

Western Flyer set to return to Mexico, and you can join the journey

By CHRIS COUNTS

FAMOUS FOR carrying writer John Steinbeck and marine biologist Doc Ricketts on a scientific voyage to the Gulf of California 85 years ago, the Western Flyer is headed there again in April 2025, and members of the public can be part of the adventure.

To help raise money for its research and educational efforts, the Western Flyer Foundation is chartering a small cruise ship, the Safari Voyager, that will accompany the Western Flyer for 10 days when it returns to Mexico. Spots for singles and couples are available, with costs ranging from \$14,000 for a solo traveler with the most basic room, to \$30,000 for a couple in the best room.

During the 10-day trip, the Western Flyer will explore some of the same collecting sites Steinbeck and Ricketts

the Gulf of California in 1940. While Ricketts collected samples of marine life, Steinbeck used the trip as inspiration for his book, “Sea of Cortez,” which came out in 1941. A second book, “The Log from the Sea of Cortez,” was published in 1951.

Time took a toll on the boat, and by 2015 it was

described as “almost beyond repair.” But that didn’t deter marine geologist John Gregg from buying it for \$1 million and launching an ambitious effort to restore it. Gregg founded the Western Flyer Foundation to guide the

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PHOTO/WESTERN FLYER FOUNDATION

Eighty-five years after its famous voyage to the Sea of Cortez, the Western Flyer will return there early next year.

visited in 1940. Snorkeling, kayaking, paddleboarding, stargazing, yoga and gourmet meals are also part of the package.

The boat will leave Old Fisherman’s Wharf in Monterey in mid-March. The Safari Voyager will meet the historic research vessel in La Paz the following month and accompany it on a trip around the gulf, which is also known as the Sea of Cortez.

Built in Tacoma, Wash., in 1937 for Monterey’s sardine-fishing industry, the 77-foot fishing ship gained fame after Steinbeck and Ricketts took it on a six-week trip to

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FLYER

From page 15A

project, and eventually raised about \$5 million for the work, which included installing a hybrid diesel-electric engine and a state-of-the-art marine lab.

Eight years after the work to restore the ship began, the Western Flyer returned to Monterey to great fanfare last November when Congressman Jimmy Panetta and other local leaders welcomed it with a ceremony, a boat parade and a party.

Fundraising auction

To pay for the boat’s upkeep and raise money for its research and education programs, the Western Flyer Association is presenting an online auction through Sept. 30.

The highlight of the auction is a chartered trip through Monterey Bay aboard the Western Flyer for 20, with bidding starting at \$10,000.

In addition, the foundation’s executive director Sherry Flumerfelt said the auction is “bursting with creative gifts and experiences.”

“We’ve curated auction items that are fun, creative, and even a little bit quirky, offering participants a chance to immerse themselves in that Western Flyer magic, while helping us maintain the boat and provide free programs for local students,” Flumerfelt said.

To see the auction, visit westernflyer.org.

CHARTER

From page 13A

“There is ample turnover of council members without term limits,” the opponents write. “Long-term council members have lost their election in the past when voters decided a change was needed.”

They also point to numerous accomplishments shepherded by longtime members, including the Monterey Sports Center and Windows on the Bay Park.

Measure X, along with the three other measures, will be discussed during the Sept. 11 session, which runs from 6 to 7 p.m. in Steinbeck 1 at the Monterey Conference Center at the foot of Alvarado Street.

The talk will cover what the proposed charter amendments would mean to the people of the City of Monterey and will offer an opportunity for staff to answer questions from members of the public.

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