

TALL SHIPS YOUTH TRUST.



LIZARD OUTREACH TRUST

STAVROS NIARCHOS VOYAGE.

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## INTRODUCTION

I have just completed the voyage on the Stavros Niarchos, the voyage was for seven days and has been a great experience. I now know first hand what young people will gain from these trips and voyage has left me feeling physically exhausted but mentally refreshed.

I will do my best to relay some of the experience and how special it was although this will be hard to do as a lot of the reasons why the trip was great are hard to put into words.



## THE VOYAGE

Graham and I headed for Southampton where we to embark on a seven day voyage, only knowing that we would be arriving in Falmouth seven days later.

At Southampton docks, we stepped aboard and were greeted by the crew and introduced to our watch leaders.

Over the next 24 hours we received extensive safety training and instructions on how to set the sails. The way in which the information was imparted was impressive the permanent crew were extremely effective teachers and the mass of ropes on board began to make some

This was my second voyage on a tall ship within the last month and I was secretly hoping for some rough weather to make things more exciting! (I would later regret making this wish!)

Our watch duties had commenced and it is very difficult to distinguish between the days as one day would merge with another and normal sleep patterns were a thing of the past!

I was in an all male team and we bonded well together taking on the tasks set for us as a team.



It becomes apparent very quickly that you cannot achieve much by yourself and each task requires everyone to pull his or her weight. This results in a strong team atmosphere being formed very quickly, and I believe is one of the positive outcomes of this type of activity.

The food on board was excellent and I was informed the menu had been carefully planned ensuring we all received a minimum of 6000 calories which I understand is about three times the recommended daily allowance for normal life! We enjoyed our 3 meals a day and it one of the few times you can chat and sit down. As soon as we have finished our meal we are sent on our way to make way for the next sitting.

The ship is run like a military unit with a high level of organisation, this is necessary to ensure that everyone is fed and watered, as the space on board is limited.

The days on board seemed to blur into the next as we took our turns on watch duty which involved working through the night.

Your internal body clock gets very disorientated and most of the time you do not know what time of day it is.

I realised that I was having a fantastic time and thoroughly enjoyed climbing the rigging and stowing the sails despite being over 100 ft in the air! It is fair to say you get an adrenaline rush when stowing the topsails on the ship and it has provided me with memories I will not forget.



The attitude of the crew is excellent and they promote a “can do” attitude, nobody is forced to partake in any of the activities but everyone is encouraged to do so. The level of participation of the crew impressed me and nobody opted out of any of the activities, this is a reflection on the skills of the crew and the level of encouragement on board.

For 70% of the voyage we were sailing and this was unusually high, we were very fortunate with the weather and it worked out perfect for training. In the early part of the week the wind was calm, which enabled us to gain and practise the necessary skills to cope with what lay ahead!

## SCARY MOMENT!

I think I was midnight when a call came over the tannoy from the Captain for good climbers to make their way to the deck. I contemplated whether or not I was a good climber as I made my way to the deck not wanting to miss out on an opportunity to climb the rigging.

I realised the ship was moving a lot and it was a challenge in it self to climb the stairs and put my harness on without crashing into the other voyage crew crashing around the ship!

I bumped into Graham already in his harness and as we stepped out on to deck and saw the weather conditions I wondered what we had let ourselves in for.

The wind was Force 8, water was coming over the side of the ship this felt to me like a storm. Suddenly the need for the information we had learnt was becoming apparent. We needed to stow the sails urgently because the wind was becoming too strong. I felt quite scared at the prospect of climbing the rigging in these conditions, and the necessity to have life assurance on these trips worried me!

Before I could work myself into too much of a panic we were instructed to climb the riggings to stow the sails, there was an urgency in the captains voice which made me realise it needed to be done and I prepared myself to start climbing.

Leaning over the yard arms on the highest sail set was a surreal experience; I looked over and gave a shout to Graham who was one of the first volunteers to climb. One of my watch team was looking particularly scared and as a team we reassured him. It was nearly inaudible with the wind and rain thrashing across the ship.

We got on with the task in hand and I made a mental note to be more careful for what I wished for in the future! The deck looked a million miles away and the sea moved closer and further away as the ship lurched over in the strong winds.

The motion was making me feel sick and the pressure of the yard arm on my stomach was not helping. One of my fellow watch team was actually sick and this provided great amusement to the crew as the unfortunate crew members below were forced to dive for cover, maybe I was in a safest place!

AS soon as the sails were stowed away we headed down the rigging and I was glad to set foot again on the deck. The climbers shook hands and realised we had just shared a thoroughly exciting experience together.

During the voyage we moored up in various places on the way to Falmouth including Swannich and Fowey where we were able to tune in and watch the rugby world cup.

The voyage was drawing rapidly to a close, although in a strange way it felt as though we had spent a lifetime on board.



We arrived in Falmouth in the afternoon and as a team we headed into town and enjoyed a beer to celebrate a great voyage and safe return.

I could write about the voyage all day, there were so many great moments and aspects of the voyage that are hard to put down on paper.

The friendships formed and the atmosphere is special, the crew had been brilliant and I was grateful to have had this experience.

I believe that there is a vast amount of benefit available to young people who are able to voyage on the ships and they will receive memories that will last with them forever.

Saying goodbye to fellow crew members was sad as we had worked so closely together over the last week and it marked the return to the normal routine. Having said that I was glad to set foot on land again and get some sleep as I felt like a zombie not having slept for 24 hours!



The sense of achievement gained is great, you really feel as though you have stepped out of your comfort zone into a totally alien environment. You learn new skills to enable you to be part of a team and contribute to the success of the journey.

The voyages take you on a journey both a geographical journey and one of self development, everyone I spoke to confirmed it had been more than just a trip on a boat but that they had developed and benefited in many ways.

In summary, I consider myself very fortunate to have had this opportunity and I will be recommending to the young people I work with to grasp these opportunities if they come their way.