

Sail of the century!

The Tall Ships Races' 2008 gave Liverpool one million reasons to be proud

Capital of Culture wouldn't have been complete without a major maritime event at Liverpool's world-famous waterfront.

The Tall Ships' Races was just that event. Liverpool was the host port for the start of The 2008 Races. And the arrival of the show-stopping extravaganza on the Mersey in July was the year's most attended event - with over a million people converging on the city's docks.

Crowds, 10-deep in places, crammed onto the waterfront at the Dock and ACC Liverpool to see one of the largest fleets of Tall Ships ever assembled on British waters.

The free, four-day event, launched by Princess Royal, HRH Princess Anne - featured over 70 vessels, crewed by 3,000 young people from more than 30 countries.

Major Class A Tall Ships, such as the UK's Lord Nelson, Germany's Alexander Von Humboldt and Mexico's Cuauthemoc, were berthed in the Wellington and Sandon half-tide docks. Smaller class B, C and D vessels were berthed at Albert, Salthouse, Canning and Canning half-tide docks.

Among the crews were 50 Liverpool youngsters, who won a competition organised by the city council to race on the Tall Ship Starvos Niarchos. The competition was the culmination of a four-year sail training programme which placed 200 young Liverpoolians on Tall Ships' Races.

Visitors were able to climb aboard the ships and find out more about the realities of life at sea. And they were wowed by street entertainment, aerobic displays and the colourful Shanties '08 Music Festival.

The event reached a triumphant climax with the stunning Parade of Sail. Crowds lined both sides of the river and also gathered on Waterloo and Crosby beaches to see the vessels - many of which fired a salute to the city as they sailed past.

Then - it was over. The fleet left Liverpool to embark on a challenging voyage, battling it out over 600 miles of open sea to the finish line at Maloy in Norway.

And when the Tall Ships waved goodbye to Liverpool, they left in their wake one of '08's most unforgettable experiences as well as an estimated £30 million boost to the city's economy.

