

9 Fun Facts About Cargo Ships (*Clickable for testing*)

1. **We've Been Shipping for Over 3,000 Years**

Ancient Polynesians were voyaging thousands of miles across the Pacific as early as 1200 BCE using nothing but celestial navigation, bird behavior, and wave patterns.

Source: <https://hokulea.com/polynesian-wayfinding>

2. **The Age of Sail Exploded Global Shipping**

Global maritime shipping really accelerated after 1492, as European powers launched wave after wave of transoceanic expeditions during the Age of Sail (1500s–1800s).

Source: <https://time.com/5697768/ocean-exploration-beyond-columbus>

3. **Santa Maria Was Tiny Compared to Treasure Ships**

Columbus's Santa Maria was about 80 feet long and held ~100 tons. Zheng He's treasure ships were over 250 feet long, carried 15× more cargo, and had crews in the hundreds.

Sources:

<https://www.thoughtco.com/zheng-hes-treasure-ships-195235>

[https://kids.kiddle.co/Santa_Mar%C3%ADA_\(ship\)](https://kids.kiddle.co/Santa_Mar%C3%ADA_(ship))

4. **From Sails to Coal to Diesel—and Back Again**

Sailing ruled for centuries, but steamships and then diesel power changed everything. Now, thanks to climate and fuel concerns, wind is coming back in high-tech form.

Sources:

<https://www.historyhit.com/a-timeline-of-the-development-of-maritime-steam-power>

<https://www.dnv.com/maritime/insights/topics/waps-wind-assisted-propulsion-systems>

5. **Modern Ships Are Floating Skyscrapers**

The MSC Irina and similar vessels are over 1,300 feet long, haul 240,000 tons, and are run by just 20–30 crew thanks to automation and efficient navigation systems.

Source: <https://www.shiphub.co/msc-irina>

6. **They Haul Almost Everything**

Today's cargo ships carry phones, cars, turbines, prefab buildings, bananas, raw metals, and even roller coaster parts—basically, if it fits, it ships.

Source: <https://www.freightos.com/freight-resources/container-shipping-guide>

7. **Global Fleet: 50,000 Ships, Millions of Crew**

Roughly 50,000 merchant ships are active today, employing about 1.9 million people and transporting more than 90% of global goods.

Sources:

<https://www.ics-shipping.org/shipping-fact/shipping-and-world-trade-driving-prosperity>

<https://unctad.org/news/90-world-trade-ships>

8. **Fuel Burn Is Staggering**

One big ship can use 200 tons of fuel a day. Multiply that by tens of thousands, and you get a rough picture of why cleaner propulsion matters.

Source: <https://supplychaindigital.com/logistics/a-sea-shipping-timeline-from>

9. **Modern Sails Are Back**

High-tech sails are saving fuel. The Pyxis Ocean used “WindWings” on a test voyage and cut diesel usage by around 15%—part of a growing trend to clean up shipping.

Sources:

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-a-warming-planet/the-climate-crisis-gives-sailing-ships-a-second-wind>

<https://www.bar-technologies.com/news/windwings-pyxis-ocean-maiden-voyage>