

WITH THE KIDS

Putting the fun in ocean sciences

Children climb on board the Indies Trader for a big lesson in conservation.

By Steve Baltin
Special to The Times

June 30, 2005

Bright blue and orange and painted to look like the leg tattoo of a Polynesian chief named Roonui, the 75-foot dive-and-survey boat the Indies Trader stands out in any marina. But it's the Quiksilver Crossing name (the moniker of the worldwide journey the boat has taken) that attracts kids of all ages.

"It's amazing how many people recognize this boat," said Mark Healy, a pro surfer who periodically travels with the boat. "You can go anywhere and you have random people paddling out to the boat, talking to the crew. It's a pretty famous thing."

Built in 1970 as a salvage boat, the Indies Trader is devoted to exploring the globe for uncharted surf breaks, as well as educating visitors on conservation and researching coral reefs. The vessel has logged 93,072 nautical miles since it was launched in Australia in March 1999 — and this summer it is making its first foray to the West Coast of the U.S.

"This whole thing is really to bring more awareness to what we've been doing the last five years with this boat," said John Rose, a pro surfer from Laguna Beach. "A lot of individual boat captains are going around searching for surf, but that [Quiksilver] chose to make it such a big priority commercially and bring awareness to so many cool things that we get to experience through these tours on the boat and from us is really cool."

Kids, and even their parents, agree. Last week as the boat was docked near the Ocean Institute in Dana Point, a group of four boys admired the Trader. "There it is, the Quiksilver," one said.

"A lot of the surfing fraternity know about the boat anyway," said Simone Kelly, a 25-year-old Australian who serves as part-time host on the boat. "They've seen it in magazines, they've seen it in surf movies, they've seen it in feature films."

Because of the iconic name of Quiksilver (an apparel and accessories manufacturer) in the surf community — and the boat's reputation (not to mention cool paint job) — Quiksilver Crossing has street cred with kids.

On board for an impromptu tour after a visit to the Ocean Institute, a group of fifth-graders from Carrillo Elementary survey the boat. "It's awesome," Ben Guilhur said.

"It's like a house," exclaimed Rainer Sherwood as classmates peer into a storage area that contains fishing poles, DVDs and surfboards from the likes of Kelly Slater. The group also toured the engine room, lone bathroom and kitchen before climbing stairs to the captain's quarters, which contains a bed, a plasma TV and an enormous steering wheel salvaged from an old Japanese cargo vessel.

"The steering wheel is huge," said Kelsey Roualdes. "I've never seen one so big."

Quiksilver and other organizations, such as the Ocean Institute and Reef Check, a group dedicated to surveying coral around the world, are using that hip factor to make marine biology, conservation and environmental awareness cool.

"You've got this corporate model that's sort of involved in a larger sense in giving back to the community at large," said Bob Forest, a marine biologist with Reef Check who is traveling with the boat on the U.S. leg of its journey. "So kids will get on this boat, be psyched on surfing, and then you get them involved in giving back that way. And that's a really special thing that's unique about this boat."

Quiksilver usually coordinates the boat's visits with surf camps (dates in California are still to be determined). The lure of spending the day with professional surfers such as Rose, Healy and Meleana White — all of whom have worked as instructors at the camps — proves irresistible to aspiring surfers.

Healy said the turnout on the East Coast leg was amazing. "It'd be a couple of days where first thing in the morning it was foggy, windy, rainy and freezing, I'm in a full suit and there are 8-year-olds in just surf shorts standing out, turning purple, but they just want to go in," he said. "I'm sure there will be a lot of eager kids here too."

Even without the surfing or surfers, the message of the tour hits home for some.

Meg Marcum, a 14-year-old on board with her father, Steve, and 14-year-old cousin Madison, instantly snapped up the cards, to learn more about Reef Check as Forest wrapped up his brief lecture on the organization's goals.

"I think it's interesting to figure out what's out there," Meg said.

And for those not as interested in conservation, there's always the allure of the high seas. Said Madison: "It would be cool just to go travel around the world in a boat."

Steve Baltin can be reached at weekend@latimes.com.

*

Quiksilver Crossing

The Indies Trader makes several more Southern California stops. Public access and tours have yet to be scheduled for some stops; visit <http://www.quiksilver.com> for updates:

- **Newport Beach:** Newport Harbor Nautical Museum, 151 E. Coast Highway. Today through Sunday. Viewing: 9-11 a.m. today. Educational tour: 10:30 a.m.-noon Friday.
- **Marina del Rey:** Ritz Carlton, 4375 Admiralty Way. Wednesday through July 11. Viewing hours and tours to be determined.
- **Malibu:** July 8. Anchored off Point Dume. No onshore events.
- **Huntington Beach:** The Indies Trader will visit the U.S. Open of Surfing (July 26-Aug. 7). Exact dates and public access to be determined.

Background: To see the ship's log and read archived data, visit thecrossing.quiksilver.com.

To learn more about coral reef preservation: <http://www.reefcheck.org> .

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.

TMSReprints

Article licensing and reprint options

Copyright 2005 Los Angeles Times | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)
[Home Delivery](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Archives](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Help](#)

PARTNERS:

