

# Cubs Ahoy! - Planning Overnights on Navy Ships

‘Recipes’ for the Outing in Scouting

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This guide is a ‘cookbook’ of ideas for pack overnights on navy ship museums, including:

- A step-by-step guide to planning ship overnights
- Formulas for reservations, transportation and permits
- Some common pitfalls and how to avoid them
- Compatible achievements and awards
- A sample ‘recipe’ plan for visiting each ship



The Battleship USS Texas

This guide discusses the following ships, in the order of their distance from Bellaire, inside Houston:

| Miles | Ship                               | Location                        |
|-------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 29    | Battleship<br>USS Texas            | San Jacinto<br>Battleground     |
| 56    | Submarine<br>USS Cavalla           | Pelican Island,<br>Galveston TX |
| 56    | 1877 Barque Elisa                  | Galveston TX                    |
| 121   | Destroyer<br>USS Orleck            | Orange TX                       |
| 203   | Air Craft Carrier<br>USS Lexington | Corpus Christi TX               |
| 276   | Destroyer USS Kidd                 | Baton Rouge LA                  |
| 476   | Battleship<br>USS Alabama          | Mobile AL                       |

## Overview

This guide consists of recommendations based on the author’s experience organizing Cub Scout overnights on decommissioned Navy ships for Pack 130 in Houston, TX. We will explore the ways personal preferences of families within the pack may be accommodated, and how those preferences may actually be leveraged to help a trip run more smoothly.

From a task oriented perspective we can break the planning process into steps, ordered due to dependencies between scheduling and registration:

- 1 - Choose a season and survey availability
- 2 - Get a reservation and announce the date
- 3 - Get RSVPs and pay the deposit
- 4 - Choose transportation and sightseeing options
- 5 - Identify meetings for collecting payment
- 6 - Email announcements
- 7 - Get the tour permit
- 8 - Collect payments
- 9 - Mail in advance payment by the due date

From a pack perspective, most of the effort to visit a Navy ship goes into planning the trip. Schedules onboard the ships are fully structured. The schedule before and afterward can be based on advantageous choices for transportation and additional attractions. By the time the trip occurs, den leaders may be able to handle everything scheduled and the only remaining effort may be the adjustments for things like dads signed up for fire watch.

Tip #1: The trick to getting full advantage of planning is to get reservations six months in advance. This is not absolutely necessary, of course. However, advance reservations allow one to arbitrarily choose the best date and group size to suit the pack, as well as the ship and

attractions that are best for that time of year. Getting a reservation two months in advance for twenty people may be possible if you are flexible about dates. Getting a reservation for fifty on a popular weekend very often requires six months advance reservation. For this reason, the first three steps above are important.

Tip #2: The tour permit requires that the leader read and abide by the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. It helps ensure safety. <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS>

Tip #3: Consider transportation and payment collection options. These represent significant effort coordinating with parents before the trip. Worry less about RSVPs than obtaining payments in advance; otherwise there may be significant financial risk. Simplify payment by collecting checks at meetings spanning a month or more. Keep income and expenses for group transportation separate from the ship in order to simplify balancing the books after the trip.

Tip #4: For extra, optional activities, consider very active things before and relaxed things after the ship. Before, boys may have excess energy to burn, so consider less structured attractions such as hikes, self guided tours, or better yet, games and free play. Afterward, families may want to relax, so slower paced structured activities like guided tours or a nice lunch may be well received.

Tip #5: If you are going to visit only one ship, consider starting with USS Texas in any season except summer. It’s close by, so there’s no need for group transportation, and this makes it easy to plan. It has straightforward payment requirements and has great options for food, hikes and attractions before or after the onboard schedule. The USS Texas is an easy way to get started and find out whether your families enjoy overnights on ships.

# The Planning Process: Step by Step

## Step 1 – Choose a season and survey availability

Some advantages of the various ships and attractions depend significantly on seasonal weather. Because this takes a longer term perspective, this is a good place to begin, especially if one is planning to visit more than one.

Fall is excluded from this discussion because dens are busy focusing on completing achievements to help boys make rank by their blue and gold ceremonies. Late fall holiday schedules may be filled with family commitments. The least likelihood of conflicts in the fall may be October or even early November; however, even these are still far busier than the spring, and might still be filled with pack events. So, for the fall, it may be help to consider only the closest destinations like the USS Texas that demand far less preparation and drive time from families.

Mid spring is the most popular time for these trips, when the weather is best, and this is when the ships will sell out farther in advance, or have dwindling capacity that limits how many attendees can be reserved. So, it is advisable to plan six months in advance for mid spring if you have a large group or desire a popular weekend. With less lead time, dates and group size may be limited.

Winter in Houston can be a great time for outdoor activities, and for a few things it may be the best weather of the year. Winter can have perfect weather for hiking, and unlike other times of year, lower humidity that makes sleeping aboard ships far more comfortable. This is in part because the thick solid steel construction conducts heat efficiently and is subject to condensation. The author’s pack has had great success with trips during the New Year holidays, just after Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> before everyone returns to work. So we can highly recommend trips in January.

Summer is great in terms of an open schedule and no conflicts, but the heat is a hazard for some outdoor activities and it makes air conditioning on the ships a critical concern. More details are discussed in the Sample ‘Recipe’ Plans section toward the end of this guide.

| Recommended ships for each season    |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Season                               | Ship  |
| Winter                               | USS Texas Battleship<br>Best weather for battleground hike.   |
| Summer                               | USS Cavalla Submarine<br>Great air conditioning, beaches, and attractions.  |
| Spring/<br>Fall                      | USS Lexington Air Craft Carrier<br>Moderate air conditioning.<br>Warmer weather is good for the beach; however much to see onboard, thus limited time on beach. |
| Mid Fall<br>through<br>Mid<br>Spring | USS Kidd Destroyer<br>Moderate air conditioning – limited comfort in summer. Many great museums very close. Art & Science                                       |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
|        | next door.   |
| Summer | USS Alabama Battleship<br>Full day’s drive each way. |

One of the factors that may be considered in initial planning is the competing schedules that make it a challenge to plan trips in a way that inclusive of the whole pack. Soccer, baseball, school, holiday and even pack event schedules will keep things busy throughout the year. During the school year there may be no perfect time to schedule these overnights. Our best recommendation is to vary the plans for successive trips so that families have differing opportunities to work around conflicts.

## Step 2 – Get a reservation and announce the date

Employers may require many months advance notice in order for employees to obtain vacation days, even on weekends. The farther in advance parents can be notified of dates, the easier it may be for them to obtain time off from work. So, one should consider sending an early announcement of the event date alone, without further details, either at this step, or after the following step when the deposit has been paid. One can simply state that further details will be announced as arrangements have been completed.

To obtain a reservation, minimum headcount may be a concern for smaller packs. For the most part, this guide assumes that the pack is large enough that RSVPs are not required because more than the minimum people will sign up and pay the fees for the overnight. If the pack is small, RSVPs prior to paying the deposit may help ensure the pack will meet the minimum headcount. Still, RSVPs should not be a substitute for collecting advance payment, as discussed later.

| Ship      | Cost per person | Min Age | Min People | Max People      | Min People Exclusive |
|-----------|-----------------|---------|------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Texas     | 35              | 5       | 15         | 70              | 70                   |
| Cavalla   | 20              | 5       | 20         | 40 + 30 on ship | 20                   |
| Elissa    | 40              | 8       | 30         | 40              | 30                   |
| Kidd      | 18              | 6       | 20         | 70              | 70                   |
| Lexington | 49              | 5       | 15         | none            | n/a                  |
| Alabama   | 18              | 6       | 15         | none            | n/a                  |

Note that the Destroyer USS Orleck in Orange, TX is not discussed because at the time this was written, tours were discontinued while the ship was being repaired from the damage she sustained during Hurricane Rita.

In order to meet the minimum head count, it may be helpful to include the whole pack. BSA policy allows pack and Webelos Scout overnight trips, but not den overnights for Tiger, Wolf or Bear Cub Scouts. Although these trips can be conducted for Webelos Scout dens, they may have a stronger impression on younger Cub Scouts because they are a relatively safe form of overnight and can make a very positive impression on the younger boys. So, we

recommend planning these trips as a pack event for several reasons.

We will postpone discussion of awards and achievements till after transportation plans; however, at time of reservation, it may be helpful to inquire about service projects. There are many belt loops, Webelos Scout Activity Badges that require service projects. Upon request, some ships will arrange service projects such as ‘bright work,’ polishing brass on the ship. This is relatively straight forward, hands-on work, which is quite age appropriate even for younger Cub Scouts. This can give them a sense of pride in having contributed something concrete and immediately visible. So, when making the reservation, it may be helpful to inquire about service projects in order to give the ship’s staff plenty of time to coordinate resources.

**Step 3 – Get RSVPs and pay the deposit**

The deposits are non-refundable; however, except for the USS Lexington and USS Alabama, all of the ships provide a guaranteed temporary reservation prior to payment of the deposit. If less than the minimum people sign up, one may be faced with the choice of negotiating with the ship, paying for the missing people to make the minimum, or loosing the reservation fee. The ships may sometimes be flexible if they are oversubscribed or have other groups waiting to sign up for the same date, allowing them to cover operating costs, and this is more likely to occur on popular dates.

For a small pack, the temporary reservation period can be used to obtain RSVPs for the tentative date, to gauge whether the pack will meet the minimum headcount, and avoid forfeiting the deposit.. However, as described below, this should not be considered a substitute for collecting advance payment.

For a large pack, where there will be enough attendees to ensure the minimum headcount, RSVPs can be eliminated completely.

| Ship      | Deposit                             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Texas     | 50% within two weeks of reservation |
| Cavalla   | \$100 within 30 days of reservation |
| Elissa    | \$240 at time of reservation        |
| Lexington | \$50 at time of reservation         |
| Kidd      | \$150 within 10 days of reservation |
| Alabama   | \$60 at time of reservation         |

The USS Texas is discounted to \$25 in June -Sept.; however, one should take some caution about planning activities at the San Jacinto Battleground, due to the heat. It may be fine to visit the ship and the inside of the air-conditioned monument, but in summer the battleground outdoors is pretty much unbearable because there is virtually no shade around the monument, reflection pool and nature trails. Outdoor activities during the summer require a ready

supply of water, and for each parent and Cub Scout, a water bottle and sun protection. This is mandated for safety, and lapses can result in negative impressions among parents. With this, the 2.2 mile hike for the San Jacinto Award is not recommended in summer.

**Step 4 – Transportation and sightseeing options**

Transportation and sightseeing before and after the ship will determine the remainder of the schedule. Parents will want to know the schedule in order to decide whether they have any schedule conflicts, so it may be helpful to plan these things prior to announcing the trip.

If families are travelling individually, driver fatigue on the return trip is a concern that should be factored into any plans for driving times of more than an hour one way. Every ship requires a nightly fire watch, which is a parent assigned to stay up each shift during the night to watch out for and react to hazards. In the author’s experience, things work far better if those on the fire watch are not drivers, and drivers are not on the fire watch. For instance, consider a group of dads that like to stay up late and play a board games or cards. Letting that group stay up late and take the bulk of the fire watch is a great way to make fire watch enjoyable. If there are a separate set of dads who much prefer sleep and are glad to be designated drivers, everybody ends up happy.

As you can see, the ships in Texas are within a four hour drive. That is a surprisingly significant factor. A longer drive time poses much more complicated scheduling, especially when combined with the constraints of driving only during daylight hours, as required by the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Shorter driving distances are a great advantage because the driving time will fit within the morning before and afternoon after an overnight. The USS Kidd is a 5 hour drive for most people, despite what Google maps may estimate. This may make it impossible to leave after work and arrive before dark.

The USS Alabama is essentially a full day’s drive. It’s eight hours non-stop, or a ten hour drive with stops. The ship’s normal check-in time is 3pm. Given 7 hours driving time plus at least an hour for bathroom stops, one would have to leave at or before 6am to make it. So no mater how you vary this, it’s a difficult trip for Cub Scouts if one tries to schedule the travel on the same day as boarding or departing the ship. A charter bus makes the travel easier in some ways, but commercial drivers also have required schedule for breaks and limited number of hours per day they can drive.

**Twelve and Fifteen Passenger Vans**

Vans can be less than half the cost of charter bus service. They are surprisingly economical for a couple of reasons.

- Discounts for scouts and tax exemption
- Getting tour permits is not difficult
- Tour permits facilitate BSA insurance coverage

For 15 people including the driver, the cost of a two day rental plus gas can be as low \$20 per person. That may be less than the cost of gas for two people in a car, which in turn makes this encouraging for parents, and it makes various other options easier to dismiss from a planning perspective.

Enterprise Rental and PV Rental in Houston both offer 12 and 15 passenger vans that may be covered on local tour permits for all of these destinations.

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Enterprise.com | 281-498-5493<br>Stafford Office |
| PVRentals.com  | 713-667-0665                    |

At the time this was written, Enterprise quoted significantly lower rates with unlimited mileage for Cub Scouts whereas other local agencies quoted higher rates with limited mileage. The Stafford Enterprise office is one of very few locations that keeps vans in stock and has been very accommodating and extremely helpful. Enterprise also has offices in destination cities and along the routes to these ships including Beaumont, Lafayette and Victoria, which may allow for some limited support. However, vans are kept only at select locations, so this is only an indication of capability for limited support because those offices are unlikely to have a Van on site without prior arrangement. Enterprise requires tax exempt paperwork even if the tax exemption for your pack or chartered organization (e.g. church) is on file. So, one should have a hardcopy tax exemption in hand upon payment, usually when the vans are returned. When arranging group transportation and processing through a pack checking account, it can greatly simplify balancing the books after the trip, if one keeps payments for van and ship separate, including separate folders or envelopes to store the receipts, cash and checks. It may also simplify balancing the books if one avoids distribute cash advances for gas to drivers. All of these destinations can be reached in far less than a tank of gas, so refueling may be done together at the destination.

In order to obtain BSA insurance for the travel, the vans and drivers must be listed on the tour permit and the *Guide to Safe Scouting* requirements must be met, including minimum liability insurance limits for each driver of \$100K per person, \$500K per incident, and \$100K property damage. In our experience, the cost for a driver to increase their insurance limits for six months is far less than a single day of coverage by the rental agency's optional insurance. The *Guide to Safe Scouting* also requires an adult leader be in charge and accompany each group, all driving should be done during daylight hours and that drivers don't speed and don't travel in convoy.

We have found some families that have reservations about 12 and 15 passenger vans based on widely reported safety record issues. However, for the purpose of planning on the basis of BSA policy, we cannot exclude them since

12 and 15 passenger vans are currently allowed on local tour permits. Families may be more comfortable with this if van transportation is offered 'as permitted by BSA tour permits' as an elective option according to their preferences.

### Charter Bus Service

Transportation is a challenging issue for the USS Alabama. The driving time is over 7 hours uninterrupted and commercial services recommend ten hours driving time to allow for rest stops and meal stops. That is motivation for considering a charter bus, even though quotes may range between \$2500 and \$3500 for a 56 passenger coach.

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| CoachAmerica.com   | 800-334-4441 |
| Trailways.com      | 800-392-0768 |
| merloscharters.com | 866-367-5466 |

Coach America is the most recommended company and it has an excellent reputation. However, they do not provide any written guarantees or contract terms beyond what other coach services provide. They may have more offices near these travel routes and destinations, in the event of a mechanical failure; however, it's not apparent whether they would be obligated to do anything more than any other service. Quoted price may vary from day to day, even from Coach America, so it pays to get email or fax confirmation of multiple quotes. Otherwise it appears there is no way to know whether the price is reasonable or not. All of the coach services will generally meet the requirements to be acceptable for BSA tour permits, so it is reasonable to canvass them for the lowest quote and submit it on the tour permit.

### Compatible Achievements and Awards

Awards or achievements that Cub Scouts will complete on the trip may encourage attendance. This is a bit tricky though, because we do not want to dilute other, equally important 'Purposes of Scouting' that outings serve quite well, particularly 'Fun and Adventure' which can be a key to retaining Cub Scouts.

The Purposes of Cub Scouting are: Character Development, Spiritual Growth, Good Citizenship, Sportsmanship and Fitness, Family Understanding, Respectful Relationships, Personal Achievement, Friendly Service, Fun and Adventure, and Preparation for Boy Scouts.

Cub Scouting's 12 core values are: Citizenship, Compassion, Cooperation, Courage, Faith, Health and Fitness, Honesty, Positive Attitude, Resourcefulness, Respect, and Responsibility.

We want Cubs Scouts to have fun and want to enable them to use skills for themselves in a safe environment. Outings can enable Cub Scouts to practice skills in character development, sportsmanship and respectful relationships through direct experience. So achievements should be balanced with the other purposes that outings

serve well. That said, there is often low hanging fruit: things that are fun, and yet also meet requirements for service projects, hikes or visits to historical monuments.

Adjacent to the USS Texas, there is a 2.2 mile hike to complete the San Jacinto Battleground Award. The online PDF has complete instructions for a self-guided program where scouts stopping every half mile to discuss the events of the battle. The patches are available for \$1.50 each at the council office.

<https://samhoustonbsa.org/home/forms/sanjacintobattle>

Both the Texas Badge and the US Heritage Silver Award require a visit to a historic place or monument, and many of these outings can help meet that requirement. For the US Heritage Silver Award, most or all of the other requirements may be completed in a den meeting.

<http://www.samhoustonbsa.org/home/forms/texasbadge>

[http://nationstrails.com/awards/awards\\_USHSilver.html](http://nationstrails.com/awards/awards_USHSilver.html)

This is also a good time to double check with the ship about details of opportunities for service projects, just to make sure that the ship's office can schedule it and arrange for the staff to gather the necessary materials.

### **Step 5 – Identify meetings for collecting payment**

Once transportation and sightseeing options are chosen, all of the costs and agenda have been determined, and this is generally everything that parents need in order to decide whether to attend. So this is often the point at which payment may begin to be collected.

It's helpful to allow collection to occur over one month or more so that parents can provide payment at den and pack meetings and den leaders can bring payments to the pack committee meeting. This can make it easier for families, and in turn means more families are able to register. In the author's experience, very rarely do parents mail or drop off payments; so although there may be a few families who decide very late or miss meetings, mailing and drop-off are far less popular than having multiple opportunities for parents to provide payment at pack and den events.

### **Step 6 – Email Announcements**

For the reasons above, one should plan to send out a series of announcements: one initial announcement when the registration is made, another when payment collection begins, and an email before each den or pack meeting at which parents can pay. The announcements should include:

- Brief features of the ship and agenda/schedule
- Options for travel and additional attractions
- Meetings where payment will be collected.
- What to bring, which may include:

#### **Essential things to bring:**

- Sleeping bag or blanket and pillow
- Pajamas, toothbrush, and toiletries
- Boots or tennis shoes for safety onboard
- Field uniform for photos and flag ceremonies

#### **Recommended items:**

- flashlight
- insect repellent & sun block
- rain coat or warm jacket if needed
- snacks and drinks if allowed by the ship

#### **Prohibited items:**

- Electronic games and walkmans

The announcement emails should also outline meals onboard and clearly state the need for adults on fire watch so that they aren't surprised if there is a need to draft additional adults during the overnight.

When sleeping in crew bunks, for safety reasons, only adults sleep on the top bunks to avoid risk of Cub Scouts falling. That's actually a blessing, because the smaller spaces are more easily tolerated by Cub Scouts, and top bunks usually have greater space above and are less likely to promote claustrophobia in adults.

### **Step 7 – Get the tour permit**

These ships require an approved BSA tour permit upon arrival. This provides proof of group insurance. A local tour permit is sufficient for all of these ships because they are all within 500 miles – even the USS Alabama. A completed local tour permit application may be faxed to the Sam Houston Area Counsel at 713-865-9199 for approval. The local tour permit must be submitted two weeks in advance. In practice, it is far easier to simply submit it soon after making the first email announcement of the trip details and not worry about processing time. For trips over 500 a national tour permit would be required and must be submitted for approval four weeks in advance of the event.

#### **Some items needed for the tour permit include:**

- Tour leader and pack committee chair signatures.
- Confirmation of reading the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.
- A map of the route from departure to destination, as a separate page, submitted with the application.
- For Vans: rental company, model (15 passenger), driver's name, license number and insurance limits.

The ships require a liability disclaimer for each attendee. However, the liability disclaimers are not a replacement for the class 1 medical forms that ensure access to emergency medical care. According to Section 11 of the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, "It is recommended that unit leaders have a complete medical history and permission slip for every participant attending each Scouting activity. The medical history form and permission slip, in most cases, will allow emergency medical treatment to a youth member in case of injury or illness when a parent or guardian cannot be contacted."

The tour leader, Cubmaster or den leaders should arrange to have the set of hardcopy class 1 medicals forms readily accessible during the overnight, just as one would do for overnight camp outs. For example, consider how difficult it might be to have a parent incapacitated and in

need of emergency care if there is not another adult family member present to approve it. So, it is just as valuable to have class 1 medical forms for parents as it is for children. Guidelines also recommend having one CPR trained adult for every thirty attendees.

For overnights on these ships, the Sam Houston Area Counsel tour office does not require a tour permit to list adults who have current *Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation* training or *Outdoor Leader Skills for Webelos Leaders* training, unlike the requirement for overnight camp outs. However, both of these training courses provide valuable guidance on safety, including how to reduce risk, get permits, and handle medical emergencies.

### Step 8 – Collect payments

Even if the ship does not require advance payment, it is advisable for the pack to collect in advance. The Elissa and USS Kidd are the only ships that allow payment upon arrival, and they still require a significant minimum headcount of paid attendees. If families don't show up and don't pay, then the pack may have to pay for any shortfall below the minimum head count.

Time of payment is the best point at which to collect additional roster information needed for sleeping arrangements and awards. It may help to obtain:

- Full name of each attendee – for certificates
- Adult/sibling/Cub Scout den number – for awards, etc.
- Volunteers for fire watch
- Male/female – for berthing headcounts
- Paid/unpaid
- Class 1 medical forms, kept by pack, den or tour leader
- Ship's liability disclaimer – for quick check-in

Check-in will go much more smoothly if the ship's liability waivers are collected in advance. This also gives parents a chance to review the waiver and raise any concerns before the deadline to sign it. But these roster details can be sorted out by email as needed and forms can be signed upon arrival, whereas the timing of advance payments is a firm requirement dictated by the ship.

### Step 9 – Mail in advance payment by due date

All of the ships except the Elissa and USS Kidd require final payment in advance. Almost all advance payments are non-refundable; the exception is the USS Texas, which allows a few people to cancel and only forfeit only the 50% paid in advance. In practice, this is actually helpful in terms of avoiding risk of the pack failing to meet the minimum headcount.

| Ship      | Final Payment                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Texas     | 50% upon arrival               |
| Cavalla   | Remainder 30 days before visit |
| Elissa    | Remainder upon arrival         |
| Lexington | Remainder 60 days before visit |
| Kidd      | Remainder upon arrival         |
| Alabama   | Remainder 6 weeks before visit |

Advance payment is a far more accurate measure of headcount, whereas RSVPs can and do change subject to team sports schedules and professional demands. We recommend that packs collect final payment in advance even for the USS Kidd in order to ensure that the pack doesn't take on the risk of paying for cancellations that drop below the minimum headcount.

All of the ships allow changes in names on the roster. As long as the headcount isn't reduced, any changes in attendees can be made. That might make it tempting to have a waiting list of interested people, just in case people wish to cancel a non-refundable payment or when the maximum headcount is reached. However, in our experience, this has never been successful. When full payment in advance is non-refundable, families generally cancel only due to illness, when Cub Scouts become sick from colds and flu, in which case, families generally cancel only in the last three days before the outing. At this point, families on the waiting list will have already made other commitments and it is too late for them to change schedules in order to attend. So we have never found a waiting list to be effective. For that reason, it may set a far more realistic and accurate expectation to state a no-refund policy. Although this does not preclude making adjustments, it does avoid misunderstandings.

## Sample 'Recipe' Plans:

In this section, we consider additional details specific to each ship, followed by a sample email announcement of an overnight trip for that ship.

In practice, the email announcement to the pack is a critical part of the plan because it is the information that parents need in order to make an informed decision. If it is too long, parents ignore it. If it lacks details they may be unprepared. The announcement should include:

- Cost and deadline for payment
- Optional group travel and activities
- Agenda, Meals, What to bring
- Required paperwork, Directions

### Battleship USS Texas, Laporte, TX

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/battlesh> 281-479-2431



The battleship is docked at the San Jacinto battleground. There is a local award for a historic hike of

the battleground that is a wonderful way to fill the morning after an overnight on the ship. The Sam Houston Area Council web site has a PDF document (below) that describes the requirements and provides a step by step guide to conducting the hike. Patches for this award can then be picked up from the council office. Many families in the author's pack like to go to lunch after outings, and there is a seafood restaurant just down the street. After that, the Lynchburg ferry is just next door to the restaurant, and it is free.

**Sample Announcement:**

On <date> our pack will stay overnight on the Battleship USS Texas, the last of the battleships that participated in World War I and II. When commissioned in 1914, she was the most powerful weapon in the world. In 1919, Texas became the first U.S. battleship to launch an aircraft.

The cost is \$35 per person in advance, non-refundable. Please bring a check payable to "Pack <NNN>" to the den or pack meetings before <due date>, or mail to <address>. Space is limited to <reservation limit> people. Minimum age is 6.

Check in is at 6 pm at the picnic tables at the store beside the ship. Please RSVP if you would like to have hot dogs in the park at 4 pm. Adults, please RSVP if you can volunteer for fire watch during the night. Please complete and bring the attached form so we can check in quickly. Please bring a sleeping bag or blanket & pillow, flashlight, toothbrush, and drinks/snacks for the evening movie. Please wear boots or tennis shoes on the ship for safety. We will sleep in WWII crew bunks, three bunks high. Breakfast on the ship is served continental style, including cereal, milk, muffins, bananas, orange juice and coffee. Cubs please wear field uniforms for photos and the flag ceremonies. Cub Scouts will do a 'bright work' service project, polishing brass.

On Sunday, we will complete a 2.2 mile hike with various stops for discussion, to complete the San Jacinto Battleground Award and later, receive the patch. Please bring a water bottle, sun block, bug repellent, and a jacket for the hike. Afterward, everyone is welcome to join in for lunch at a well-known seafood restaurant, Monument Inn, just down the street. Families may order and pay separately. <http://www.monumentinn.com/menu.html>

**Sample Agenda:**

- 4 pm Sat optional - Hot dogs in the Park
- Meet at the picnic tables near the ship's store
- 6 pm Sat Battleship USS Texas Check-in
- Meet at the store in front of the ship
- 10 am Sun Historic Battleground Hike
- This completes the BSA San Jacinto Award
- 1 pm Sat optional - Lunch at the Monument Inn
- Just down the street.

**Submarine USS Cavalla, Galveston, TX**

<http://www.cavalla.org> 409-744-7854



Cub Scouts seem particularly impressed by sleeping on a submarine. The USS Cavalla is also less expensive than other ships as close to Houston. Although the maximum number of people sleeping on the submarine is limited to 40, another 30 people can sleep on the Destroyer Escort USS Stewart, parked beside. Due to damage by Hurricane Ike, 40 is the maximum number recommended due to limited space for gathering in the Destroyer for meals and watching the movie. For more than 40 people, meals and the movie are in shifts.

There are also some excellent outdoor mid-summer attractions, such as the beach and excellent indoor mid-summer attractions, such as the Flight Museum. For groups of 20 or more, the Flight Museum's group rate is \$4/child and \$5/adult. Together these make the USS Cavalla somewhat unique as a summertime favorite.

The Cavalla does not provide an evening meal, but rather allows attendees to order pizza delivered for dinner on the Destroyer Escort. Later in the evening, attendees may have snacks while watching a classic sub movie.

**Sample Announcement:**

On <date> our pack will stay overnight on the submarine USS Cavalla, originally a Gato class fleet sub, who on her maiden patrol, sank the 30,000 ton aircraft carrier Shokaku (veteran of Pearl Harbor and Battle of Coral Sea), earning her the Presidential Unit Citation. To meet the Soviet threat, she underwent conversion in 1952 to a new class of American sub - the SSK hunter/killer.

The cost is \$20 per person, non-refundable. Please bring a check payable to "Pack <NNN>" to the den or pack meetings or to <address> before <due date>. Space is limited to <reservation limit> people. Family members age 5 and over are welcome.

We will check-in at 5pm for orientation followed by a tour and then dinner. After dinner we will have more time to explore and then watch a movie before turning in for the night on the sub. The sleeping arrangements will be dormitory style with males in several larger compartments (torpedo and ward rooms) and females in officer's quarters. The next morning we'll explore the sub and destroyer escort and then have a flag ceremony before breakfast. Then we'll meet at the Lone Star a Museum near Moody gardens at about noon, where a docent will

give our group a tour. Admission to the Flight Museum is \$4/child and \$5/adult. <http://www.lsfm.org>

Those that wish to may stay and go to the beach as a group on Sunday afternoon. We recommend sun protection, bug spray and a water bottle.

Agenda:

2 pm – optional fishing at Seawolf Park jetties  
5 pm – check-in, orientation, tour and pizza dinner.  
9 pm – movie and snacks on USS Stewart  
11 pm - lights out for sleeping on submarine  
7 am – breakfast, flag raising, then free time on ships  
12 noon – Lone Star Flight Museum tour  
2 pm – optional lunch then the beach.

Please bring:

\$5/child and \$10/adult for pizza dinner  
\$4/child and \$5/adult for the Flight Museum  
Sleeping bag or blanket & pillow  
Drinks and snack for Sat evening movie  
Flashlight, bug spray, sun screen, hat  
Fishing gear for Saturday afternoon  
Money for optional lunch Sunday  
Cubs please wear pack t-shirts  
Directions: <http://www.cavalla.org/park.html>

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## 1877 Barque Elissa, Galveston, TX



The Elissa is completely different from other ships in many ways, including sleeping. Everyone sleeps out doors on the main deck, and space is relatively limited. So the best season to plan for the Elissa when the weather is consistently mild and cool at night. There many restaurants in walking distance, including a popular seafood restaurant, Hills, a just around the corner. The Galveston Railroad museum is a few blocks away and offers group discounts.

The Ocean Star Museum is a retired jack-up drilling rig docked next to the Elissa. It offers a video about the offshore industry, three floors of models and interactive displays on oil exploration and production, and actual drill bits and remotely-operated vehicles. For a fee, it conducts scout specific classes that meet requirements for the Webelos Scout Geologist Activity Badges. <http://www.oceanstaroec.com>

## Sample Announcement:

On <date> our pack will stay overnight on the Elissa, an original 205 foot three-masted, iron-hulled sailing ship built in 1877, carrying nineteen sails covering over one-quarter of an acre in surface area. <http://www.galvestonhistory.org/tsm-educational-programs.asp>

The cost is \$40 per person, non-refundable. Please bring a check payable to "Pack <NNN>" to the den or pack meetings or to <address> before <due date>. Space is limited to <reservation limit> people. Cub scouts and family members age 8 and over are welcome.

We will check in at 6:30 pm and hear a safety lecture, followed by an Elissa restoration film. Activities include Knots, set and douse the Elissa staysail, line handling, and sea chanties with a break for hardtack and lemonade. We will have breakfast at 7 am, and then hoist ensign, Cleanup and discuss overnight log entries. After 9 am is free time for touring the ship and gift shop.

Sunday morning we tour the Galveston Railroad museum. <http://www.galvestonrrmuseum.com> Admission is \$2.50/child and \$5.50/adult. After this, families may tour and/or meet for lunch on the stand.

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## USS Lexington, Corpus Christi, TX



If you submit a reservation online via the web site and you opt to mail in a check, they advise that it is best to print out a hardcopy of the confirmation and mail that in with the check so they have sufficient information to credit the reservation. The Lexington does not allow any outside food on-board because they have a full cafeteria, food court and vending machines. They ask to be advised of any attendees with food allergies or medical conditions. The deposit is non-refundable; however, they allow the reservation date to be changed a single time. If the reservation is changed twice, the reservation deposit is forfeited and must be paid again.

Wesley United Methodist Church has an inexpensive hostel (\$15/ea) with two dorm style bunk rooms that each sleep 18 plus a large full kitchen (see <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/wesley-corpuschristi/>). The Texas State Aquarium is a few blocks from the ship and offers those wearing a Lexington wrist band a discount of \$7.75/child

\$12.50/adult (see <http://www.texasstateaquarium.org/>). With one week advance reservation at 361-881-1307 or [reserve@txstateaq.org](mailto:reserve@txstateaq.org), the group rate is \$5/boy \$9.50/adult. Across the bridge, the Corpus Christi Museum of Science has replicas of Columbus' ships, the Pinta and Santa Maria, rebuilt by the Spanish government (see <http://www.ccmuseumedres.com/columbus.htm>).

**Sample Announcement:**

On Sat. <date>, our pack will stay overnight on the aircraft carrier USS Lexington. Commissioned in 1943, she served longer and set more records than any carrier in U.S. Naval history. <http://www.ussexington.com/>

The cost is \$49 per person, non-refundable. Please bring a check payable to "Pack <NNN>" to the den or pack meetings before <due date>, or mail to <address>. Space is limited to <reservation limit> people. Minimum age is 5. Moms, daughters, and siblings are welcome.

We have optional Friday overnight accommodations near the Lexington at Wesley United Methodist Church's hostel. They have two rooms with 18 bunk beds each, plus showers and a full large kitchen. The cost is \$15 each. Those leaving Friday will tour the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History including Columbus sailing ship replicas and cargo items from three Spanish treasure ships that ran aground on Padre Island in 1554.. <http://www.ccmuseumedres.com/columbus.htm>

Optional fifteen passenger van transportation is \$23 each if leaving Saturday and \$29 each if leaving Friday. Please pay by check to <pack> at any pack events or drop off a check to <address> prior to the due date, <due date>.

Agenda if leaving Friday:

- 5 pm Friday - Vans depart scout house
- 9 pm Fri - overnight at Wesley Methodist Church Hostel
- 7 am - breakfast then tour Columbus' sailing ships

Agenda if leaving Saturday:

- 7 am Sat – Vans depart scout house
- 11 am - Check-in curbside in front of the ship
- 10 am Sun - depart ship, free time on beach
- 2 pm - leave Corpus
- 6 pm - Vans arrive at Scout House

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## Destroyer USS Kidd, Baton Rouge, LA



The USS Kidd is the only ship that does not require final payment in advance. This can mean a lot of last

minute cancellations. Packs should request a separate berthing compartment for females if there are any present, according to the rules in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. The Kidd will not guarantee them a separate compartment unless it is requested at time of reservation.

With a headcount of 75 people, the USS Kidd allows an exclusive overnight, and this affords some extra flexibility in terms of letting Cub Scouts explore the ship. Note that Cub Scouts should always be attended by at least two adults according 'two deep leadership' rules. A single adult may only be alone with family members.

There are many great museums within five miles of the USS Kidd, including the 'Louisiana Museum of Art and Science' about a block away, on the same side of the street. There is a McDonalds five blocks from the ship.

**Sample Announcement:**

On <date> our pack will spend Saturday night on the Fletcher-class destroyer USS Kidd, the "Pirate of the Pacific," one of the most authentic and accurate restorations in the Historic Fleet. We will tour her decks and see over 50 inner spaces, including the Officer's wardroom, sickbay, radio central, berthing areas, and the ammunition handling rooms. <http://www.ussskidd.com/>

The cost is \$18 each upon arrival, plus an optional \$3 for 'big breakfast' rather than a sausage & biscuit breakfast. Minimum age is 6 and siblings are welcome!

It's a 5 hr drive straight down I10 to Baton Rouge. We have 15 passenger vans in order to avoid fatigued dads driving on the return trip. If you would like a ride, please bring a check for \$23 each to the pack meeting.

We will visit the Louisiana Art and Science Museum and Planetarium on Saturday afternoon, before boarding the ship. They are one block from the ship. The group rate is \$4, plus optional \$2 for the planetarium show. [http://www.lasm.org/stage/html/mn\\_pt\\_galleries.html](http://www.lasm.org/stage/html/mn_pt_galleries.html)

Agenda:

- 8:00 am Leave from Scout House
- 2:00 pm Art & Science Museum & Planetarium show
- 5:30 pm dinner - McDonald's
- 6:30 pm orientation & tour of USS Kidd
- 8:00 pm scavenger hunt
- 7:30 am Breakfast in the Museum
- 9:00 am Flag ceremony, free time on the ship
- 6:00 pm arrive at Scout House

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## Battleship USS Alabama, Mobile, AL



The USS Alabama is a 7 to 10 hour drive. It allows later check in, prior to 8 pm, however travel should be

done in daylight only. The Alabama, unlike others, offers only single-sex sleeping facilities, so only males may sleep on the ship. Moms and daughters may sleep at the Best Western Battleship Inn (251-432-2703), within walking distance, and pay \$10/day for admission. The overnight cost includes a tour of the Battleship USS Alabama, Submarine USS Drum, Aircraft Pavilion, and Nature Observatory. The ship does not provide meals, however it has a snack bar. Microwaves are available aboard ship and barbecue grills are available in the park. Pizza delivery is available.

The author has not conducted this trip due to the three day duration and cost. Charter coach would be far more comfortable, but costs were double, per person, over vans.

#### **Sample Announcement:**

On <dates> our pack will spend Sat. and Sun. night on the Battleship USS Alabama. She saw 37 months of active duty during World War II, earning nine Battle Stars. Armed with nine, 16-inch guns in three turrets and 20, 5-inch, .38-caliber guns in 10 twin mounts, USS Alabama main batteries could fire shells as heavy as a small car accurately for a distance of more than 20 miles. On Sunday we will have tours and free time on the USS Alabama, USS Drum submarine, aircraft and tanks at our leisure. <http://www.ussalabama.com>

The cost is \$36 each adult and child for two nights, non-refundable. Family members age 6 and older are welcome; however, per ship policy, only males may sleep aboard with Cub Scouts. Females may sleep at the Best Western Battleship Inn, 251-432-2703, in walking distance, and pay \$10/day admission.

It's an 8 hr drive. We will travel in 15 passenger vans in order to avoid fatigued dads, esp. on the return trip at a cost of \$34 each. Cost for meals is <amount>. Please pay <total fee> by check to <pack> at any pack events or drop off a check to <address> prior to the due date, <due date>.

#### **Agenda:**

9 am Sat Vans depart from Scout House, 1hr lunch stop  
5 pm check-in, orientation & pizza onboard USS Alabama  
8 pm play time, scavenger hunt, then lights out  
7 am Sun Breakfast, Flag ceremony and tours ships  
6pm pizza onboard, movie, games, then lights out  
7 am breakfast, check out and load vans  
9 am Mon Vans depart USS Alabama, 1hr lunch stop  
5 pm Vans arrive at Scout House.

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#### **Disclaimer**

This guide is provided only as a best-effort at the time it was written. Almost all quoted costs are group rates that depend on a minimum head count, and may increase at any time. Because details will change with time, one should use this for comparison purposes and verify details with the ship's web site or staff. Your mileage may vary according to the makeup of your pack. So it may be useful to discuss needs of your families with the ship, and research options that suit the unique families in your pack.

For questions about policy, please rely on the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and your local BSA council camping office, and more specifically, the council tour permit staff. The author is not BSA staff, nor sufficiently trained to make statements about BSA policy beyond quoting current standards. Any statements here about policy are merely observations of local procedures as experienced by the author.

#### **Acknowledgments**

Alice Hamilton was the author's Troop Guide for Wood Badge course SR-826, and this guide was written for partial completion of that course. Alice provided friendship, constant encouragement and invaluable insights into unique ways that 'scouting values' can be incorporated into each activity. Fritz Maxwell and Brigitte Therivel provided inspiration as examples of devotion to scouting. Gigi White was Pack 130 Committee Chair, and she provided support for conducting many of these trips.

#### **References**

The *Guide to Safe Scouting* helps ensure safety for outings: <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS>

The *Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation* syllabus has safety procedures and age appropriate activities:

<http://www.scouting.org/cubscouts/training/baloo.aspx>

A local tour permit application may done online via [myscouting.org](http://myscouting.org), or faxed to the Sam Houston Area Counsel at 713-865-9199 for approval.

<https://samhoustonbsa.org/home/camping/tourpermits>

#### **Links to Attractions by Distance:**

Laporte, 29 mi:

San Jacinto Battleground <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park>

USS Texas: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/battlesh>

The San Jacinto Award and Patch:

<https://samhoustonbsa.org/home/forms/sanjacintobattle>

Galveston, 56 mi:

Submarine Cavalla: <http://www.cavalla.org/>

The Elissa: <http://www.galvestonhistory.org/tsm-educational-programs.asp>

Lone Star Flight Museum: <http://www.lsfm.org/>

Ocean Star oil rig: <http://www.oceanstaroec.com/>

Corpus Christi, 203 mi:

USS Lexington: <http://www.usslexington.com/>

Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History:

<http://www.ccmuseumedres.com>

Baton Rouge, LA, 276 mi:

The Destroyer USS Kidd: <http://www.usskidd.com/>

Louisiana Art and Science Museum and Planetarium:

[http://www.lasm.org/stage/html/mn\\_pt\\_galleries.html](http://www.lasm.org/stage/html/mn_pt_galleries.html)

Mobile, AL, 476 mi:

USS Alabama: <http://www.ussalabama.com/>