

# Frequent Flyer®

MAKING THE BEST OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

by [Paul Burnham Finney](#)

**HISTORY AFLOAT:** Not all your hours in Washington (see city profile) have to be spent jousting with bureaucrats or unscrambling red tape. You can cut out of the mess and see how past occupants of the White House enjoyed some R&R while cruising the Potomac or Chesapeake Bay aboard the former presidential yacht, the U.S.S. Sequoia. It's a museum-quality charmer in shipshape condition waiting at the Washington Marina to host high-level corporate groups and incentive winners who want the thrill of reliving a lot of White House history while talking business or simply enjoying the fruits of their selling talents.

When you charter the Sequoia—\$12,500 for a four-hour cruise—it's not the Mickey Mouse you encounter on a corporate excursion to Disney World.

Among the boldface names that have partied on board: former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, Vice-President Richard Cheney, Texas Instruments, Wells Fargo and the Dresdner Bank..

The 104-foot "graceful piece of the furniture of our history," as *The New York Times* described the yacht, was built in 1925 for a Philadelphia banker and sold to the federal government during Prohibition for use in a sting against rumrunners. Then it fell into presidential hands when Herbert Hoover took on the Sequoia to replace a yacht three times its size and inappropriate for the chief executive's image during the Depression.

Open the Sequoia's lockbox of memories, and if the yacht has ears, it has had plenty to hear over the years. In Washington's pre-air conditioned days **Franklin D. Roosevelt** fished, entertained and debated aboard the yacht with General Dwight Eisenhower and Winston Churchill. (An elevator was installed to accommodate FDR's wheelchair, later replaced by **Lyndon Johnson** with a bar that was in the yacht's original design.) **Harry S. Truman** supposedly decided to use the atomic bomb against Japan while on the Sequoia (which hosted Japanese Emperor Hirohito when he was visiting Gerald R. Ford in 1975). **John F. Kennedy** had his last birthday on the Sequoia. And in 1973, according to yacht lore, **Richard M. Nixon**, a Sequoia fan, discussed a Cold War détente with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on shipboard. In 1974, with the Watergate scandal bubbling, the beleaguered president spent a night playing the Sequoia's piano and drinking whisky before announcing his resignation.

In a move to help bury the notion of an "imperial presidency," **Jimmy Carter** sent the Sequoia into near-retirement in 1977, letting it languish in a Norfolk drydock even as it earned status as a National Historic Landmark in 1985. Not long after that accolade, with friends of **Bill Clinton** angling to ship the yacht to Little Rock for display on the Arkansas River, Maryland entrepreneur Gary Silversmith, who had been collecting presidential memorabilia since age 14, picked it up for about \$2 million and began raising \$5 million to operate the motor yacht under the aegis of the Sequoia Presidential Yacht Foundation.

Come up with the scratch, and you too can have the storybook motor yacht all to yourself—along with a capacity gathering of up to 49 executives and salespeople. (Call 202-333-0011 or visit [www.sequoiayacht.com](http://www.sequoiayacht.com) for details and booking.) Guests often provide their own catered buffet for dining or nibbling.

Note the smokestack used by Nixon as an improvised screen to watch movies and a table scarred by a cigar cutter Truman purportedly wielded when he got mad during a poker game. Just things to tell the folks back at the office or out on the fairways about your strenuous trip to D.C.