

Yachting Southern Style

Learn to sail in historic Charleston Harbor. >> by **GRANT CLAUSER**



THE OCEAN HOLDS A MAGICAL APPEAL TO MANY PEOPLE. WHETHER IT'S THE BRINY SMELL, THE SAND UNDERFOOT OR THE MUSIC OF WAVES ON WARM SUMMER EVENINGS, there's nothing like spending quality time, especially with family, at the ocean. For those daring few, spending time actually *on* the ocean adds an even more intimate level of enjoyment. And what better way to do that than sailing, catching a breeze and running with it using the same skills practiced by sailors for thousands of years?

Contrary to popular belief, sailing really isn't that difficult, especially if you learn the, ahem, ropes from a qualified teacher in a spot as scenic and historically rich as Charleston Harbor, S.C. Ned Goss, five-time U.S. National Champion in the Fireball Class and president of Ocean Sailing Academy, says he

can teach virtually anyone to sail.

"Just about everybody enjoys sailing," says Ned, who's sailing school is situated at the tip of Patriot's Point, just minutes from the hustle and history of downtown Charleston. Sailing appeals to people on many levels, from those looking for a healthy outdoor activity to those looking for a more personal experience with the sea, as well as families looking for something they can all participate in together. And you don't even need your own boat to do it. "About 75 percent of the people who come through here don't own a boat or intend to buy one," he says. "They charter through us or join the College of Charleston Sailing Association or rent a Beneteau from the islands for a week." An organization called Sailtime (www.sailtime.com), a fractional sailing program, like a boat co-op,





offers memberships in fully-equipped Hunter sailboats.

Ocean Sailing Academy is located within the marina of the Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina. The resort offers luxury rooms and suites, a gourmet restaurant, full-service marina and easy access to several low-country golf courses.

Ned got hooked on sailing at 10-years-old (he chose that over tennis because he didn't like wearing white tennis shorts) and has hardly been away from the water since. He started teaching sailing at 14, began at Ocean Sailing Academy in 1999 and bought the school in 2006. The school now has 12 instructors.

Ned emphasizes that while many of his students do get hooked on sailing and make it a lifetime hobby, sailing classes are also a great way to experience the ocean during a family vacation. Considering that Charleston and its surrounding barrier islands (such as Isle of Palms, Sullivan's Island and James Island) are popular vacation destinations for both South Carolinians and visitors from distant states, Ocean Sailing Academy does a brisk business with visitors.

Recently, Ned says he had two fathers come through the Academy's Basic Keelboat and Basic Cruising classes, then return with their wives and kids for the Learn to Crew class, with the fathers acting as skippers. "That gave them the confidence and ability to take a cruising boat out on their own," he says. Usually, he says, the goal of families learning to sail is to eventually charter a boat to go island hopping for a week in the British Virgin Islands. He offers a package of courses to that end that includes 18 days of instruction for \$3,995 that will get families

on their way to strutting the deck with confidence.

For complete newbies, Ned suggests the Learn to Sail course, a three-hour class that he offers most evenings at 5:30, making it perfect for locals or vacationers who want to get out after the hot Charleston sun has started to fade. Then he says, the Learn to Crew class teaches all of the mechanisms of running the boat, from lines and winches to tacking and jibbing. For people looking for more advanced instruction, OSA offers courses that will get you to a U.S. Sailing certification. There are also options for an ocean passage course for true adventurers. All of the instruction is done on a boat except for a separate two-day navigation course. And if all you want to do is take a harbor cruise to enjoy the scenery while someone else does all the work, OSA can do that to.

The school also offers a women-only course, taught by women. "Some women feel they learn better with other women," Ned says. On the other hand, he encourages couples to sail together as a great way to grow closer.

While students are welcome to show up in their own boats, most instruction is performed on one of OSA's five Yachts. The school has two small 26-foot Colgate keelboats with outboard engines, a 24-foot Meglos, a 33-foot J105, a 33-foot Beneteau plus a 38-foot Catalina. They're all roomy enough for crew and students to get around in, plus as keelboats, they're weighted at the bottom and therefore can't tip over.

Ned notes that with the increased attention on energy consumption and the environment, sailing has grown in popularity. A tank of gas for a sailboat may last months, while power boat-





■ Contact:
Ocean Sailing Academy
843 971 0700
www.osasailing.com

ers refill every weekend. The wind, he adds, is an inexhaustible resource.

For visitors, the Charleston area is home to endless opportunities for entertainment and touring. Nearby, the scenic marina where Ocean Sailing Academy is located is the USS Yorktown, the flagship of the Patriot's Point fleet. Once it launched planes against Iwo Jima and Okinawa; now it's open to the public and houses the National Medal of Honor Museum. A short boat ride away is Fort Sumter where the American Civil War began. Boone Farm Plantation, Shem Creek, Charles Pickney Site, the South Carolina Aquarium, Charleston Market, the Battery and of course several scenic beaches are all within a few minutes drive from Patriot's Point and offer distractions for the non-sailors in the family.

Sailing a Yacht, pulling into a dock at an exclusive resort, heading into the sunset with a captain's hat tilted on your head ... those are the kinds of images that evoke thoughts of Thurston Howell, III, but for Ned, and most people who actually try keelboat sailing, it's not the luxury that appeals to them, it's the escape. "Sailing puts everyone on an even level. It doesn't matter if you're a doctor or lawyer or engineer or mechanic; everyone's learning the same skills," says Ned. He likes to tell people that sailing gets him back into the moment and out of the chaos of life. "When I'm sailing, I'm not thinking about the bills or the car in the shop. I'm thinking about what this next puff is going to do. I'm always learning something new." ■

