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DESTINATIONS

Posted by: [Jan Ross](#)

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I glanced up at the masts of the Tall Ship berthed in the Savannah harbor for the [Tall Ships Challenge](#), soaring up into the clear blue sky and appearing to pierce the puffy white clouds. The sounds of the people crowding onto [River Street](#) to see the ships fade away as I stood there, imagining the same scene two hundred years ago.

Behind me, the shops, restaurants and hotels transformed into cotton warehouses and offices where cotton

was bartered and sold in a town where cotton was king, huge mansions filled the live oak lined streets and the War of 1812 was looming on the horizon. The ballast stones under my feet being tossed out of the hold of a ship to make room to load the precious cotton but don't go to waste as the colonists build streets and walls from the stones.

Then, a sweet brown sugar smell jolted me back to the present as someone opened the door to the [Savannah's Candy Kitchen](#) and the smell of freshly made pralines rolled out.

I was not sad to come back to the present – those fabulous pralines were one reason – because my husband and I were in town as part of a media group covering the [Tall Ships Challenge in Savannah](#) and we were anxious to board the beautiful ships that had sailed into Savannah to begin the Challenge. A series of races, cruises, crew rallies and maritime festivals, the event is organized by [Tall Ships America](#) in cooperation with U.S. and Canadian ports along the Atlantic Coast and only traditionally-rigged sailing vessels can participate. The Tall Ships Challenge is an annual event which alternates in a three year cycle between the Great Lakes, the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts of North America – and we were lucky enough to be in the very first port!



Some of the Tall Ships docked on River Street.

The event began in Savannah, Georgia and would then continue to Greenport, New York; Newport, Rhode Island and Halifax and outports in Nova Scotia. The festivals in each port were designed to give visitors a chance to board the tall ships, meet the crews and learn about the many

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opportunities to sail on the ships. Because the ships are different sizes, a special rating system is used to assign the vessels a relative performance factor so this gives everyone an equal chance to participate. [The Bicentennial of the War of 1812](#) was chosen as the theme of the Tall Ships Challenge and celebrations and festivals were planned in all the different ports.

The ships had already arrived when we checked into the [River Street Inn](#) and threw open the curtains of our window which overlooked historic River Street and the Tall Ships which were berthed along the docks on River Street and across the river at [Hutchinson Island](#). Crew members and local citizens were performing in the street and along the dock and lots of pirate costumes were seen. We checked out all the ships, then attended a reception aboard the [Tall Ship Alliance](#). The Alliance is a 105 foot 3-masted gaff topsail schooner from Yorktown, Virginia and we were impressed with the beautiful little ship and how everything on board was perfectly maintained.

The next day, we prowled over every ship on the River Street side of the river. We loved them all but one of our favorites had to be the



The lovely Dewaruci!

[Dewaruci](#) from Indonesia. A gorgeous barquentine, she is the tallest ship in the Indonesian navy and was built in 1952. She is a sail training vessel and an ambassador symbol of goodwill for the people of Indonesia. The best thing about the Dewaruci is the crew who dressed in full uniform and held a parade up and down River Street twice a day during the Tall Ships Challenge. They also danced and sang along with the music their band performed as they sailed on the river – quite a

performance!

In the afternoon, we met up with the rest of the group for lunch at [The Pirate House](#). The Pirate House is a local restaurant which first opened as an inn back in 1753 and became a haven for pirates and sailors alike, although you had to be careful if you stopped by The Pirate House because they were famous for kidnapping innocent civilians who later found themselves on the high seas as part of the crew! After lunch, we were excited to set sail on the [Appledore V](#). The Appledore V is an 85 foot Topsail Schooner based in Bay City, Michigan and we enjoyed sailing up the river – and helping to raise the sails!

A captain's reception that evening gave us time to mingle with and talk to the captains of the ships and the later fireworks over the river

capped a perfect day in Savannah. We spent the next morning on a historic tour of Savannah, lunch at the wonderful [Crab Shack](#) in nearby charming [Tybee Island](#) and finished the day with dinner at The Olde Pink House Restaurant where we toasted our lovely experience at The Tall Ships Challenge with the requisite pink lady drinks.

The last day of the Tall Ships Challenge included the Parade of Sails and we were there, bright and early with our cameras, ready to photograph this epic event. Unfortunately, after days of perfect weather, Savannah decided not to cooperate on our last days and the skies opened up. The huge crowd almost immediately dispersed and we took cover under a nearby awning, but not before we were absolutely soaked.

We waited out the rain and finally the Parade of Sails took place later in the morning under gray, low hanging clouds. We waved goodbye to each of the crews as they sailed out onto the river on their way to the Atlantic and their next port, then we packed up and headed out of Savannah.



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The Tall Ships Challenge in 2013 will be in the Great Lakes.

Will we see you there?

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Tags: , Savannah Georgia, The Tall Ships Challenge



For twenty years, I worked as a librarian in an elementary school but finally decided to get serious about travel writing and devote all my time to it. Now, I travel the world and write all about it. I can't imagine a more fabulous or fulfilling job. I write a regular travel column for two regional, Central Kentucky magazines and contribute regularly to other magazines and online travel sites, such as The SavvyGal, A Luxury Travel Blog and

The Vacation Gals. I'm an avid reader and stay active with Yoga, Pilates and Zumba classes. My favorite place in the whole world is a beach - any beach. I have been married for 34 years and my husband is my favorite travel companion. I also rely on him for his excellent photography skills. We have two grown children and the best grandson in the world. Slowly but surely, we are visiting all the places we have dreamed about. Hopefully, the next one will be the one you want to read about!

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