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Sailing Weekends / Start Yachting

Course Outline

Sail Training Weekends are ideal for beginners to experience sailing a cruising yacht and complete the RYA 'Start Yachting' Course – the first step on the RYA Sail Training pathway. These weekends can also be used to complete RYA Competent Crew or Day Skipper practical courses and they are suitable to refresh or extend sailing skills or have coaching and an assessment for the International Certificate of Competence, or complete a Day Skipper tidal conversion. Weekends start and finish at Chatham Marina on the River Medway in Kent – less than 1 hour from Central London. Most sailing weekends are residential in that you live aboard during the course. A few weekends are also available as a non-residential course where you can return home overnight.

Format for the weekend

You join the yacht at Chatham Marina at 0900 on Saturday and meet the skipper/instructor and up to 4 other crew. The other crew may be first timers, or doing a series of weekends for a competent crew or day skipper course.

You will be shown around the boat, allocated a berth (residential courses only) and, after a safety briefing by the skipper the course will begin. The first steps are usually to show you how to prepare the yacht to leave harbour so you will be immediately involved in handling ropes as you leave the marina berth and either practice coming back alongside or go out through the lock into the river. You will be involved 'hands-on' from the beginning as you work as a team to set and trim sails. Fairly soon we'll shut down the engine and you'll experience the thrill as the yacht responds to the power of wind in the sails. You might soon even find yourself helming the boat down the river – controlling the direction using the wind or the compass as reference. The first day is all about learning the ropes', how to steer the yacht, set and trim sails, tack and gybe and lots more. Meanwhile other students who may be working towards day skipper qualifications will be learning how to take charge of the deckwork and navigate the yacht safely out of the river and into the open sea. Lunch will be 'on-the-go'. On Saturday night (on residential courses) we'll find a mooring or anchorage in the Medway and a well-earned, convivial dinner around the saloon table. On some weekends, weather permitting, we'll get alongside a landing or use the dinghy to get ashore to a pub to debrief over a pint. But if not we'll find a secluded creek to enjoy the special experience of a night aboard a yacht at anchor.

After a well-earned night's sleep and breakfast we'll get going again, consolidating what we learned the day before and extending knowledge and skill to things like emergencies at sea including man overboard drills and then an exhilarating sail back up river to Chatham. After another lunch 'on the go' we'll lock back into the marina by 1500 and after a clean-up of the boat and final debrief you will be saying goodbye to the others at about 1600 on the Sunday.

Variations for Non Residential Courses. The pattern of activity is the same on non-residential courses except that in the late Saturday afternoon the yacht will return to the marina and at about 1700 and crew will be free to go home or stay aboard (if cabin accommodation has been booked). The Sunday sailing activity will begin at 0900 or earlier if pre-agreed with the instructor and crew.

Our instructors are chosen for their experience, patience and understanding. Your instructor will show you how to do everything from the beginning so that you are able to participate right from the start. Although you will be working and exercising as part of a crew you will be given individual guidance and instruction. As each hour and day passes you will acquire new skills and grow in confidence.

The atmosphere aboard is relaxed and the emphasis is on having fun – exactly what sailing is supposed to be. At the same time there is lots to learn and some work to put in. At the end of a weekend you will be tired – yes – but also fulfilled and refreshed.

Our well-equipped yachts offer exciting sailing performance and comfortable, heated accommodation. Meals are all prepared from good quality and mostly fresh ingredients so you will eat well. If you enjoy wine or beer with an evening meal you can bring your own or contribute to a 'kitty' to buy some before leaving harbour.

We want you to enjoy your experience and of course we hope that you are going to want to continue with your sailing. If you wish, you can book two further weekends to complete the RYA competent crew course – the first step along a

challenging and fascinating path as you learn about this wonderful sport. Alternatively you can switch to a 5 day course or even an adventure sailing holiday. Whatever you decide, we will be there to offer help and advice as you pursue your goals – be they boat ownership, charter, racing or cruising with us to new destinations.

Age:

No minimum or maximum age limit.

Achievement

RYA Start Yachting Course Certificate. You will have made a big step towards the RYA Competent Crew standard.

What's Included

For residential courses the price includes a berth on the yacht (this may be in a shared cabin or a single berth in the saloon), all meals aboard from lunch on the first full day to lunch on the last day, tea, coffee etc and all operating expenses including berthing and fuel. (When comparing prices with other schools you may find that some meals are either not included or taken ashore at your expense and berthing costs may be charged to students). Water from the boat's tanks is drinkable. Alcoholic drinks, bottled water or other soft drinks are not included but you are welcome to bring your own. Often people contribute to a 'kitty' to buy some wine with dinner. Wet weather clothing hire (jackets and trousers) is available at £7 per day but capped at £25 for a single course or event. There are no other essential extras but you may want to buy one or two books (see below) and bring a little pocket money for use if you go ashore.

Facilities Aboard

The training yachts are all designed and certificated for 8 persons but we operate RYA courses with a maximum of 5 students to one instructor. Each yacht has 3 double cabins (2 aft and one forward), a saloon that seats up to 8 and converts to provide 2 single berths (on port and starboard sides), a galley with twin sinks, a twin burner gas stove and a refrigerator, and a single toilet/shower compartment. (Although there are washing facilities and you could take a shower if you want, as sailors we don't expect to shower every day). Berth allocations are made by the instructor when you join. Two of the crew may be asked to share a cabin.

The yachts all have 12 volt dc electrical systems including a limited capacity to charge mobile devices via a 12 volt USB socket. 230 volt ac power is available only when the yacht is alongside in a marina and connected to shore power.

What will I need to bring

We can provide wet weather clothing hire so the only things you may need to buy are a sleeping bag, pillow slip, suitable footwear (deck shoes or sea boots – although trainers are OK) and clothing to suit the weather and season. For a complete suggested packing list see Downloads.

Books

There is no essential reading before you come on the weekend. However, if you have never sailed before you might want to read through the RYA Competent Crew Course notes booklet. You might also want to buy a personal RYA Log Book. These books are available to buy at our base – or you can obtain it from the RYA website.

Next Steps

Go on to complete the [RYA Competent Crew course](#). You can do this by booking 2 further 2-day weekends, or one 3-day weekend, or a 5-day competent crew course or an [Adventure sailing holiday](#).

Downloads

- [Recommended Packing List](#)
- [Directions to Elite Sailing at Chatham Marina](#)

Costs and availability

One place on a two-day weekend costs from £250 in low season up to £298 in high season. This price includes a berth, instruction, all meals aboard from lunch on day 1 to lunch on the Sunday, beverages and snacks and all yacht operating expenses. The only extra is wet weather gear hire and any personal expenses ashore. Great value for a full weekend away with accommodation, food and top-quality training.

We sail every weekend throughout the year. You can see availability directly in the table on this page. If you would like to enquire about or book a specific date just click on the date and then complete and send the enquiry form. If you are buying it for someone as a gift, its usually simpler to give them an open dated certificate and then they can choose their own dates.

Go to [Gift Certificates](#) for details.



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