

# Ty Warner Hotels & Resorts, LLC Media Monitoring Report

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Photo: Paul Wellman

## On the Big Ship

*Indy* Reporter Steps Onto the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan

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By [Chris Meagher](#) ([Contact](#))

*"If we have learned anything these last eight years, it's that peace through strength works."*

— President Ronald Reagan, in a radio address on Sept. 24, 1988

"Peace through strength" is the slogan for the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan, the **most recently commissioned aircraft carrier in the United States Naval Fleet**, and now, after taking a tour with other media on Friday, I understand why. The massive ship dwarfs anything near it even when anchored more than a mile off the coast of Santa Barbara. **"This ship will deter war just by its presence,"** said public affairs officer **Donnie Ryan**, who was my tour guide of the ship.

The tour didn't vary too far from what I imagined the ship, which is stationed in San Diego normally, to be like, but to be on such a massive floating object certainly was exhilarating. After stepping off the boat that took us to the back of a carrier, where we stepped off onto a floating mini-barge next to the carrier and then onto the ship, we wandered through some of the halls of the ship until we ended up in Hangar Bay 3. There are three bays in the ship where aircraft are worked on. Hangar Bay 3 had been cleaned up and looked good in preparation for ceremonies to take place later this weekend. **The room reminded me of a large gymnasium, and large flags hung from the tall ceiling.** The floor was black and bumpy, made out of a sort of pavement, that had lumps throughout it. The material was called non-skid, created to provide more friction than regular pavement.

## Photo Gallery

USS Ronald Reagan



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We left the Hangar Bay and headed into the innards of the ship, climbing a long series of grated, metal stairs to our next destination. We began on the main level of the ship, with nine levels above and nine below. **Counting the tower and radar antennas above even that, the ship registers at about 21 stories.** As we make our ways through the halls, which aren't wide enough for two people to walk next to one another comfortably, a series of pipes and wires runs along the

ceiling as well, making sure there is water where the needs to be water and fuel where there needs to be fuel. **Ryan tells us that, much as how everyone in the Army is a soldier, everyone in the Navy is a fireman.**

The next thing I know, we reach our destination, open a door, and the expansive flight deck is in front of us. Though empty of aircraft, the deck is busy with activity, with tours going on, and workers in different colored vests directing traffic, cleaning, or making sure everything is in order. The carrier is **1,096 feet—more than three football fields—long**, and took roughly five years and **47,000 tons of structural steel and one million pounds of aluminum to build**. The flight deck itself is four-and-a-half acres large. When supplied with aircraft, the ship can hold up to 80 in its fleet, including F/A-18 Hornets, C-2A Greyhounds, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets and EA-6B Prowlers. Our visit Friday yielded an empty flight deck, although we did see some helicopters in action. With no aircraft crews on board, the ship's **population is roughly 3,600**. Should the ship have aircraft onboard, such as a time as combat deployment, the population jumps to **about 5,000**, said Ryan, who has been in the Navy for 17 years, has so far spent two-and-a-half on the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan. **“When we go around the world people know the name Ronald Reagan because he was a world leader,”** Ryan explains. The ship was named by Congress and agreed upon by President Bill Clinton, making it the first aircraft carrier to ever bear the name of a currently living president. The ship, christened on March 4, 2001, has gone on two deployments, one in 2006 and the other last year to Asia. The crew is prepping for another deployment, which should commence in the late spring early summer.

The deck has four catapults, which are 175 feet long. **The steam-powered catapults thrust an aircraft from zero to 165 miles per hour in two seconds.** Standing in the small area which allow for the planes to land, Ryan explains that each aircraft has a hook which is used to catch one of three steel cables stretched across the deck, bringing the planes from 150 miles per hour to a halt in just 300 feet. Across the deck we can see knee-high windows peeking over the side of the deck. From there the catapults are run, Ryan said. You can notice the up-and-down movement caused by the ocean current. After leaving the flight deck, we took another series of steps up to what Ryan called **“Vultures Row,”** an outdoor hallway where we watched from above two helicopters take off from the flight deck. From there we headed into the primary flight control station, where Lt. Commander **Chris Burks** explained how they were in charge of everything that landed and took off on the ship, essentially the equivalent to a flight tower at an airport. **“I’m still amazed at what I see,” he said.**

From there we head back down, making a stop in one of four mess halls where crews can get a meal 22 hours out of the day. Because the ship is always running, some people are eating breakfast when some are grabbing dinner before bed. There are two major galleys where food is prepared for salad bars, speed lines filled with hot dogs and hamburgers, and normal eating lines. The ship recently was awarded for its food service. On the same floor is medical and dental offices. The mess hall was the last stop on a nearly two-and-a-half hour tour of the ninth ship in the Nimitz-class aircraft carriers.

We made our way back down to the Hangar Bay and out to the floating barge, where we waited in line with sailors eager to get off the ship they call home, and onto shore to partake in a meal and fun with fellow Santa Barbarans. Events were planned all weekend for the service men and women, including games in the park, service trips around Santa Barbara, and a concert Saturday night.

