

Fractional Sailing

Two simple schemes to go sailing and own a boat

The new business of fractional sailing that has become so popular in the past few years solves a lot of issues for people who don't want to get involved in owning their own boat.

The concept is simple. You join a fractional sailing program the way you would join a health club and in exchange for your monthly fee you get to use the facilities—the boat or boats that the program maintains.

SailTime is the largest and most established of the fractional sailing programs available. In partnership with Hunter Marine and other leading marine businesses, SailTime has established bases on a franchise basis across America and around the world. And, it is still expanding.

Members do not own a share of the boats in the programs, just the

right to use the boats. The Hunters used by SailTime belong to the base managers and to the core group of sailors at each base who step up and buy boats for the fleet—having their costs covered completely by the program.

Other programs that use this basic business model include Pinnacle Yachts, Windpath and Voyage BLiS.

New to the scene this year and working with a different ownership model is Beneteau Fractional Yachting, which was co-founded with Beneteau by one of the founders of SailTime. Instead of joining as a fee paying member, owners in the Beneteau model become actual fractional owners of their new boats with three other members. One of the four members becomes the owner of record while the other

three contribute their 25 percent to the cost of purchasing and running the new boat.

For busy professionals who do not want to commit to the expense and time required in owning a cruising boat, fractional sailing in the SailTime model makes a lot of sense and allows you to sail often at a very low entry price.

For those who are interested in getting into ownership one step at a time, with the minimum financial commitment, the Beneteau Fractional Yachting model might be a good idea since after the required three-year commitment the partnership is dissolved and the boat sold. By that time, the partners will know if they are ready to buy their own boats or not. ~

LEARN TO SAIL & CRUISE FROM THE PROS

You can learn the basics of sailing from books and magazines but to develop your skills as a crew and skipper, you need to sail with experts who can show you how things are really done aboard a boat. There are hundreds of sailing schools across North America and in the Caribbean so if you live near a large body of water chances are excellent that you will find a sailing school nearby.

Sailing schools fall into two camps in the U.S. One camp is overseen by U.S. Sailing, the non-profit, national governing body for the sport, while the other is run by the American Sailing Association (ASA) which is a for profit education company.

Both U.S. Sailing and ASA have instructor certification programs that ensure their affiliate schools meet rigorous standards. And both organizations provide standardized

curriculums that are designed to take students step by step through the learning and development process on their way to becoming competent skippers and sailors. The ASA curriculum offers 10 levels and a new radar certification course. U.S. Sailing offers certified courses in all types of boats, including powerboats.

Most instruction at sailing schools will be in small keelboats that are stable and easy to sail. As you move up through the course levels you may choose to take courses in dinghy sailing and racing or you may choose to move up to large cruising boats.

If you want to combine a sailing course with a vacation to the Caribbean, you will find that most charter companies offer sailing instruction right at their bases and can, if you like, send an instructor out with you on a charter vacation.

Those who want to take the most advanced courses will find RYA-certified programs through two schools in the U.S., The Offshore Sailing School (at their base in the B.V.I.) and The Modern Sailing Academy (on San Francisco Bay).

The RYA program was developed by the Royal Yachting Association in the U.K. and has become the gold standard for sailing instruction worldwide with more than 2,200 schools offering the course in the U.K., Scotland, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. The course leads to a Yachtmaster certificate, which is the highest qualification available in the sport of sailing.

To find a sailing school that fits your needs, you will find a very complete national listing at the U.S. Sailing website at www.ussailing.org. Or, you can find the list of ASA's affiliate schools at www.american-sailing.com. ~