

Seaport Independence Museum

Contributed by L.D.
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We already mentioned the Independence Seaport Museum and it's USS Becuna, the World War II and post-war submarine, in other article. But I believe she's worth few more lines.

Independence Seaport Museum is located on the bank of Delaware river, we can say in the very heart of Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania. We should also mention, that it's on the east coast of the United States just around 3 hours by bus from the New York City. When you arrive at the bus station, you can find a small info center there with useful leaflets including a map of the Philadelphia city center and leaflet of the Independence Seaport Museum itself.

With the information from the leaflet, it's now piece of cake to get to the museum, just walk east the Market street, which stretches from the river bank to the bus station. When you get to the Delaware river, cross the waterfront park and you're there!

The most important attraction of the museum, is of course, the USS Becuna - a submarine of Balao class improved to GUPPY (Greater Underwater Propulsion) standard. That means the outside appearance had changed a lot - the bow was modified as well as the deck and most notably the conning tower. The deck guns disappeared and the conning tower is now sleeky with smooth lines. The upper slim cover hides extremely long periscopes.

Submarine interior is basically accessible all the way from aft torpedo room to the front one. It's obvious that such a rooms as Pump Room underneath the Control Center or the small Control Center in the conning tower can't be accessed by public. A lot of small rooms and open spaces are covered by a transparent glass panels so you can have a look inside, but you can get in.

To me, it seems to be too much restrictive; in example if you compare it with USS Ling in NJNM. You can go through the submarine on your own, which is basically a good and appreciated fact. On the other hand, people would like to hear something about the submarine itself, its service, life onboard, etc.

Of course, the Independence Seaport Museum has much more to offer. You browse it's galleries and see many exhibits related to ships and submarines. A submarine enthusiast would find very interesting a large model of Balao submarine in section, and a small scientific submarine which is in "Divers of The Deep" exposition. Here you can watch a video about history of submarine diving as well. There are more ships as well - the cruiser Olympia from the World War One is one of them.

Finally I should note, that you can use camera on the ships, but you are not allowed to use it within the museum building. I took many photos on the USS Becuna and you can see them in our photo gallery.

You can find more information on the museums web site on www.phillyseaport.org.

Dates & TTD

Laid down:
29 April 1943

Launched:
30 January 1944

Commissioned:
27 May 1944

Decommissioned:
7 November 1969

Displacement surfaced/submerged:
1550 t/2460 t

Length/Beam/Draft:
95.0 m/8.3 m/4.6 m

Depth limit:
120 m

Speed surfaced/submerged:
20.25 knots/8.75 knots

Propulsion:
4x 5400-hp diesel engines
4x 2740-hp electric motors,
2x propeller

Submerged Endurance:
48 hours at 2 knots

Patrol Endurance:
75 days

Range:
20,000 km surfaced at 10 knots

Complement:
66 officers and enlisted

Armament:
10 x 533 mm torp. tubes (6 fwd. / 4 aft),
carried 24 torpedoes

1 x 127 mm deck gun

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