Harbor Drive, downtown San Diego; Costumed boarding party Saturday 9:30 a.m.; \$12, adults; \$8, ages 6-17; free, 5 and under; sdmaritime.org or

If your visit to the pirate exhibit leaves you wanting more history, how about an imaginary 19th-century voyage on the Star of India? Beginning in June, you and your family can sleep over on this historic, and some say haunted, vessel and experience a little bit of what the voyage might have been like from England to New Zealand.

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If you'd rather do more than imaginary sailing, try the Adventure Sail on the Californian. Excursions run all year, but, starting in June, the museum adds many to the schedule for summer. You can take the weekend and try a Catalina Adventure sail on the Californian if a day trip won't do.

The popular "Movies Before the Mast" series is back, beginning in July, showing nautical movies on board the Star of India. The movies are projected onto a special sail on the ship's deck, and there are games for kids and parents as well (depending on whether you choose date night or family night).

■ Wendi Whitmore is a San Diego writer.

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