

how to **Learn to Sail**



**A Beginner's Guide to
WORLDWIDE SAILING COURSE QUALIFICATIONS,
REGULATIONS & LICENSES**

Image by T. Fernandes



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Introduction

Over this e-book you should be able to find out what the local regulations are, and how to learn to sail wherever you may be in the world.

Remit of the book

Sailing comes in a whole variety of shapes and sizes. A 9 year old sailing an Optimist could conceivably be racing a foiling catamaran or blasting around the world on a Volvo Ocean 65 in their twenties, or may just take boozy sailing holidays on the Med as he or she make their way through the world through another profession...



We have kept this book to amateur sailing on dinghies and boats. This leaves out one of the world's fastest growing water sports in kite surfing, as well as windsurfing. If you wish to learn windsurfing or kite surfing then do watch this space as we are sure we will publish something along these lines soon!

Equally, if you want to become a professional sailor we have left these qualifications out too. This is for simplicity and the fact that only a minority will wish to become instructors or captain someone else's yacht for a living.

There are 59 nations listed in this e-book – most of which have some sort of national sailing scheme or legal licensing for small pleasure boats. Largely, if your country isn't listed you won't find a scheme there.

Organisation of the book

For simplicity we have written this according to the continent or region a country is in. Thus Austria is in Central Europe and the Bahamas are in North America and the Caribbean. You will find the odd, odd entry – Japan has been put in the same section Australia and New Zealand, but that is the broad geographical part of the world.

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Want to learn to sail?

1. Get experience!

From the perspective of someone who has sailed for the best part of 35 years on everything from Toppers to tall ships, the best advice the writer of this book can offer the newcomer to sailing is, if you wish to learn to sail, then go sailing. Do a course to learn how to trim the sails, gybe, tack and stay out of trouble on the water, and then get sailing. This might sound obvious but in writing this book we have seen some state accreditation systems (Luxembourg stands out but is not the worst by any means) that seem to suggest that with 12 hours of theory tuition and four hours of sailing on a boat you are fit to pack your family on a yacht and sail them across the Atlantic.

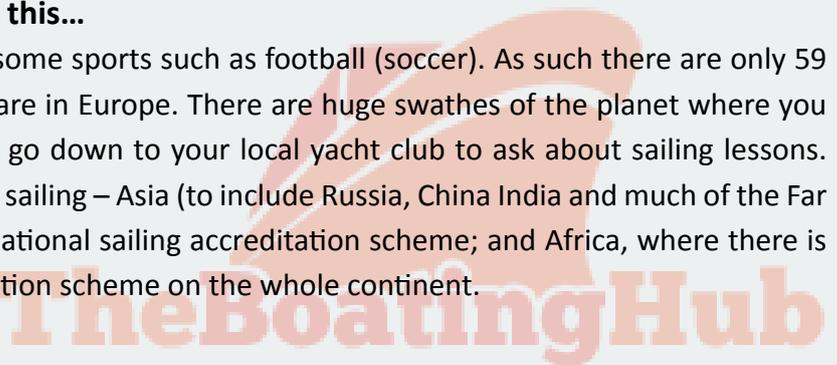
In the last three years the author has seen two people he has sailed with die on the water. One was a tall ship captain who sank his ship in a hurricane. This isn't a typical death on the water – the more usual type was when a member of his sailing club drowned in unexplained circumstances while sailing unsupervised at their club's 100 acre sailing lake on a relatively calm day. The sailor had many years of experience yet something happened beyond his control and that was that. Having experience and a good level of training should ensure you don't get killed, and make it home to tell your salty tale of trouble on the water. This isn't to say you won't be killed or injured – a lot of the draw to the sea for people is that it is far less safe than sitting at your desk all day.

There is no substitute for experience in keeping safe at sea. A piece of paper confers that you have been through the motions and have shown you know what you are doing soon after completing a course. Once you have sailed every weekend in rain, hail or sunshine over a number of seasons, then you will do things quickly and safely at all times.

As an example, after 20 years of sailing on everything that floats the writer went out on a day sail with a friend in Spain. His friend used the same battery to keep the beer cool in the fridge as should have started the engine. The wind built up to dangerous conditions from the direction of port and the battery was flat from keeping the beer cool so wouldn't start the engine. Despite the author's being 40 years his skipper's junior he took over and short tacked the boat into the harbour entrance where he put the skipper ashore to call for a tow back to his house. You can't learn that in a book – you can from sailing at every opportunity you can over the years...

2. Some thoughts from writing this...

Sailing is a minority sport, unlike some sports such as football (soccer). As such there are only 59 nations listed, over half of which are in Europe. There are huge swathes of the planet where you either can't learn to sail, or must go down to your local yacht club to ask about sailing lessons. There are two major gaps in world sailing – Asia (to include Russia, China India and much of the Far East) where there is virtually no national sailing accreditation scheme; and Africa, where there is only one national sailing accreditation scheme on the whole continent.



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This is not to say that you cannot learn to sail in China or Russia for instance. In China you can learn to sail through the International Yacht Training (IYT) scheme, a Canadian based worldwide sail training organisation, where in Russia you have the choice of the IYT or Royal Yachting Association (RYA). If you cannot find your country listed in this book, have a look at the International Sailing Qualifications listing, which covers a number of internationally taught and accepted sailing schemes. The Beijing Sailing Center, for example, can teach you everything from basic dinghy sailing to professional yacht skipper qualifications through the IYT.

In many countries that do not offer national or international sailing qualifications, there are schools that can teach you to sail by their own curriculums. Brazil is a country where this is a classic case. This is generally because the likes of the RYA and ASA charge uncomfortable sums of money to use their brand and teach their courses, and this impacts on the fees that the sailing schools must charge. Sailing is very simple at its most basic, and there is no right or wrong way to teach someone to point the bow off the wind and haul the sheet until the sail stops flapping to start moving. If you wish to learn to sail longer distances in another country (perhaps while touring Europe or the Caribbean) then do consider undertaking an IYT or RYA qualification in a neighbouring country to learn the intricacies of night time coastal navigation and the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea.

3. Accessibility?!

Sailing is one of the few sports where disabled people can compete on a level footing with able bodied people and frequently leave them standing.

You don't need to be your stereotypical bow legged, strong as an ox old salt to go sailing. You just need to see 2012 US Paralympic Silver Medallist duo Jen French and JP Creignou – Jen is a quadriplegic who broke her back skiing before learning to sail, and JP is well on his way to going blind. As they sailed toward their Paralympic dream in Weymouth, England, he provided the muscle and she provided the expert helmsmanship and acute vision to beat the fleet.

Most sailing centres have disabled sailing facilities, and only a very few will turn you away because they are under the misapprehension that someone who is disabled can't sail. You have every right to be bloody rude and go elsewhere if confronted with such rubbish!

We hope you get what you need from using this reference, and wish you many years of pleasure afloat once you have taken the leap and learned what fun it can be pottering about, or blasting along on the water!

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International Qualifications

ASA

Wherever you are in the world where there is sailing and Americans you will likely be able to learn to sail through the American Sailing Association (ASA). This includes the Caribbean, northern Mediterranean, and many Pacific islands.

The system gives you US government accreditation to sail within the limits of that qualification. Unlike the RYA course however, people from outside the US may not be able sail on US waters due to US legislation that protects its maritime industry. People from outside the US can learn to sail using this course however, as it does teach sailing to a very high and thorough standard.

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Basic

Basic Small Boat Handling

This teaches you how to sail a boat without an engine that has a centreboard, or is a catamaran in moderate winds without supervision.

Basic Keelboat Sailing

This USCG accredited course teaches you how to sail a keelboat of 20-27 feet in moderate conditions. You will learn the parts of the vessel, and how to gybe, tack and manoeuvre the boat. You will learn the basics of the Collision Regulations so you can avoid trouble.

Basic Coastal Cruising

You should have your Basic Keelboat Sailing qualification before beginning this course.

You will learn how to sail a boat of 25-35ft with an auxiliary engine in moderate conditions. You will learn the language of the sea, how to trim your sails as well as how to manoeuvre the boat under sail, and basic coastal navigation, Collision Regulations, seamanship and safety.

Trailerable Multihull Standard

This course is for people who wish to sail a multihull to Basic Coastal Sailing standard. It is done as an add on to the other course.

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Intermediate

Bareboat Coastal Cruising

You should have the two basic qualifications above before beginning this course.

This course is a 48 hour live aboard course, and will teach you how to sail a boat of between 30-45 feet in moderate to heavy conditions – up to Force 7 winds. You will learn how to provision the boat and operate it on a short multi night cruise. You learn about engine operation and maintenance as well as coastal navigation and GPS operation. You will also learn how to anchor with multiple anchors, docking and emergency operations. Finally, you will learn about advanced sail trim and meteorology.

Cruising Catamaran

This is for those who wish to sail a cruising catamaran to a safe standard in most conditions. The standard enables you to sail in catamarans up to 50 ft in length.

Coastal Navigation

This theory only course teaches you how to navigate inland or off the coast.

Advanced

Advanced Coastal Cruising

You should have done the Coastal Navigation course before beginning this as well as the Bareboat Coastal Cruising qualification.

You will be able to sail anything up to 50 feet in length, confidently in any weather conditions, day or night with this qualification.

Celestial Navigation

This theory based course teaches you how to navigate offshore using celestial navigation.

Offshore Passagemaking

On qualifying you will be able to sail in any boat in any sea state anywhere in the world.

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Code European de Voile de la Navigation Interieure (CEVNI)

This system of accreditation permits the sailor to travel through most inland waterways in Europe. There are exceptions such as the UK and Balkans, but if you wish to sail up the Danube, Rhine, Seine or their canals, this qualification will enable you to sail upon them legally.

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The system differs from coastal or oceanic sailing regulations such as the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea (“Col Regs”) and the buoyage system differs from the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (IALA).

Do I need CEVNI to travel anywhere in Europe?

No – only if you wish to sail inland. This includes Lake Constance (the Bodensee) and major inland waterways such as the Rhine, Seine and Danube.

It excludes the British canal system, the Balkans, Italy and Spain.

How do I get my CEVNI accreditation?

You should look at your home country’s accreditation system elsewhere in this e-book. All countries that are signatory to the system will have the appropriate accreditation system.

In European countries that are not signatory to CEVNI you can still qualify. In the UK for example, the RYA runs classroom based CEVNI courses that include an exam, and you can get your International Certificate of Competence accredited for CEVNI.

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International Certificate of Competence (International Certificate for Operator of Pleasure Craft)

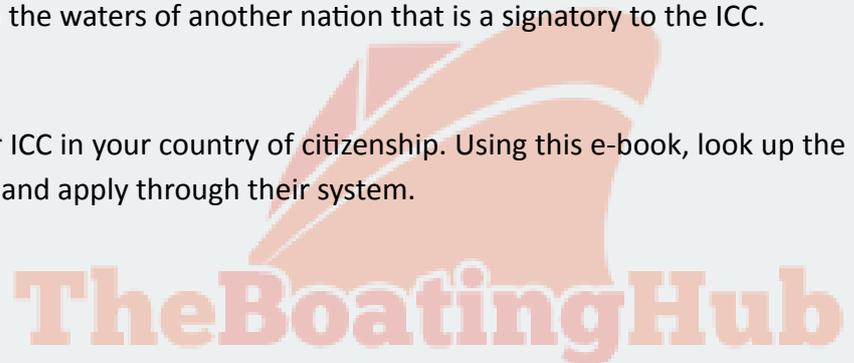
This accreditation is issued by your home country (in most cases) and validates your skills for specific waterways, coastal or offshore sailing.

In Europe you can sail into another country’s waters in a matter of hours, whether offshore around the coast or up the Rhine or Danube. As such there was a need for some sort of international recognition of certification without too much bureaucracy or treading on nations’ toes by demanding that everyone re-qualify to a specific central standard. Since most people only ever sail on home waters, the ICC gives them the option of qualifying for the certificate should they need it.

The ICC was set up by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to enable people with one qualification to sail legally in the waters of another nation that is a signatory to the ICC.

Where do I get my ICC?

You train for and qualify for your ICC in your country of citizenship. Using this e-book, look up the country where you are a citizen, and apply through their system.



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Do I need an ICC to sail anywhere in the world?

No. If you are from a signatory nation, sailing within another signatory nation's waters the system makes life a lot easier. For example, if you are British and wish to sail anywhere else in European waters it is necessary in nations where there are strict demands on qualification and accreditation such as Spain or France.

You do not need an ICC if you are to sail in your home country's waters, as long as you conform to that country's sailing accreditation system.

It is worthy of note that the US and Canada do not recognise the ICC.

Is the ICC qualification system the same everywhere?

Again, no. Getting an ICC varies from country to country.

Can I get an ICC from my country of residence?

No. With the exception of Malta (where citizens must get their ICC from the UK) you must get your ICC from your country of citizenship – where you were born generally, though you can get one if you are a naturalised citizen in the country you have become naturalised in.

Therefore, if you are a Czech living in the UK but wish to sail in French waters you will need to go to the Czech Republic to get your ICC – this usually means learning on the Adriatic with the Croatian government issuing the Czech ICC!

ICC Signatories

The following countries have signed up to the scheme:

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

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International Yacht Training (IYT)

This is an independent sail training scheme that is run in over 40 countries worldwide. The IYT website claims that every bareboat yacht charter company in the world accepts qualifications through them, enabling the qualified person to sail almost everywhere on the planet without fear of bureaucracy and petty officials...



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A number of the professional courses it runs have been approved by 24 governments around the world – this differs from the other sail training schemes on this list, as, for example, where the ASA scheme is approved by the US government it has not been approved by others. As such you will only qualify to sail in US waters under the ASA scheme...

If you plan a life of adventure under sail, then consider an IYT qualification that will enable you to sail almost everywhere you want to.

Simply, what does the qualification scheme involve?

There are three strands of sailing qualifications – dinghy, recreational, and professional. In theory you can start your sailing career in an Optimist and work your way up to sailing a super yacht.

For this e-book we will focus on recreational and dinghy sailing – look on the IYT website for professional qualifications [here](#).

Basic

Dinghy

Bronze – Start sailing

This five day course is in Optimists and is for 7-12 year old children. It guides you through the basics from launching to sailing at all points of sail.

Silver – Safe Sailing

Developing the skills learned at Bronze level, this course develops the emerging sailor's skills so they can sail safely in light to moderate winds. It also teaches capsiz recovery.

Yachting

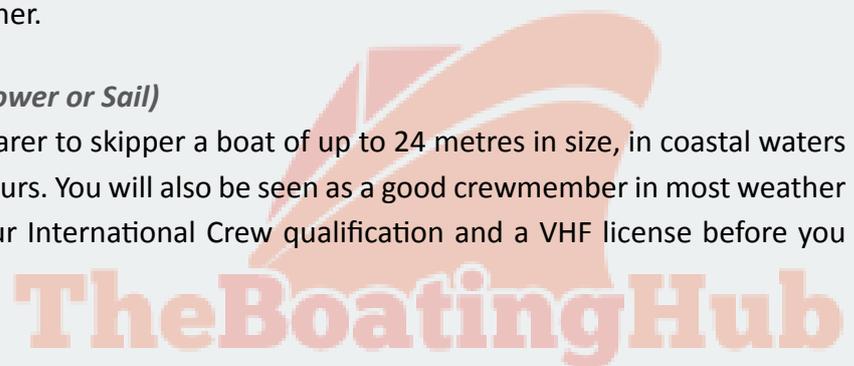
Introduction to Boating and International Crew (Power or sail)

This qualifies you to sail as crew on a boat of up to 24 metres (78 ft) in daylight in moderate conditions. You can also skipper a small yacht in sheltered waters where help is immediately available.

The course takes you through the basics from parts of the boat to Collision Regulations, and sail handling. You will learn how to manoeuvre the boat safely under power or sail, as well as the basic knots and how to read the weather.

International Flotilla Skipper (Power or Sail)

This qualification entitles the bearer to skipper a boat of up to 24 metres in size, in coastal waters with good visibility in daylight hours. You will also be seen as a good crewmember in most weather conditions. You should have your International Crew qualification and a VHF license before you begin this course.



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The 3-4 day course covers the necessary knowledge required to sail in a flotilla where the boats are guided as a fleet. This includes the Sunsail holidays that cruise the Med and Caribbean.

Intermediate

Dinghy

Gold – Independent Sailing

This three to four day course enables the sailor to sail confidently, problem solve on the water, and fly a spinnaker. You will also learn to gybe the spinnaker and sail the best possible downwind course.

Yachting

International Bareboat Skipper (Power or Sail)

You should have over 200 logged miles and 10 days as crew or as a skipper, have a VHF license and ideally be over 18 to take this course. It qualifies you to take a boat of up to 24 metres out in daylight hours, in moderate conditions. You would be able to bareboat charter a yacht where the conditions of charter state that you must be in a marina every evening.

If the sailing school issues them, you will automatically be entitled to receive an International Certificate of Competence upon qualification with this.

The five day course covers all the necessities of planning and skippering a passage in daylight hours safely.

Yachtmaster Coastal (Power or Sail)

This course is not a professional qualification. It does permit the recreational user to sail a vessel of up to 24 metres, up to 60 nautical miles offshore. For sailing the course is a six day live aboard course where the powerboat version takes five days.

You should have 30 days or 800 miles of sailing experience, of which two days must be as a skipper. You must have 12 logged hours on watch at night.

The exam is a practical and oral exam that demonstrates knowledge of good seamanship and accurate navigation, combined with safety and First Aid skills. The exam can cover anything on the syllabus of the course.

Advanced

Dinghy

Platinum – Perfected Sailing

This five day course covers high speed sailing, club racing, and navigation. You will learn how to plan a day cruise but also how to get in the thick of the club racing fleet, and handle performance dinghies well and efficiently.

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Yacht

Yachtmaster Offshore (Power or Sail)

The course is for the experienced sailor who wishes to sail a boat of up to 24 metres, up to 150 nautical miles offshore. This accreditation is accepted worldwide as a high level of expertise, and you will learn international regulations that apply outside your immediate territory – for example, IALA B in an IALA A region.

Prior to doing this course you should be a very experienced skipper with 3000 logged sea miles, 50 days at sea as an active crew member, thirty night hours on watch, a medical examination showing your eyesight is up to standard for night time watch keeping, and a valid VHF certificate.

It is strongly recommended you complete your Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping Basic Safety course before doing this qualification. The five day, International Maritime Organisation accredited course takes you through most major emergencies you will face at sea, and how to deal with them.

The course itself is probably the most intense of all recreational qualifications the IYT runs. You will be taken from being someone who can adequately sail across the North Sea over a weekend to one who can competently sail, in most weather conditions across Biscay to Portugal on a nonstop passage, with regard to safety and comfort of the crew.

Yachtmaster Ocean

This is the pinnacle of offshore recreational yachting. If you're planning long passages, perhaps across the Pacific or Atlantic as skipper, this is the course for you. It enables the user to sail on a boat of up to 24 metres on all oceans. Again, this is not a professional accreditation.

The course is an extension of the very intensive Yachtmaster Offshore, but brings in oceanic navigation techniques such as great circle passage making and astral navigation. You will learn how to plan a passage with regard to meteorology.

Royal Yachting Association (RYA)

The RYA is a British export – it is the primary non governmental organisation that looks after the interests of the British boating public.

You will likely find an RYA accredited sailing school almost everywhere there is a market for British tourism. Most countries of the northern Mediterranean, Red Sea and Caribbean, as well as some islands in the South Pacific will have RYA accredited sailing schools.

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It is important to note though, that unlike some of the 'international qualifications' here, RYA qualifications are not in themselves accepted as government approved qualifications. For example, once you have an RYA Day Skipper you can apply for an International Certificate of Competence (ICC) from the British Department of Transport. The Day Skipper *is not* the ICC.

This is not to say that the RYA course system is gymcrack or fly by night. Many tens of thousands of people have gone through this training system and gone on to enjoy safe sailing all over the world. In order to sail in most developed nations' waters, these people will have had to gain an ICC from their country of origin.

Basic qualifications

Taster courses can be found almost everywhere, inland on lakes and rivers and at coastal locations. For around £150 you can do an RYA Level 1 sailing course for dinghies or you can do a Competent Crew course.

Dinghies

RYA Level 1

From launching, to sailing and beaching the boat RYA Level 1 teaches you the important things to know how to sail a boat in moderate conditions safely. You will learn how to rig and de-rig a boat, and launching and landing it.

You learn how to tack and gybe, as well as how to recover from a basic capsized. You will also learn the basics of reaching, beating and running, and how to handle the boat on these points of sail.

Important for all sailors is the Rules of the Road, and how to determine whether you have right of way over another boat coming towards you.

You learn the basics of reading the wind, and how to be safe on the water including wearing a buoyancy aid.

Yachts

Start Yachting

This is an experience oriented course designed to show you the ropes. You get experience helming, rope handling, and hopefully a great day on the water that fuels your enthusiasm to pursue sailing as a past time!

Competent Crew

Yachts behave differently to dinghies. They do not capsize for a start! Doing a Competent Crew course will teach you the basics of rope handling, helming, and navigation so you are an effective and useful member of crew.

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The five day practical course will teach you the parts of the boat and how to do the basic things such as set a sail.

You will learn fire fighting techniques, as well as how to deal with seasickness in yourself and other members of the crew. You will learn how to use safety equipment such as lifejackets and the life raft.

Finally, you will learn how to read the wind and synoptic charts to get an idea of what the weather will bring you.

Intermediate Courses

Dinghies

Dinghy sailors will do an **Improvers Course** that takes the sailor from a basic skill level and allows them to learn racing skills such as roll tacking and gybing. The course will teach racing technique too. Someone who has taken an Improver course should be able to race mid fleet on a club fun racing day, depending on how much they have learned...

Yachts

The **Day Skipper** course comprises of classroom and practical tuition. Over a winter's night school or an intensive course you will learn the arts of navigation and meteorology, as well as Collision Regulations and safety. You then have to pass a practical exam that involves engine maintenance, sailing safety (including man overboard) and other important aspects of coastal sailing.

This progresses to Yachtmaster as you gain a greater and deeper knowledge of sailing.

Advanced Courses

The RYA can take you from being a complete novice and through its qualification system, turn you into a seasoned old salt. On both dinghies and yachts you will be given a logbook to log your hours of sailing. It is important you keep these as only after a certain amount of experience can you get certain qualifications.

Dinghies

Advanced Courses take the person who has done RYA Level 2 and guide them in advanced techniques. You should only do these courses with at least one season's independent sailing behind you, but you will hone your skills from being a competent sailor to that of someone who can potentially sail in all conditions. You will be sailing on a boat that carries a spinnaker and will learn to use that effectively – and by the end of your training can take on the guys at the club who do the serious racing at club level and beyond!

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Yachts

Yachtmaster Ocean is the apex of yacht sailing qualifications. In order to even begin the course, you must have skippered the boat on passages over long distances – one of those must be at least 600 miles, to include planning and preparation for the passage.

In order to get to this level you should have done your **Day Skipper** qualification as well as the **Yachtmaster Coastal** qualification. These are not like school education where you learn a lot but experience very little – you must get a lot of sailing experience in all weathers to climb this ladder.

You will do a lot of classroom work in the finer points of navigation, boat and engine maintenance, meteorology and safety at sea. You will also have to get peripheral qualifications such as a VHF license. You can attend night school during the winter to do the classroom work, whilst sailing the rest of the year to get the necessary experience to achieve this grade.

Perhaps you might skipper on the Atlantic Racing Cruise (ARC Race) to the Caribbean? This 2000 mile passage will give you the experience you need to take people safely on a boat no matter what Neptune throws at you.

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Northern Europe

Image by Greg Benson-Shettle

Belgium

With over 1500km of inland and coastal waters, Belgium is a wonderful and varied place to sail. A divided country between the Flemish and Walloons, there are different laws and customs to observe depending on where in the country you sail. If you're spending any real amount of time in Belgium, do consider learning to sail there, if only to get your head around the local regulations!

Do I need qualifications to sail in Belgium?

Not unless you want to sail a boat larger than 15 metres or sail to another country.



Basic courses

Consider an RYA course or learning in the Netherlands.

Advanced courses

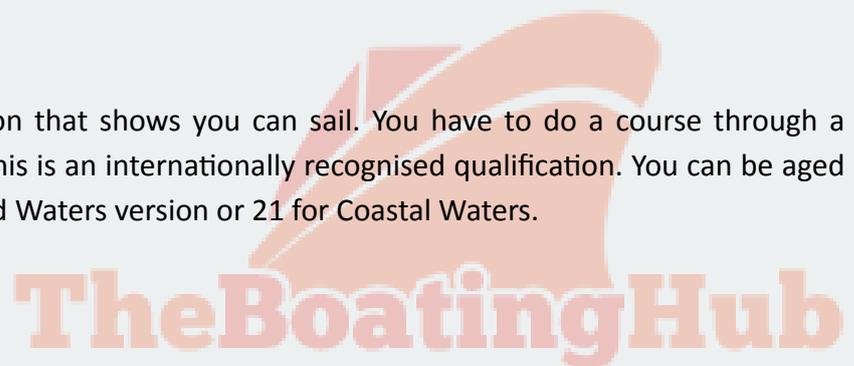
Boat License

Though only required for vessels larger than 15 metres or for those travelling abroad, it is advisable to get a Boat License (NL **Theorie Belgisch Stuurbrevet** or FR, **Send Brevet**) that requires six hours of practical experience either with someone who already has a Boat License or at a sailing school.

You must sit a theory test covering navigation, Rules of the Road, boat maintenance and meteorology. You must pass a medical examination and be physically fit. Finally, you must be over 18 to qualify.

Yachtman

The Yachtman is an accreditation that shows you can sail. You have to do a course through a Belgian sailing school, though this is an internationally recognised qualification. You can be aged 20 when you apply for the Inland Waters version or 21 for Coastal Waters.



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It is a difficult course covering navigation, VHF, meteorology, Belgian and international collision regulations, as well as manoeuvring in up to 30 knots of wind. You are required to learn how to reef in building winds and a number of other safety skills.

On qualifying you can apply for the Belgian Yachtman International Certificate of Competence that is recognised in every country signed up to the ICC scheme.

ICC

With either of these qualifications you can apply for a Belgian International Certificate of Competence. You must have a valid Boat License or Yachtman, and be a Belgian National.

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Denmark

With the opportunity to sail on the Baltic and North Sea, Denmark is a great place to sail. It has a great maritime heritage too, stretching back a thousand years to the era of the Vikings...

Do I need qualifications to sail?

If you wish to sail a vessel over 4.5 metres in length and or with a power output of 4.5hp you will need to get qualifications to sail from the Danish Maritime Authority (søfartsmyndigheder). This would allow you to learn the ropes on a Laser without bureaucracy for example, and a 4.5hp engine will push a one man tender at a gentle pace at best.

Basic Course

Certificate of Proficiency (Duelighedsbevis)

This course comes in two parts, the theory and the practical course. You are able to do the theory course at home with a fair bit of reading. You will learn the Collision Regulations as well as basic meteorology, tidal and navigation theory.

The practical side can be done for 'sailing only', though you may as well do the full course as you will be qualified to use anything that floats, up to 12 metres in length. You will be tested on basic operation and maintenance of an engine, parts of the boat, and manoeuvring skills.

Intermediate

Yachtmaster 3rd Class (Yactmaster 3)

You must have this qualification to sail anything between 12 and 24 metres in length, in restricted waters. The course involves in depth theory and practical work.

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You will learn voyage planning, coastal navigation and the IALA A buoyage system. You will learn engine operation and maintenance.

The practical exam involves boat handling, loading, man overboard skills, as well as rope handling and good seamanship skills. You will also have to pass a VHF exam.

Advanced

Yachtmaster First Class (YACHTSKIPPEREKSAMEN AF 1. GRAD)

This entitles you to sail anything up to a 24 metre boat in all seas around the world. Put in perspective, in theory you could skipper an IMOCA 60 on the Vendee Globe with this qualification...

You must have the Yachtmaster 3rd Class to sit this exam.

The course involves in depth and broad knowledge of navigation, tidal systems, Collision Regulations and international buyoage (IALA A and IALA B). You will sit an advanced in First Aid exam as part of this course.

Though less involved than the Yachtmaster 3rd Class, you will be examined to a much greater depth and be expected to have a much greater degree of competence than the previous exam. Do not view this as just as a quick adjunct to the former course.

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Estonia

Talinn Bay was the location for the Moscow Olympics sailing regatta in 1980. Sailing and ice boating is part of the school curriculum – what a country to be a kid!

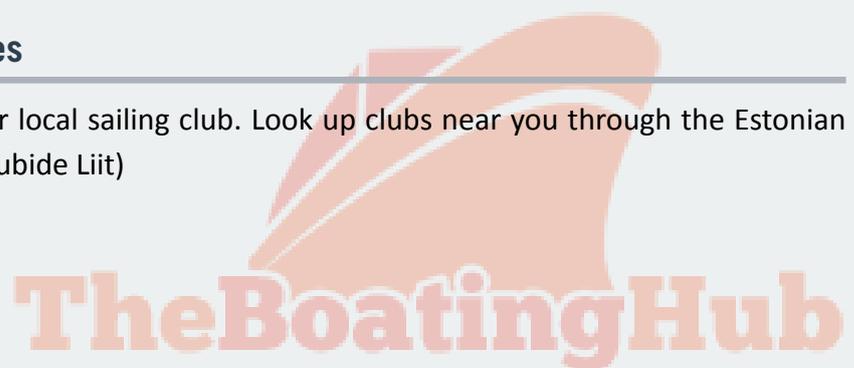
Do I have to get qualifications to sail?

No, and there are no sailing qualifications to be had except as part of the school curriculum or if you wish to go to sea professionally – and even then not as a sailing boat sailor but as a commercial seafarer.

Basic and Advanced Courses

These can be done through your local sailing club. Look up clubs near you through the Estonian Yachting Federation (Eesti Jahtklubide Liit)

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With coasts on the Mediterranean and Atlantic, as well as an extensive inland waterway system France is a Mecca for sailors from all over the world. There are rules to abide by, and breaking them can result in fines.

Can you sail with no qualifications?

On boats without an engine you do not have to qualify to sail on any waterways. This could mean you are sailing a Topper or a foiling GC32 catamaran. However if you have an engine of over 6HP then you have to undertake training to sail in French waters.

If you are on a foreign registered vessel you can sail in French coastal waters with no qualifications. If you wish to sail on inland waterways you must have at least an International Certificate of Competence (or equivalent) with Inland Waterways accreditation or a French Permis de Plaisance for inland waterways.

Permis de Plaisance

Essentially there are two grades of sailing license in France for coastal and inland sailing run under the Permis de Plaisance licensing system. In order to qualify for any of these you should undertake a medical exam and provide a certificate from a European Union practising doctor.

If you are younger than 16 you cannot apply for a license.

As well as taking the Permis Plaisance qualifications you should have a VHF license.

Basic courses

Eaux Intérieures (EI)

This qualifies you to sail a boat of up to 20 metres in length. Put in perspective the IMOCA 60's that race around the world in 80 days on the Vendee Globe are under 20 metres long, so in theory you could skipper one of these monsters with the EI!

You undertake around 3 hours of practical testing. This can be done in your own language (several centres do it in English). The difficult part will be the theory test, which must be done in French. You have to have a good grasp of the language to pass this.

Permis côtier (PC)

Though you can learn the course in your own language the theory testing is in French, so you must have a good grip of the language to pass.

This is a practical and theory course for sailing up to six miles offshore. The practical course lasts 3.5 hours and covers everything from docking and undocking to navigation, boat handling and rules of the road. This can be assessed in your home language.

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The theory test, which is in French, is a series of 30 multiple choice questions where you must get a minimum of 25 questions right.

Advanced Courses

Permis Hauturier (PH)

This license is for anyone who wishes to sail further than six miles offshore. If you wish to cross la Manche to the UK then this is what you need. This involves a written exam of around 90 minutes, and can only be done on completion of the PC exam above.

Grande Plaisance (GP)

The GP permit is an inland waterways licence and is for people over 18 who have had at least 9 hours' training on a boat of over 20 metres in length.

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Germany

Germany is a major maritime nation with extensive inland waterways that can take you across most of Europe. It has a fantastic coastline too. Hiring a boat to see the sights should definitely be considered.

Germany accepts other countries' government sailing licenses such as the International Certificate of Competence to hire and sail boats there. There are however rules of the road and conventions on European inland waterways that differ to coastal sailing and it is important that you do your research before setting out.

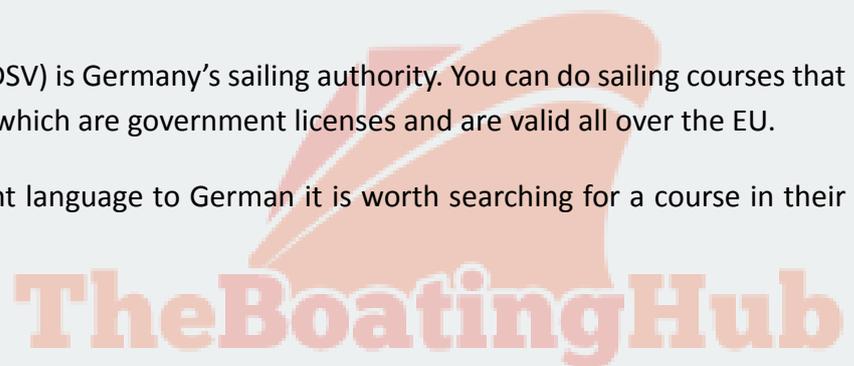
Can you sail with no qualifications?

In many cases you can go sailing with no qualifications at all, though on some rivers and inland waterways a so-called Schein is a necessity for safety and insurance purposes. You can only sail on Lake Constance (the Bodensee), around Berlin and Brandenburg, as well as parts of the Rhine if you have certification appropriate to those waters.

The DSV

The Deutscher Seglar Verband (DSV) is Germany's sailing authority. You can do sailing courses that are accredited through the DSV which are government licenses and are valid all over the EU.

For people who speak a different language to German it is worth searching for a course in their own language.



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Basic Courses

Sportbootführerschein – Internal (SBF Single)

You can only get these licenses through a sailing club that has been licensed by the DSV.

Beginners can do the SBF See that teaches the basics of the rules of navigation and sail handling for maritime waters. Though on most waterways you are only required to have this if you have an engine of over 15 horsepower and the boat is under 15 metres (45 ft) in length, around Brandenburg, Lake Constance and Berlin you must possess this license if you are sailing.

You have to have a medical certificate before you apply for the licenses, and the course takes around two weeks to qualify.

If you wish to sail a bigger boat / boat with a bigger engine you should get the **Sportbootführerschein See** or Binnen. For beginners you should undertake a two week course to master the arts of sailing as well as navigation. For intermediate sailors it is generally reckoned you only require a one week course, and for experts you can start the SBF See or Binnen assessments immediately.

Advanced courses

Sporthochseeschifferschein

This is Germany's top sport boat sailing qualification, showing you are capable of sailing any boat anywhere in the world. It is a theory only course, and the exam will test you on yacht handling, shipping law and meteorology. You will also have to be tested in an oral exam on celestial navigation, international maritime law and how to survive a tropical storm. Once again, you must possess a medical certificate.

You must have sailed over 1000 miles as skipper and this must be verified by your sailing club. You must also be in possession of the qualification below this, the Sportseeschifferschein.

For the Sportseeschifferschein you will have done a practical exam that involves advance manoeuvres, radar and lifesaving techniques.

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Ireland

The Emerald Isle has a great variety of sailing to be done, from the oceanic west coast to the Irish Sea. The country's sailing courses are administered by the Irish Sailing Association (ISA), that can take you from wobbly legged landlubber to seasoned salt.

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Do I need qualifications to sail in Ireland?

No, but it is strongly advised you learn to sail through the ISA. This is the administering body for the country's International Certificate of Competence scheme.

Basic

The ISA runs a number of basic courses tailored to fit a range of needs.

For youngsters it runs a scheme for 7-10 year olds that introduces them to dinghy sailing and guides them to being a competent, independent sailor. Look up the **Otter** course for the very basic qualifications. Your young Otter can progress to being an **Orca** through a gentle, fun progression of courses.

Adults can do a similar scheme for keelboats, multihulls and yachts. These schemes take the completely inexperienced person and make them a competent yet independent dinghy skipper or crew on a keelboat or yacht.

For dinghies, multihulls and keelboats, the adult should look up a **Taste of Sailing** or a **Start Sailing** course, and for yachts look up the **Competent Crew** course.

Intermediate

Youngsters and adults do the same courses at this level.

Again, the accreditation is complex and varies according to your speciality. If you want to race monohull dinghies there is one set of courses, multihull dinghies another and keelboats or yachts, another set of courses.

If you wish to learn dinghy, keelboat or multihull sailing look up the **Improving Skills** course, and for yachts, look up the **Day Skipper** course. With the Day Skipper you can apply for the **International Certificate of Competence**.

Advanced

Dinghy, keelboat and multihull sailors have a wide variety of qualifications to progress through at this level. Look at an **Advanced Skills** course initially then you can progress through **Kites and Wires**, that take you to the next level of sailing fast dinghies. You can then progress through the Racing courses, covering **Racing 1 and 2** or if you're more interested in investigating the west coasts' inlets and islands than bombing around the buoys, consider the **Adventure 1 and 2** courses.

For yachting there is the **Yachtmaster** course. This is a difficult shorebased and practical course that enables the sailor to sail competently and safely in all weather conditions.

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Latvia

Latvia is one of the four newest Baltic states in the European Union. It has a growing sailing community, both on the ice in the winter and at sea in the summer.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

No you don't. It is recommended you undergo training – have a look for a sailing school where you can learn.

There are a number of internationally recognised qualifications administered by the Latvian government. You can only get one if you are a Latvian National.

Basic Course

ICC - Yacht Driver (JAHTU VADĪTĀJS IEKŠĒJOS ŪDEŅOS)

This entitles you to operate a sailing yacht of up to 10 metres in sheltered waters. You will learn how to hand, reef and steer, and basic boat maintenance. You will also learn to navigate and to read the weather (both on charts and by looking at the sea). Finally, you will learn the International Collision Regulations.

Intermediate Course

Both of these qualifications will require fairly advanced skills and experience in boat handling, meteorology and maintenance.

ICC - Coastal Skipper (JAHTU VADĪTĀJS PIEKRASTES ŪDEŅOS)

You will be able to sail a yacht of up to 15 metres in coastal and sheltered waters.

ICC - Yacht Captain Offshore (Jahtu Kapteinis)

You will be entitled to sail a yacht with no limitation of size in open sea, coastal waters and sheltered waters.

Advanced Course

ICC - High Seas Yacht Captain (TĀLJŪRAS JAHTU KAPTEINIS)

This course will enable you to sail any boat of any size in any seas.

It will require a period of logged miles sailing as a Coastal Skipper, and you will have to pass exams that cover advanced sail handling techniques, astral navigation, and boat handling in winds of over 30 knots.

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Until the 1990's part of the USSR, Lithuania is an emerging economy as one of the newest members of the European Union. Sailing is growing in popularity as people discover the pleasure to be found in blasting around the Baltic.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

No, but it is advisable to learn. Lithuania subscribes to the International Certificate of Competence scheme so, if a Lithuania national you can qualify to sail pleasure boats all over the world.

Basic qualifications

To learn the ropes you should contact a local sailing school.

Helmsman

The basic national qualification is known as the **Helmsman (I eilės vairininkas)** qualification. This is open to 16 year olds and older with no sailing experience at all. Once qualified you can sail any boat of any size in inland waters. Unlike the other two courses this covers First Aid skills.

You will learn basic navigation, the Collision Regulations and boat handling, as well as what to do in an emergency such as a fire or man overboard.

The exam involves a theory and a practical test.

Intermediate

Pilot

You can do the **Pilot exam (II eilės vairininkas)** with two seasons' experience, and must be over 18 to do it. The Pilot exam involves the steepest learning curve of all, with greater emphasis on theoretical skills than the Helmsman certificate. This involves a theory test covering meteorology, navigation and Collision Regulations, as well as boat maintenance and safety requirements. In particular, the Pilot course covers a greater depth of navigation and radio navigation skills than the Helmsman certificate.

Once qualified you can safely sail a boat up to 200 miles offshore.

Advanced

Captain

With four seasons' sailing experience you can do the **Yacht Captain (Kapitonas)** exam, a theory test covering all the necessary requirements for an offshore skipper. You should have a VHF license by now. You will be considered to be able to take a boat anywhere in the world safely upon qualification.

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Luxembourg

A landlocked country in the heart of Europe, Luxembourg is better known as a seat of power of the European Parliament than as a great sailing nation. A signatory of the International Certificate of Competence scheme, there are qualifications to be had if you wish to sail on Europe's inland waterways or bareboat charter anywhere in the world...

Please note, just because you have sat the highest qualification Permis Mer (see below) you will not actually be fit to pack the family up in a yacht and sail them to the Caribbean. Please consider getting more involved training such as that provided by the RYA or IYT before even considering crossing the English Channel with the Permis Mer – this is a classic example of government bureaucracy making sure you have a piece of paper rather than ensuring you are competent and safe.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Luxembourg?

If your vessel has no engine, generally no. However if it does, then you may need one.

Basic

River Permit (Permis Fluviale)

You need this qualification if you wish to sail a vessel with a power output of 7.35KW or greater, and the boat is under 20 metres in length. You must be 16 or older to get this.

The course covers the European inland water regulations, safety, meteorology and practical skills. You will have to do 10 hours of theoretical training followed by 2 hours of practical training on the river.

Intermediate

Coastal Permit (Permis Cotier)

This qualification permits the holder to sail a boat of a maximum of 7 metres long without a habitable cabin up to three nautical miles offshore.

The course involves 9 hours of theoretical training, covering coastal navigation and meteorology, seamanship and Collision Regulations. You will then do a 2 hour practical course on the River Moselle in order to complete training.

Advanced

Permis Mer

This permits the holder to sail anything up to 24 metres in length in any weather at any distance from shore.

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The course involves 28 hours of theoretical training covering navigation, Collision Regulations, meteorology and First Aid. You will then have to do a day's practical sailing on the sea to qualify.

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Poland

Poland has a proud seafaring heritage and there is some great sailing to be done on inland waters such as the Masurian Lakes and on the Baltic.

Though you learn to sail through YKP clubs, you get your qualifications through the Polish Yachting Association (PZZ) that administers and regulates sailing on behalf of the government.

Unlike some countries, you can learn to sail in English at some sailing schools too, so don't worry too much about learning Polish before considering going afloat.

As with many European countries, if you have a government endorsed qualification from a different country such as the International Certificate of Competence, you will be able to sail a Polish registered boat.

Can you sail with no qualifications?

You don't need a qualification to sail on a boat of up to 7.5 metres in length, though learning to sail is advisable though the Yacht Klub Polski (YKP), the association of Polish yacht clubs, which is the main sail training organisation in the country.

A 7.5 metre boat will include most dinghies from Topper to Wayfarer – and even a 49er, the fastest boat sailed at the Olympics! However a boat of this size would be a bit too cosy for a family to go any real distance aboard.

Qualifying to sail in Poland

As with many countries in Europe there is an hierarchy of qualifications in sailing in Poland. You begin by learning the basics and then can progress to ocean skills. At the beginning you should get hold of a personal sailing logbook from the PYA to keep a formal record of your sailing experience.

Basic qualification

Żeglarz jachtowy

In order to charter a sailing boat of up to 12 metres to enjoy the coast and inland waterways, you must obtain a Żeglarz jachtowy, or "Inland Skipper". You will then be allowed to sail up to two miles offshore or anywhere on inland waterways, but only in daylight hours. With the latitude of Poland this can be quite late at night in summer!

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You will learn boat handling, safety at sea, knots, meteorology, docking and undocking, as well as local laws and the international collision regulations. Being government accredited this qualification automatically entitles you to sail boats of a similar size, within the range limits, anywhere in Europe via the International Certificate of Competence scheme. You could for instance sail on the Rhine or Lake Constance in Germany.

You must be 14 years old to do the course.

Advanced qualification

Ocean qualification – the Jachtowy sternik morski

For those who want to sail confidently in all weather conditions, they should consider the Jachtowy sternik morski. This qualifies you to sail a boat of up to 18 metres in length on any seas or inland waters around the world. In theory you could sail an IMOCA 60 Vendee Globe challenger racing yacht with this level of qualification...

To even begin this course you need to have done at least two passages as skipper for over 200 hours in charge. Some courses will involve a six day passage as part of this, but you will also do theory and inshore skills as well.

The course involves pilotage, advanced navigation, man overboard and meteorology, as well as advanced boat handling skills.

From here you can progress to the top level of sailing qualification, the **Kapitan Jachtowy**. This allows unlimited sailing on unlimited size of vessel.

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The Netherlands

With one of the highest per capita leisure boat ownership in the world, the Dutch are very into their water sports. Much of the sailing is on inland waters so if you want to qualify then you'll need to consider this.

Do I need sailing qualifications?

Not if you're planning to sail anything up to 15 metres in length in most waters, though in some estuaries and lakes a government license is required. If the boat is over 15 metres (49 feet) or is capable of speeds of over 20 km/h then you will need to get a license. It isn't clear whether this applies to the Mk 2 Moth, 49er or high end racing catamarans which blast past 20km/h on their way to top speed in a good wind!!!

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Basic qualifications

The Dutch CWO has a range of courses in all water sports.

Dinghy

For first time sailors, consider taking the **Zwaardboot eenmans/tweemans I (Dinghy Level 1)** which takes you from rigging to sailing, gybing and tacking. You will be able to sail on a lake in relatively calm conditions after passing this.

Inland Waterways - Keelboats

Keelboats are an intermediate between full blown yachts and dinghies. They can be incredibly quick cabinless racing day boats or more sedentary day sailors.

Keelboat Level 1 (Kielboot I)

This takes the complete novice and teaches you the ropes. You will learn everything from parts of the boat to basic manoeuvres and basic safety techniques.

Inland Waterways - Yachts

Cabin Sailing Diploma 1 (Diploma Kajuitjachtzeilen I) teaches you to be a competent crewmember on a boat. How to hand, reef and steer.

Coastal Waterways - Yachts

The Sea Sailing I course is designed to make you a competent crewmember on a yacht at sea.

Intermediate qualifications

Dinghies

Dinghy Level 2 (Zwaardboot eenmans/tweemans II) will enable you sail confidently in moderate conditions and even start racing.

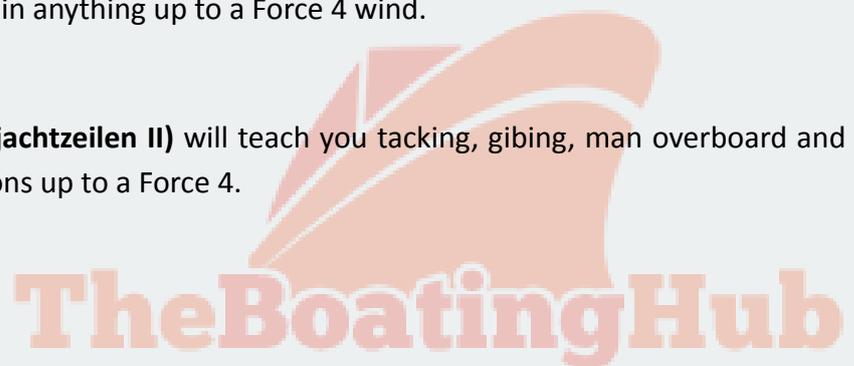
Inland Waterways - Keelboats

Keelboat Level 2 (Kielboot II)

This takes the beginner sailor out of their comfort zone a bit, with more advanced techniques and enabling you to sail comfortably in anything up to a Force 4 wind.

Inland Waterways - Yachts

Cabin Sailing II (Diploma Kajuitjachtzeilen II) will teach you tacking, gibing, man overboard and accompanying theory in conditions up to a Force 4.



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Advanced qualifications

Dinghies

You can progress to **Dinghy Level 3 (Zwaardboot eenmans/tweemans III)** that will enable you to race the big boys in the local sailing club. You will learn racing techniques such as roll tacking and being the first to the line when the gun goes off.

Keelboats

Keelboat Level 3 (Kielboot III)

This teaches advanced sailing techniques such as anchoring and how to get out of a lee shore. You will sail confidently in up to a F6 wind.

Inland Waterways - Yachts

Cabin Sailing Diploma III is an inland waterways skipper's certificate. You will learn to sail in anything up to a Force 6 (known in yachting circles as a 'yachtsman's gale'). You will be able to navigate safely and give the crew the right commands in a given situation.

Coastal Sailing – Yachts

The Diploma Zeezeilen III will enable you to day sail on a seagoing yacht safely. You need at least 750 logged miles of sailing experience to do this, and at least 250 miles of sailing experience after getting the Zeezeilen II qualification.

Vaarbewijs

This is a government accredited license to sail through seaports and the inland seas for boats over 15 metres. If you wish to sail to another country it is advisable you get qualified. Though you just need to cross the Rhine Estuary to get into Germany you'd be crazy not to have some skills before dodging the big ships entering one of the world's biggest ports!

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United Kingdom

Britain once ruled the waves! With a huge variety of inland and coastal sailing, as well as some of the most famous regattas and races in the world, the UK should be on the bucket list of every old salt. Whether screaming around the buoys at 2012 Olympic venue Weymouth, 7 days of hard racing at Cowes Week, or cruising the west coast and lochs of Scotland, the variety and opportunity to sail is almost endless.

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Do you need qualifications to sail?

The UK has some of the least regulated waterways in the world. In theory anyone can go sailing with no qualifications at all. The UK has also some of the most widely recognised sailing qualifications in the world through the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

Basic qualifications

Taster courses can be found almost everywhere, inland on lakes and rivers and at coastal locations. For around £150 you can do an RYA Level 1 sailing course for dinghies or you can do a Competent Crew course.

Dinghies

RYA Level 1

From launching, to sailing and beaching the boat RYA Level 1 teaches you the important things to know how to sail a boat in moderate conditions safely. You will learn how to rig and de-rig a boat, and launching and landing it.

You learn how to tack and gybe, as well as how to recover from a basic capsize. You will also learn the basics of reaching, beating and running, and how to handle the boat on these points of sail.

Important for all sailors is the Rules of the Road, and how to determine whether you have right of way over another boat coming towards you.

You learn the basics of reading the wind, and how to be safe on the water including wearing a buoyancy aid.

Yachts

Start Yachting

This is an experience oriented course designed to show you the ropes. You get experience helming, rope handling, and hopefully a great day on the water that fuels your enthusiasm to pursue sailing as a past time!

Competent Crew

Yachts behave differently to dinghies. They do not capsize for a start! Doing a Competent Crew course will teach you the basics of rope handling, helming, and navigation so you are an effective and useful member of crew.

The five day practical course will teach you the parts of the boat and how to do the basic things such as set a sail.

You will learn fire fighting techniques, as well as how to deal with seasickness in yourself and other members of the crew. You will learn how to use safety equipment such as lifejackets and the life raft.

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Finally, you will learn how to read the wind and synoptic charts to get an idea of what the weather will bring you.

Intermediate Courses

Dinghies

Dinghy sailors will do an **Improvers Course** that takes the sailor from a basic skill level and allows them to learn racing skills such as roll tacking and gybing. The course will teach racing techniques too. Someone who has taken an Improver course should be able to race mid fleet on a club fun racing day, depending on how much they have learned...

Yachts

The **Day Skipper** course comprises of classroom and practical tuition. Over a winter's night school or an intensive course you will learn the arts of navigation and meteorology, as well as Collision Regulations and safety. You then have to pass a practical exam that involves engine maintenance, sailing safety (including man overboard) and other important aspects of coastal sailing.

This progresses to Yachtmaster as you gain a greater and deeper knowledge of sailing.

Advanced Courses

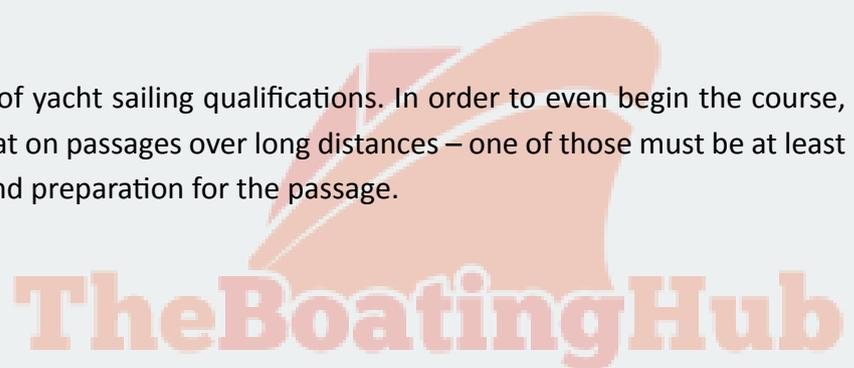
The RYA can take you from being a complete novice and through its qualification system, turn you into a seasoned old salt. On both dinghies and yachts you will be given a logbook to log your hours of sailing. It is important you keep these as only after a certain amount of experience can you get certain qualifications.

Dinghies

Advanced Courses take the person who has done RYA Level 2 and guides them in advanced techniques. You should only do these courses with at least one season's independent sailing behind you, but you will hone your skills from being a competent sailor to that of someone who can potentially sail in all conditions. You will be sailing on a boat that carries a spinnaker and will learn to use that effectively – and by the end of your training can take on the guys at the club who do the serious racing at club level and beyond!

Yachts

Yachtmaster Ocean is the apex of yacht sailing qualifications. In order to even begin the course, you must have skippered the boat on passages over long distances – one of those must be at least 600 miles, to include planning and preparation for the passage.



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In order to get to this level you should have done your Day Skipper qualification as well as the **Yachtmaster Coastal** qualification. These are not like school education where you learn a lot but experience very little – you must get a lot of sailing experience in all weathers to climb this ladder.

You will do a lot of classroom work in the finer points of navigation, boat and engine maintenance, meteorology and safety at sea. You will also have to get peripheral qualifications such as a VHF license. You can attend night school during the winter to do the classroom work, whilst sailing the rest of the year to get the necessary experience to achieve this grade.

Perhaps you might skipper on the Atlantic Racing Cruise (ARC Race) to the Caribbean? This 2000 mile passage will give you the experience you need to take people safely on a boat no matter what Neptune throws at you.

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Central and Eastern Europe

Image by Nouhailer

Austria

Despite being landlocked, Austria is a sailing mad country. Some of the best yacht builders are based there, and people sail everything from kite boards to yachts on the country's many lakes.

Austria is a crossroads of the major waterways of Europe too – the Danube and Rhine both pass through the country. You could make your way to the North Sea or Adriatic from Austria by boat. Having certification opens the doors wide to travel right across Europe...



Do I need qualifications to sail in Austria?

No – though the Österreichische Segelverband (Austrian Sailing Federation) has a very good training scheme in place to take you from complete landlubber to crusty old salt.

Basic Courses

The **BFA Internal – Junior (Befähigungsausweis Binnen – Junior)** entitles a 10-17 year old to sail a boat of up to 12 square metres sail area on inland waters. This takes the child from novice to someone who can launch, sail and land a boat safely. The same course for adults (the **Befähigungsausweis Binnen**) will allow an adult to become a competent sailor.

Competent Crewmember (Zertifikat Kompetentes Crewmitglied) shows that you can hand, reef and steer a yacht, as well as having basic knowledge of the Rules of the Road on open waters.

Intermediate courses

BFA Courses 1- 4 are licenses that show a level of competence as a skipper.

BFA Level 1 shows you can skipper a boat on inshore / coastal waters in moderate conditions.

Advanced courses

BFA Level 4 will show you are competent to sail a vessel up to 200 miles offshore safely in all weathers.

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All courses involve a theory and a practical exam.

You can apply for an International Certificate of Competence with your BFA Levels 1-4

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Czech Republic

With access to the Elbe, one of Europe's great rivers and trading routes, the Czech Republic is a seafaring nation albeit one that is very far inland...

Amicably split from Slovakia in the 1990's, much of the inland and maritime regulations are similar, with the chief difference being that Slovakia's inland waterways licenses are more complex.

Do I need qualifications to sail in the Czech Republic?

Yes you do. There are two types of qualifications – inland and seaborne. Because many countries' regulations require a sailing license to charter a boat in that country, yet the International Certificate of Competence largely only being available to the nationals of the country where it has been issued, if you are a Czech citizen irrespective of your country of residence you need a Czech license that is recognised under the ICC in order to skipper a yacht in another country.

Important note – the holder of an Inland qualification cannot sail on open water, and the holder of a seaborne qualification cannot do the same on inland routes. These qualifications are not interchangeable.

Once you have your accreditation this qualifies you for life.

Inland qualifications

VMP – vůdce malého plavidla

This is the only qualification you need to sail for leisure on inland waterways in the Czech Republic. It licenses you to sail a vessel of up to 20 metres in length or with a sail area of a maximum of 80 square metres, and an engine of power output of up to 100KW. You can carry up to 20 paying passengers too.

The test is theory only, and is carried out orally before a board of the State Navigation Commission. You will be asked questions about navigation and inland waterways regulations, as well as meteorology and safety.



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Seaborne qualifications Basic

License C

You will be entitled to sail a vessel of up to 12 metres long to 10 nautical miles out to sea, in winds of up to Force 4.

You will do a practical and theory test to show your competence. You will be tested on navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations, as well as safety and boat maintenance. You will also be tested on VHF. At sea you should show competence in boat handling, tacking and safety manoeuvres.

Seaborne qualifications Intermediate

License B

You can only apply for this certification on completing License C. You should have some sailing experience. On completion you will be licensed to sail up to 200 nautical miles offshore on any vessel.

Again, examination is on theory and practical ability. The course is necessarily of a greater depth and breadth than License C.

Seaborne qualifications Advanced

License A

You can only apply to do this once you have License B. It is recommended you have a significant amount of sailing experience to do this.

This qualifies you to sail without restriction, anywhere in the world. You will be examined on practical seamanship skills, as well as your theoretical knowledge of advanced navigation, meteorology and safety techniques. You will also demonstrate a thorough knowledge of engine maintenance.

Hungary

Hungary's major international inland waterway is the Danube, linking the Black Sea to northern Europe. Lake Balaton is also the biggest lake in Europe, offering coastal sailing conditions to the inland sailor.

You will train to sail on open waters in Dalmatia, Croatia and will be issued your coastal and offshore licenses by the Croatian government. This differs from the license they offer their own citizens.

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Do I need qualifications to sail in Hungary?

If your vessel has a sail area of over 10 square metres and / or a hull length of over 7 metres, yes you do. Therefore Lasers and many smaller dinghies are not classed as 'vessels' in Hungarian law. Hungary also subscribes to the International Certificate of Competence scheme so, if you want to do a bareboat charter in another country it is advisable to get your coastal or offshore accreditation.

Inland qualifications basic

Sailing Pleasure Craft (Kedvtelési célú vitorlás kishajó)

This qualifies you to sail a boat of up to 20 metres long on inland waterways. You can carry a maximum of 12 passengers. You can do the theory exam aged 17 but the practical exam when you are 18.

You will be tested on inland waterways navigation and collision regulations. You will be tested on sailing skills as well as boat handling.

You must have a medical certificate.

Inland qualifications Intermediate

Recreational Combined (Kedvtelési célú kombinált)

This license allows you to use a recreational motorboat. The same rules and assessment apply as to the Sailing Pleasure Craft license, only developing an understanding of engine maintenance as well.

Inland qualifications Advanced

Professional Boat Driver

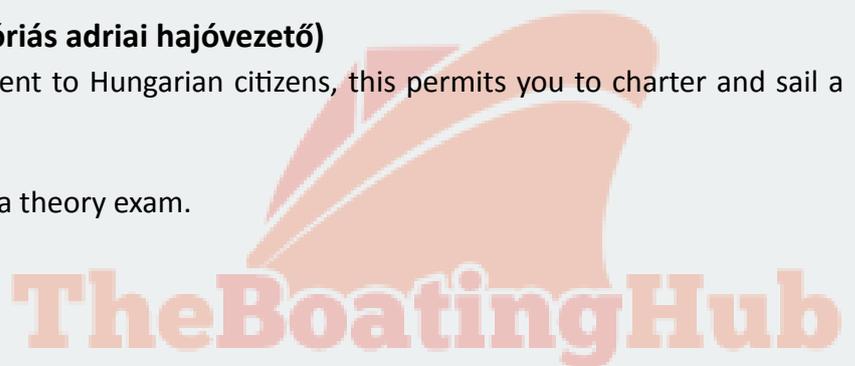
To sail a boat larger than 20 metres inland, you will need a professional level license such as a Professional Boat Driver or Professional Boat Driver A (hivatásos kishajóvezető "A")

Offshore qualifications Basic

B Adriatic Skipper ("B" kategóriás adriai hajóvezető)

Issued by the Croatian government to Hungarian citizens, this permits you to charter and sail a boat on the Adriatic.

It involves a one day course and a theory exam.



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Offshore qualifications Advanced

Category C Leading International Ship (“C” kategóriás nemzetközi hajóvezető)

This qualification entitles you to sail a vessel of up to 30 Gross Registered Tons, with up to 12 passengers on offshore waters. It is issued by the Croatian government to Hungarian citizens and is valid for five years. You must have a medical certificate before you begin.

The test will be in English, and you will first face a barrage of medical tests to see if your heart, balance and eyesight are up to scratch. You will then be assessed on your practical skills before sitting an exam on international maritime law, engineering, collision regulations, meteorology, VHF, GMDSS and ship management skills.

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Romania

A crossroads of Europe, Romania lies on the Black Sea and Danube. A new member of the European Union, it has an underdeveloped but growing sailing scene.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Romania?

If your boat has an engine up to 4.94HP, you do not need any sailing qualifications. Therefore, you can sail any racing dinghy with no license, but if you're on all but the smallest yacht, you will.

Basic qualifications

Navigation License D (Permis de navigatie D)

This permits you to sail any pleasure vessel on inland waterways.

You will be tested on the rules and regulations around sailing on the Danube, sailing skills and manoeuvring skills under power. This comes as a theory and a practical test.

Navigation License C (Permis de navigatie C)

You will be able to sail on the sea, up to 6 nautical miles offshore.

In addition to the requirements of Navigation License D, you will be tested on International Collision Regulations.

Intermediate qualification

Navigation License B (Permis de navigatie B)

Entitles the owner of the license to sail up to 12 nautical miles off the coast

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In addition to skills tested in Navigation License C, you will be tested on navigation, meteorology, and VHF skills, as well as safety skills and engine maintenance.

Advanced qualification

Permis de navigatie A

This is a permit that allows the owner to sail on all sea areas.

In addition to Navigation License B, you will be tested on GMDSS and advanced navigation techniques.

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Slovakia

On one of the major inland waterways of Europe, the Danube, Slovakia is an important inland country with a significant waterborne heritage. An independent nation after Czechoslovakia split amicably, Slovakia has much the same regulations for sailing as the Czech Republic – with one major exception, inland waterways.

Do I need a qualification to sail in Slovakia?

Yes you do. The qualification system is more complex in Slovakia than the Czech Republic by virtue there are three grades of inland certification to the Czechs' one. Very similar regulations apply for seaborne qualifications in Slovakia as they do in the Czech Republic.

Why do I need seaborne qualifications in Slovakia? Because many countries' regulations require a sailing license to charter a boat in that country, yet the International Certificate of Competence largely only being available to the nationals of the country where it has been issued, if you are a Slovak citizen irrespective of your country of residence you need a Slovak license that is recognised under the ICC in order to skipper a yacht in another country.

Important note – the holder of an Inland qualification cannot sail on open water, and the holder of a seaborne qualification cannot do the same on inland routes. These qualifications are not interchangeable.

Inland qualifications Basic

Category A

This is for vessels over 1000kg in weight. You can be 12 years old to take this if for sporting purposes, as long as the vessel has between 4 and 20kW of power. For vessels over 20kW you must be 15 years old.

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You will sit a theory test on a computer with a series of questions chosen randomly by the examining board to test your knowledge of regulations, navigation, safety and boat handling.

Inland qualifications Intermediate

Category B

You can be 16 years old to get this qualification for sport or leisure – 18 to take it as a professional qualification. This entitles the holder to sail a vessel of up to 20kW power.

You will do a practical and theory test to show your competence. You will be tested on navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations, as well as safety and boat maintenance. You will also be tested on VHF. At sea you should show competence in boat handling, tacking and safety manoeuvres.

Inland qualifications Advanced

Category C and D

For sporting activities, people of 15 years old and up can get a Category C or D as long as it is for sporting or pleasure purposes. You should be 18 if you wish to get this license for professional use. Category C covers boats of up to 12 square metres Where D is for a 'small vessel of special design' ('malé plavidlo zvláštnej konštrukcie')

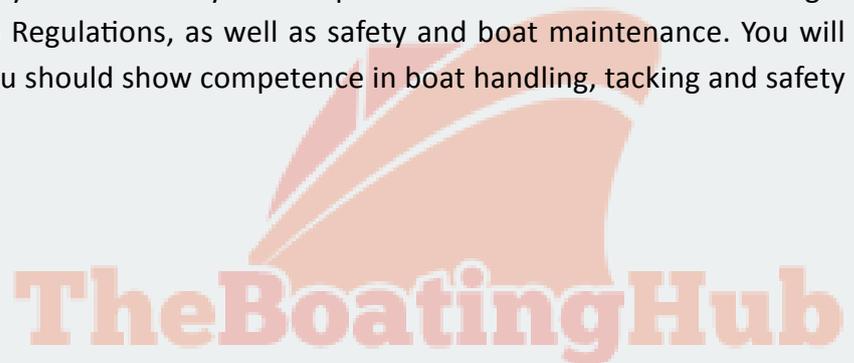
You will do a practical and theory test to show your competence. You will be tested on navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations, as well as safety and boat maintenance. You will also be tested on VHF. At sea you should show competence in boat handling, tacking and safety manoeuvres.

Seaborne qualifications Basic

License C

You will be entitled to sail a vessel of up to 12 metres long to 10 nautical miles out to sea, in winds of up to Force 4.

You will do a practical and theory test to show your competence. You will be tested on navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations, as well as safety and boat maintenance. You will also be tested on VHF. At sea you should show competence in boat handling, tacking and safety manoeuvres.



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Seaborne qualifications Intermediate

License B

You can only apply for this certification on completing License C. You should have some sailing experience. On completion you will be licensed to sail up to 200 nautical miles offshore on any vessel.

Again, examination is on theory and practical ability. The course is necessarily of a greater depth and breadth than License C.

Seaborne qualifications Advanced

License A

You can only apply to do this once you have License B. It is recommended you have a significant amount of sailing experience to do this.

This qualifies you to sail without restriction, anywhere in the world. You will be examined on practical seamanship skills, as well as your theoretical knowledge of advanced navigation, meteorology and safety techniques. You will also demonstrate a thorough knowledge of engine maintenance.

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Switzerland

What? Learn to sail in Switzerland?! The country has a number of very large lakes and the Rhine emerges from the Swiss Alps. You can sail from Rotterdam to Switzerland, and then enjoy Lake Constance and Lake Geneva with their immense scenery...

Swiss are also mad sailors – they have had an America's Cup entry before and the country regularly hosts major world sailing events. Switzerland is arguably one of the best sailing nations in the world in that respect...

Do I have to have qualifications to sail in Switzerland?

You can sail in Switzerland if you have an International Certificate of Competence.

If your boat has over 15.2 square metres of sail, you must have a basic license called a Permis de Plaisance. If you race a Laser 5000, you would have to have one but not on a Laser, or Laser Radial.

Not surprisingly for a landlocked state, you can only get a sea qualification once you have an inland qualification.

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Basic qualifications

Most people learning to sail on dinghies won't want a huge sail area so will be able to learn on something with a relatively low sail area, and can do this without qualifying first! It is good to learn by experience, and even on relatively large dinghies with 2-3 sails you can learn the ropes without dealing with bureaucracy...

Permis de Plaisance

This is issued by the Road Traffic Office.

For sailing, you need a Category D sailing permit. You can do this in French, German or Italian though you are allowed an official interpreter into the examinations with you.

You must be 14 or older to take this test.

You will take a theory test that covers inland navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations.

Within 12 months of taking the theory test you must undertake a practical test, within the same Canton as the theory test, which involves basic boat handling and maintenance skills, as well as safety procedures such as a man overboard drill and what to do in the event of a fire.

If you want to sail a boat with an engine you must apply for a Category D1 permis de plaisance, which accounts for engine maintenance and operation as well.

Advanced

Permis de Plaisance – sea

This is issued by the Swiss Maritime Navigation Office.

You can only apply for a Permis de Plaisance – Maritime once you have the inland Permis de Plaisance. You must have at least 1000 miles of seafaring experience, a medical certificate showing your eyesight meets the required minimum, and have passed a First Aid exam.

Once you qualify to take the test, you will sit a theory test looking at advanced navigation, meteorology, tides, and Collision Regulations.



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Southern and Eastern Europe

Image by Dmytrok

Albania

Sailing is heavily restricted in Albania. There is only one port of entry for foreign yachts into the country and foreign vessels are kindly asked to sail no closer than five miles offshore.

There is one yacht charter company in Albania.

Qualifications

These are unknown.

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Bulgaria

A new member of the European Union, Bulgaria is where the Danube runs into the Black Sea. It has an ancient inland and maritime heritage, coloured with decades of communism and Soviet power...

Do I need qualifications to sail in Bulgaria?

Only to sail on the Black Sea.

Basic qualifications

Leader of the boat up to 20 GT (Водач на кораб до 20 БТ)

This is a practical and theory test. You must be medically fit and be over 18 years old to do this.

You will be tested on navigation, meteorology, and collision regulations. Practically you will be tested on seamanship and safety skills, as well as boat handling and engine mechanics.

Advanced

Leader of the boat up to 40 GT (Водач на кораб до 40 БТ)

This is a much more involved course, involving VHF and GMDSS as well as the other skills and techniques described in the Leader of the boat to 20 GT course. You will be tested in theory and practise on advanced meteorology and navigation techniques, safety at sea as well as engine maintenance and operation.

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On the Adriatic, Croatia has some beautiful sailing grounds and ports including the historic city of Split. It has a culture going back several hundreds of years, marred and coloured by recent war and the Ottoman Empire.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Croatia?

Yes you do. You must be 15 or over to skipper a boat, though 18 or over for some of the higher grade qualifications. You can get one of several national qualifications or can use an International Certificate of Competence.

The qualification system blends with professional grades – unlike some countries, you will be licensed to sail a passenger, fishing or cargo vessel with many of the licenses available.

Basic qualifications

Boat Leader Category A

You must be 15 or over to get this qualification

This allows you to sail a boat of up to 6 metres and power output of 8KW on inland waters or as far out as 6 nautical miles in some waters:

Navigation Area IIIa – up to 6 nautical miles.

Navigation Area IIIb – up to 3 nautical miles

Navigation Area IIIc – up to one nautical mile

Navigation Area IV – Adriatic Ports, bays, gulfs, and rivers

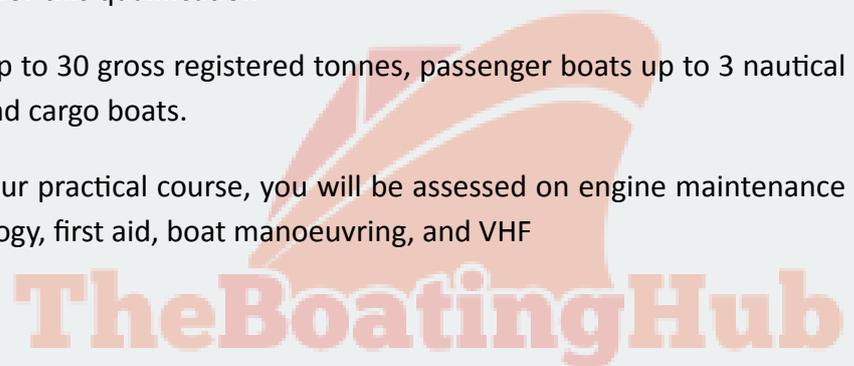
Over a two hour theory course and a two hour theory course you will be assessed in a theory exam on navigation, Collision Regulations, knots, distress signals and meteorology.

Boat Leader Category B

You must be 16 or over to apply for this qualification

You will be able to sail a yacht up to 30 gross registered tonnes, passenger boats up to 3 nautical miles out to sea, fishing boats and cargo boats.

Over 3 hours' theory and a 3 hour practical course, you will be assessed on engine maintenance and repair, navigation, meteorology, first aid, boat manoeuvring, and VHF



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Intermediate qualification

Boat Leader Category C

You must be 18 or over to attain this qualification. From this grade of certification up you must have a medical exam from an Occupational Health practice in Croatia before applying.

You will be able to skipper all types of boat, but yachts up to 30 gross registered tonnes.

You will do 17 hours of theory instruction and eight hours of practical training, covering maritime safety law, meteorology, boat maintenance, first aid, and VHF training as well as boat manoeuvring.

Advanced qualifications

Yacht Master Category A

Once qualified you will be able to sail anything up to 100 gross registered tonnes.

Over 90 hours training (to include 57 hours of practical) you will cover all of the areas in Boat Leader Category C to a much greater depth and breadth.

Yacht Master Category B

This is the apex of sailing qualifications in Croatia, and enables you to legally sail anything up to 500 gross registered tonnes. To give you an idea of how big 500 GRT is, this will include medium sized tall ships...

Over 214 hours of training you will learn everything in Yacht Master Category A, plus ship construction and planning.

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Cyprus

Cyprus is one of the jewels of the Mediterranean, with great sailing and a laid back way of life. It is a divided island with the Turkish invasion in the 1970's still leaving it effectively splitting the island into two, hostile nations. Of the 100 odd countries in the world, only Turkey recognises Northern Cyprus as an independent country.

For the purposes of this section we will refer to 'Cyprus' as being the independent, southern end of the island and 'Northern Cyprus' as being the Turkish side.

Sailing in Cyprus

Though relations between the two countries are warming, at present, if you sail into a Northern Cypriot port before entering Cyprus you can be subjected to arrest and heavy fines by the Cypriot authorities.

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Do I need qualifications to sail in Cyprus?

You need a license if you wish to skipper a boat of up to 15 metres whose speed can exceed 15 knots.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Northern Cyprus?

No.

Basic qualifications – Cyprus

Consider doing an RYA accredited course at one of the many sailing schools in the country. You might do an RYA Level 1 Dinghy course or a Competent Crew course.

Basic qualifications – Northern Cyprus

None are available.

Intermediate qualifications - Cyprus

Consider an RYA intermediate course such as a Day Skipper, or for dinghies, an RYA equivalent.

Intermediate qualifications – Northern Cyprus

None.

Advanced qualifications – Cyprus

Consider doing an RYA Yachtmaster course

Advanced qualifications – Northern Cyprus

None

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Greece

One of the oldest maritime nations in the world, with history stretching back thousands of years, Greece and its thousands of islands are a sailor's wet dream. The climate is perfect for sailing year round. It is recommended you consider sailing outside of the traditional holiday period in August to get the best conditions and not have to pray for a berth as you come into port in the evening...

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Do I need qualifications to sail in Greece?

Yes you do. If you are from a different country, relax as the country recognises qualifications from many other countries including the US and most of Europe. In Greece you can learn to sail in English, and can choose between the Greek courses, RYA accreditation and ASA accreditation.

Basic courses

Beginners course (ΤΜΗΜΑ ΑΡΧΑΡΙΩΝ)

This qualifies you to sail a boat of up to 20 metres in length anywhere on the Aegean and beyond.

The course involves 21 hours of theory and 55 hours of practical experience. The theory course covers meteorology, navigation, engine maintenance, collision regulations, first aid and maritime law. The practical course covers sailing at different points of sail, tacking and gybing, as well as man overboard and other safety techniques.

Advanced

Advanced course (Σχολές Προχωρημένων)

Run at most sailing clubs in Greece for members, the aim of the Advanced course is to take the sailor and hone their skills to the point that anchoring, for example, is as second nature to the sailor as parallel parking is to the experienced car driver – an effort at the best of times but the expert does it first time most of the time!

The course involves getting a lot of experience and tuition to become an expert sailor. Courses in Greece will take you through 18 hours of theory, usually in six lessons, and 52 hours of practical sailing.

Italy

Whether sailing inland on the beautiful inland lakes, on the Adriatic or Mediterranean seas, Italy has some of the most varied sailing in the world.

Do I have to have a qualification to sail?

Only if your boat is less than 24 metres long, has an engine and you plan on sailing more than six miles out to sea. If it does have an engine, then only if the power is over 40.8hp and / or a cylinder of over 750cc. If you wish to sail more than six miles out to sea then you must have a license.

Where some countries demand you have a specific inland waterways license you only have to have one license – for inland and coastal / offshore in Italy.

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If you are from a foreign country and wish to hire a yacht on bareboat terms you should have an International Certificate of Competence or IYT accreditation.

Patente de Nautico

The Italian licensing system is a government regulated system called the Patente di Nautico. There are three categories of license, each subdivided into three limits.

Categoria A applies to 'vessels and pleasure craft'

Categoria B applies to 'control of pleasure craft'

Categoria C applies to 'marine vessels and pleasure craft'.

The license must be renewed every 10 years, or five years once over the age of 60.

Health requirements

You cannot get a license if you have a diagnosed mental or physical health impairment, though in some cases you may be allowed a Category C license as long as you have an able bodied crewmember at sea with you. Your eyesight must reach strict minimum standards without correction too.

Basic qualifications

Category A – B (Categoria A - B)

Within 12 miles of the coast. (entro le 12 miglia dalla costa)

You will have to do a practical exam on a lake or at sea to demonstrate you can sail the boat safely, and understand basic engine operation and maintenance,

You will have to sit a theory test that shows your knowledge in navigation, inland and offshore Italian and international collision regulations, meteorology, safety and engine operation and maintenance.

Category C (Categoria B)

If you have a physical disability you can only sail if you have an able bodied crew member who can help out in emergency, and you must have an emergency system that can deactivate the autopilot and stop the engine in an emergency.

Intermediate

Unlimited offshore sailing (senza alcun limite dalla costa)

This is only a theory test but requires you to be able to navigate offshore to an advanced level, have strong boat maintenance skills, and know advanced safety techniques. You will also have to have a VHF license.

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Advanced

Vessels over 24 metres (Recreational vessels - per navi da diporto)

Put it in perspective, the 2017 America's Cup yachts that will fly over the water at speeds of double the wind speed will be smaller than 24 metres in length. Most of us will never be lucky enough to sail on one, let alone skipper it!

You must have held an unlimited offshore license for a minimum of three years in order to be assessed for this license.

You will have to sit a theory and a practical exam covering boat handling, meteorology, navigation and the law.

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Malta

In the middle of the Mediterranean, Malta has long been a Mecca for yachties. Until 1964 part of the British Empire, the island still has close ties with the UK. This includes legal ties – you can be a Maltese citizen and get a UK International Certificate of Competence to sail in all countries signed up to the scheme.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

Only if you are on a boat with more than 60HP of engines (combined power) or plan on towing / taking someone waterskiing.

Basic - Advanced qualifications

See United Kingdom elsewhere in this book – the RYA runs courses recognised by the Maltese Government

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Montenegro

Though a very under developed country with regard sailing (there are currently only five marinas in the whole country), Montenegro has a UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Bay of Kotor, known as the only 'fjord' in Europe. Being able to sail on the placid yet deep river valley is a must do on most sailors' bucket list...

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Do I have to be qualified to sail in Montenegro?

Yes you do. The country is signed up to the International Certificate of Competence but you can also do a practical and theory exam known as the Yacht Skipper, that qualifies you to sail anything up to 100 gross registered tonnes.

Basic qualification

Sailing schools in Montenegro teach sailing courses, some accredited by the RYA to get you from complete landlubber to competent sailor. Only then should you consider the government sailing license, Yacht Skipper.

Advanced qualification

Yacht Skipper

This course requires 6 hours of practical training and 36 hours of theory training.

The practical course involves boat manoeuvring, knots, sail handling as well as navigation, engine maintenance and operation, and safety.

The theory course covers meteorology, navigation, law, safety, collision regulations as well as engine maintenance and first aid.

The exam is done with a board of three experts at a Harbour Master's office having at a time and date arranged in advance.

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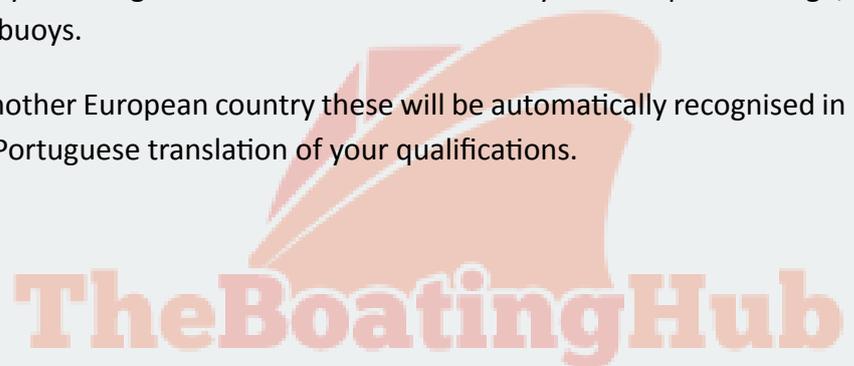
Portugal

One of the great European seafaring nations, Portuguese sailors once led European exploration and dominance of the globe.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Portugal?

Yes you do – there is a complex system of government accreditation that you must pass through, even to race a yacht around the buoys.

If you have qualifications from another European country these will be automatically recognised in Portugal. Make sure you have a Portuguese translation of your qualifications.



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Basic

Beginner's course (Curso do Principiante)

This accreditation allows you to skipper of up to 5 metres in length, with an engine of power output of up to 6HP, up to a mile offshore. You must undertake 10 hours of theory and 5 hours of practical lessons before sitting the exam.

On the theory course you will cover First Aid, navigation and tides, basic meteorology, law, collision avoidance, parts of the boat, anchoring and signals.

On the practical course you will cover man overboard recovery, how to equip a rowing / sailing / motorboat, the basics of driving a rowing / sailing / motorboat, docking manoeuvres, and use of lifejackets.

Course Sailor (Marinheiro)

This course enables you to skipper a boat of up to 7 metres in length up to 3 miles offshore. If you are between 14-18 you can have an engine of up to 30HP. Over 18, up to 60HP. You must have the Curso Pincipiante.

Over 20 hours' theory and 10 of practical you will cover the elements of the Curso de Principiante in greater depth.

Intermediate

Local Skipper (Patrão Local)

This entitles the owner to skipper a boat up to 5 miles offshore or 10 miles from a safe haven. You must have the Marinhero qualification.

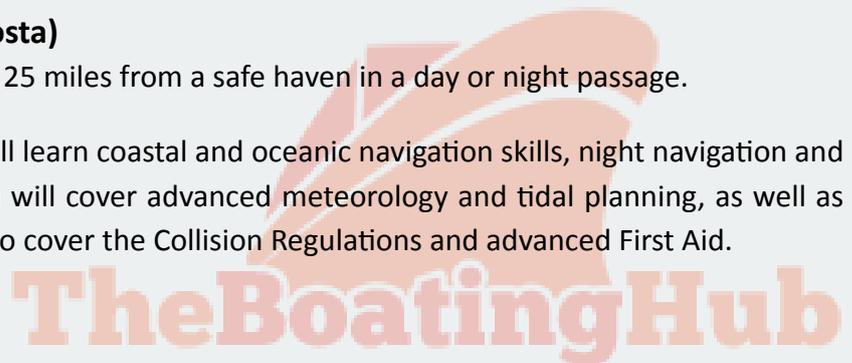
Over 30 hours of theoretical learning, you will learn navigation to a much greater depth, a good level of meteorology, Collision Regulations, how to abandon ship and when, and engine maintenance.

Over 10 hours of practical course, you will cover: estimated position, towing, man overboard, proper use of navigation and communications equipment.

Master of Costa (Patrão de Costa)

You will be qualified to sail up to 25 miles from a safe haven in a day or night passage.

Over 50 theoretical hours you will learn coastal and oceanic navigation skills, night navigation and navigation without visibility. You will cover advanced meteorology and tidal planning, as well as VHF and GMDSS use. You will also cover the Collision Regulations and advanced First Aid.



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For the practical side you will be expected to be a competent seafarer, able to use the sextant, modern navigation aids, and VHF to high standards. You will be able to use your theoretical navigation skills in practice, quickly, accurately and efficiently.

Advanced

Master of the High Seas (Patrão de Alto Mar)

This accreditation allows you to undertake oceanic voyages without limit. You must have the Master of Costa to begin this course. The course will involve 76 theoretical hours and 24 hours of practice.

You will be expert in meteorology, oceanic navigation (with and without electronic aids), be familiar with advanced passage planning techniques, and be capable of dealing with emergencies ranging from man overboard to fire at sea and mechanical failure. You will undertake an advanced First Aid course.

The practical side will involve at least one passage of 12 hours between ports and you will be instructed in navigation in fog.

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Slovenia

Slovenia, on the northern end of the Adriatic and a former member state of Yugoslavia, is an up and coming sailing nation. It has an emerging yacht building industry and its sailing teams are future contenders for honours at international sailing events.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

Compared to other countries the certification scheme is relatively simple, though again, you must pass a government test – it isn't completely free of bureaucracy!

- If you are on a boat with no engine that is up to 7 metres long, you can sail with no license.
- If your boat has an engine, and is over 5 metres long, you will need a license to sail.
- If you are under 16 years old you cannot qualify to sail.

Basic qualifications Sea

Certificate of proficiency test for the management of a boat - sea (PREIZKUS ZNANJA ZA UPRAVLJANJE ČOLNA - MORJE)

This qualifies you to operate a vessel of up to 7 metres with an engine on open waters. The test comes in two parts – an oral theory test, and a practical test that are done together. You must be 16 to sit the test.

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Basic qualifications Inland

Certificate of proficiency for the management of a boat (PREIZKUS ZNANJA ZA UPRAVLJANJE ČOLNA - CELINSKE VODE)

This certifies the person to sail a boat of up to 7 metres with an engine on inland waters. Like the sea test, you are required to undergo a practical exam and an oral exam that takes 30 minutes.

Intermediate qualifications Sea

Boat leader (ZPIT ZA VODITELJA ČOLNA – MORJE)

This allows the skipper to sail a boat of up to 12 metres in length. You must be 18 to sail a boat of this size with an engine, though 16 year olds can take the test on a sail only boat.

The test is more involved than the basic courses above but again involves a 30 minute practical and oral test to make sure you are safe at sea.

Intermediate qualifications Inland

Boat leader (PREIZKUS ZNANJA ZA UPRAVLJANJE ČOLNA - CELINSKE VODE)

You will be licensed to sail a boat of up to 12 metres on inland waters with this accreditation. You must be 18 to use a motorboat though can be 16 to sail a sailing only boat.

The test involves a 30 minute oral examination inland waters collision regulations.

Advanced qualifications

Sailor Motorist (MORNAR MOTORIST)

This qualifies you to sail a boat of up to 100 gross tonnes, powered by an engine of up to 250KW – a pretty big gin palace... You will also be able to carry up to 50 passengers on a commercial basis.

You must have held a Boat Leader certificate for a minimum of three years.

The test comes in two parts – the oral and the practical:

Practical: Navigation, ship's power plant, safety at sea

Oral: Navigation, Prevention of Collisions at sea, safety at sea, ship's power plant, meteorology.

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With its Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts and islands, Spain is a varied and fun place to sail. Whether lazing off the Canaries, blasting down to the Balearics, or cruising off the Basque region, you will never be bored with the variety of sailing off this great maritime nation.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

If you have an International Certificate of Competence (or equivalent) you can sail wherever you like in Spain, as long as it is on a boat registered in the same country you qualified. If you don't have an ICC, or you wish to skipper a Spanish registered boat of over 5 metres, you must have a license called a Titulo de Recreo (TR).

However, if you wish to sail a dinghy such as a Topper or Laser you can go afloat without a license – the TR only applies to sailing vessels of over 5 metres, which could mean a Wayfarer at a stretch, as long as you are sailing it in daylight hours.

Unqualified and you are caught sailing a bigger boat or one with an engine of over 10KW? Under the law the authorities have the power to confiscate your boat!

As with many European countries, you have to have a medical certificate to qualify as a skipper for any regulated size of boat.

Titulo Recreo (TR)

The titulo de recreo has a number of grades according to the size of the vessel and whether it is sailing or otherwise. You must be 18 to have a license, or with parental consent you can be 16.

If you have certain equivalents such as an RYA Yachtmaster you can apply for equivalence and do not have to do any testing.

If you do have to do the testing then you must speak Spanish fluently in order to take instruction and pass the test.

Health

For all but the most basic sailing qualifications you have to pass a government accredited psycho-physiological health exam in order to sit the practical and theory tests.

Basic course

For a basic course in dinghy sailing in English, consider an RYA Level 1 course – you will be able to find RYA centres in coastal towns – see the International Courses section to work out whether you can do a basic sailing course in an RYA centre near you.

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Patrón de Navegación Básica (PNB)

This practical and theory test allows you to sail a vessel of up to 8 metres up to four miles offshore. This involves a course of 12 hours on coastal navigation and safety, to include boat handling skills and knots as well as fire safety, or a practical exam.

You will sit a 40 question theory test.

You will have to pass a VHF test.

Patrón de Embarcaciones de Recreo (PER)

This allows you to sail anything up to 12 metres, up to 12 miles offshore, and is required to undertake the Patron de Yate (see below).

You have to do a 16 hour practical course or a practical exam.

You must sit a VHF exam.

You have to sit a 75 question theory exam.

Intermediate

Patron de Yate

This allows you to sail anything up to 20 metres, up to 60 miles offshore. You should have your PER before applying for this accreditation.

The practical course takes a minimum of 4 days and 5 hours during which you will be tested in day and night navigation. Alternatively you will have to do a practical exam.

You will sit a four hour VHF exam.

You will also sit an extensive theory test.

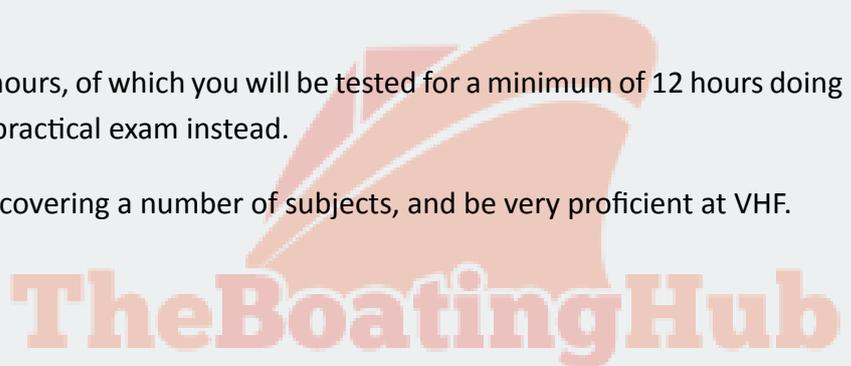
Advanced

The **Capitan de Yate** is an ocean level accreditation for any vessel. You must pass a theory test and undertake a VHF course.

The practical course will take 48 hours, of which you will be tested for a minimum of 12 hours doing night navigation. You can take a practical exam instead.

You will have to do a theory test covering a number of subjects, and be very proficient at VHF.

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Scandinavia and North Atlantic

Image by Bengt Nyman

Finland

With its myriad and spectacular fjords and lakes, Finland is one of the most stunning countries on earth to sail. Being as far north as it is, one shouldn't go out on a boat unless you at least have an idea of how to get home in the event of the weather turning!

There is no legal requirement to have a license to sail around Finnish waters. The Finnish Sailing Federation (the Suomen Purjehdus Ja Veneily or SPV) has a number of qualifications that will ensure you can sail safely from novice level and up.



Basic qualification

The 'basic boaters course' or "Veneilijän peruskurssi" equips you in basic boat handling, navigation and safety in sheltered waters. This will make you a useful crewmember on a boat, with someone else skippering you.

Advanced

From there you can progress to the Venepäällikkökurssi, or 'Boat command course' that gives you a certain competence as a skipper. You must have at least two years' sailing experience to begin the course, but with this qualification you can get further, government accreditation called the Kansainvälinen huviveneen kuljettajan pätevyyskirja (International Certificate of Competence) and sail anywhere in the world that accepts works with this scheme.

This is composed of a theory and a practical course, where your navigation and meteorology knowledge is tested alongside your safety, boat handling and practical skills.

For those interested in sailing on the Inland waterways of Europe you can extend the Venepäällikkökurssi to include CEVNI accreditation. This is administered by the Finnish Transport Safety Agency.

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Iceland

The land of fire and ice sits in the North Atlantic. Due to its location and primary export (fishing), it is understandable that there isn't much in the way of sailing accreditation.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Iceland?

Not if you wish to sail a boat of less than 12 metres in length. If you do, then you must do the skipstjórnarnáms course. This can be done at school and you can qualify when you turn 18 years old and blends in with commercial and fishing qualifications.

The courses all reach the demands of the International Maritime Organisation Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) for commercial vessels. You should be aware you will have to pass commercial standards of physical fitness, unlike other countries.

All of these qualifications are recognised under international treaties.

Basic qualifications

Skipstjórnarnáms S (< 12 m)

This course qualifies you to be a crewmember of a boat of under 12 metres in length. The course is primarily focused on inshore fishing boats, though you will learn the skills to be a useful crew on any yacht or speedboat as well.

Intermediate

Skipstjórnarnáms A (<24 metres)

The skipstjórnarnáms A allows you to skipper a boat of between 12 and 24 metres in length. You can also be mate on a boat of up to 45 metres in length.

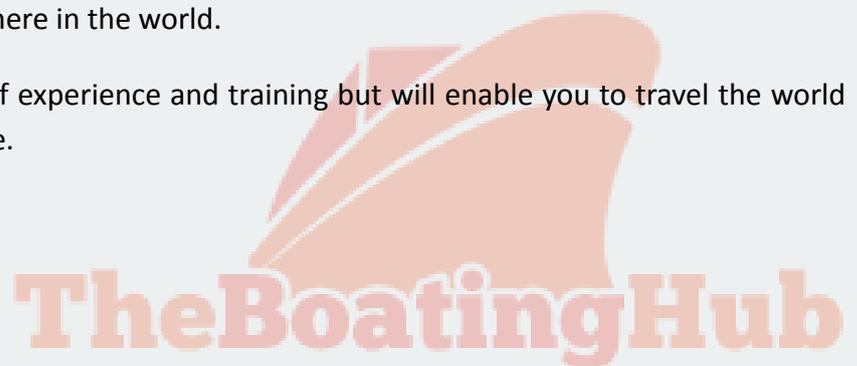
A large part of this course involves fish handling, to include fisheries law and techniques.

Advanced

You can get your **skipstjórnarnáms B (< 45 metres)** and **skipstjórnarnáms C** that allows you to sail any ship in any conditions anywhere in the world.

Such accreditation takes years of experience and training but will enable you to travel the world confidently in a vessel of any size.

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With its stunning fjords and access to the Arctic, Norway is an amazing place to sail. The seas surrounding gave the Vikings the skill and experience to invade and raid much of Europe! Due to the mountain weather racing into the fjords and latitude, sailing can be dangerous too – it is well advised to learn how to sail.

Do I need qualifications to sail?

For boats up to 8 metres in length, or vessels with an engine of 25hp or more, you need a Båtførerbevis, or boating license. The Båtførerbevis is issued by the Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMD). This allows you to sail most dinghies, but in order to sail most cruisers you'd need a license. The Båtførerbevis allows you to sail any boat up to 15 metres, or just over 49ft. Again, most sailors would not need a greater qualification for bombing around the buoys or on day trips exploring the fjords.

Norway recognises the International Certificate of Competence.

Basic qualifications

Dinghies

There is no formal, nationally recognised progression as with some other countries.

To learn the ropes on a dinghy you should pop down to a sailing club and ask for lessons. Most will run beginner and intermediate courses to get you on the water confidently. Youngsters up to the age of 15 will generally learn on an Optimist where teenagers and the young at heart will start on a bigger boat.

Yachts

Båtførerbevis

This government sailing license is required if you are to sail a boat of over 8 metres or have an engine of over 25hp. It covers navigation, meteorology, environmental regulations and the International Collision Regulations in some depth. You will undergo a practical assessment that demonstrates you can safely maintain and operate the vessel.

The Båtførerbevis is accepted in countries that have signed up to the International Certificate of Competence scheme.



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Advanced

Fritidsbåtskippersertifikat (D5L)

This certificate allows you to sail a boat of up to 50 gross registered tonnes. You need a valid health certificate to pass it, and must have regularly skippered a vessel of over 8 metres for the last 3 years.

The examination comprises of practical assessment and a theory test. The practical covers engine maintenance and repair, boat handling and safety manoeuvres. The theoretical test covers advanced navigation, meteorology and Collision Regulations.

Progression from this level will be for commercial skippers.

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Sweden

Sweden is renowned for its fantastic sailing, with fjords, islands and lakes of astounding beauty. It is a seafaring nation of some reputation, doing well in international competition, and hosting international sailing events of its own. One only has to think of the seven Volvo Ocean 65's blasting their way around the world at the time of writing to see the level of Swedish sailing!

You don't have to have any qualifications to sail a smaller boat such as a Laser or a Wayfarer though insurance companies give discounts for people who are qualified.

The Nämnden för Båtlivsutbildning administers sailing education, and runs a series of courses that can take you from complete landlubber to salty old professional.

Basic

Children

Children can do the Nämnden för Båtlivsutbildning Bronze, Silver and Gold sailing courses.

The Bronze level (Bronsmärket) says you can rig a boat and sail safely at all points of sail.

The Silver level (Silvermärket) teaches you about collision regulations, and how to rescue someone who has gone overboard.

The Gold level (Guldmärket) will enable the child to participate at club level races, and various skills such as roll tacking. It also involves race planning.

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Adults

Adults can do the Sailing Certificates levels 1, 2 and 3

These courses take you from being a complete novice to being a competent sailor in most conditions.

Sailing Certificate 1 (Seglarintyg 1) takes the landlubber and gives them a taste of sailing safely. You will be able to sail in inshore waters comfortably. It covers sail handling, helmsmanship and gybing and tacking. You will also learn about the 'Rules of the Road', the international collision regulations and basic meteorology.

Intermediate

Coastal Skipper (Kustskepparintyg)

This is a theory only course, generally taken through the dark winter months. In the classroom you will cover navigation skills, tidal calculations and Collision Regulations. It is advised you take this prior to the Sailing Certificate 2.

Sailing Certificate 2 (Seglarintyg 2) looks at all the issues covered in Seglarintyg 1 but to a greater breadth and depth.

Racing course

The **Racing Course (Kappseglingkurs)** takes the beginner sailor and turns them into a yacht racer. You will learn the basics of boat and rig tuning, racing rules and tactics used to be the first across the start line, as well as how to finish with a flourish!

Advanced courses

The **Sailing Certificate 3 (Seglarintyg 3)** qualifies you to sail any sized yacht in even the worst conditions offshore.

As well as advanced sail trimming and manoeuvres and flying a spinnaker safely, the course will take you through meteorology, advanced navigation and seamanship in rough weather.

Channel Certificate

The **Channel Certificate, (Kanalintyg)** will get you government accreditation to sail on inland waterways, including the Rhine and Seine as an example. This covers all the rules and regulations unique to sailing on Europe's inland waterway system.

Racing Course 2

The Racing Course 2 (Kappseglingkurs 2) is about going from being comfortably in the middle of the racing fleet to leading from the front. You take your skills learned in the first Kappseglingkurs course, combine it with your experience and learn how to refine your skills to the next level.

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North America and Caribbean

Image by Pshutterurg

In this section there are the two major countries – the US and Canada – that have very developed sailing accreditation which are recognised all over the world.

There are around 30 independent, and semi independent nations in the Caribbean. Here I could have mentioned every island in the Caribbean regardless of whether you need a license or not but chose not to – if the island is not on this list it doesn't have a pleasure boat licensing system. In most of the Caribbean outside of US waters this seems to be the case – you are free to sail throughout the region untrammelled by bureaucracy.



Antigua and Barbuda

The Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda has long been a draw for sailors from around the world. Placid seas with steady winds and a great climate all combine to make the region a paradise for sailing. Be careful though – everything from hostile locals, to coral heads and even hurricanes can ruin your trip...

Do I need qualifications to sail off these islands?

No, but don't be lulled by the serene seas. One of the fascinations of the sea is that it is dangerous, even on a gin clear, calm day.

The other issue to consider is that other nations in the Caribbean do require a license. You can easily stray into other nations' waters, and may require a license to sail on them.

Consider doing an internationally recognised qualification such as an IYT, International Certificate of Competence or RYA recognised course. If you are stopped by a patrol boat you then have a decent chance of a cheery wave as they send you on your way...

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Aruba

One of several Netherlands run islands, Aruba is a semi independent nation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Unlike the French island of Guadeloupe, it is not considered part of the Netherlands (as Guadeloupe is part of France) but nor is it an entirely independent nation.

Do I need a license to sail off Aruba?

Yes you do. The only vessel that is exempted from requiring a license to sail is one defined as 'being powered by muscle only'.

Being a Dutch colony, you will be allowed to sail into and around its waters with an International Certificate of Competence.

Basic

It is advised you learn to sail through a local RYA or IYT sailing academy.

Advanced

License to Sail

You must be 18 to sit this course, and the license expires when you turn 65.

You are then required to sit an extensive course that takes 6-8 weeks, covering meteorology, navigation, tides, collision regulations and law of the sea, as well as engine maintenance and operation.

Barbados

Long a destination for the wealthy due to direct flights from London and other fashion capitals, Barbados is one of the many paradise islands of the Caribbean.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Barbados?

If you own a speedboat, you need a "Bajan Speedboat License" issued by the Ministry of International Business and International Transport. If you are renting the vessel, and it is of a length not exceeding four metres, you can use one without a license as long as you have had a safety briefing.

The learner's license costs USD \$140 and the test \$40, and is available from the Ministry of International Transport.

On anything else? It is advisable to learn to sail before you take a boat out. Consider an internationally recognised qualification through the RYA, IYT or ASA, or get hold of an International Certificate of Competence before you go out to the island.

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Bahamas

Just off Florida is a paradise – the northern edge of the Caribbean Sea, and the Bahamas. Abutting onto the Florida Keys, you can unwittingly leave the free and easy Bahamas and enter US territorial waters with a lot more regulation on sailing activities.

Do I need qualifications to sail in the Bahamas?

No, but it is strongly recommended you do. As you wouldn't tell your 16 year old son to drive you to work one morning with no driving lessons or license, you shouldn't consider just taking a yacht out anywhere without a certain level of skills and experience.

Consider taking an ASA, IYT, International Certificate of Competence, or RYA sailing course before sailing anywhere on the Caribbean. You've a far better chance of surviving the perils of the unexpected, whether a USCG cutter stopping you for a chat, or something far more lethal...

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Belize

Famous for its coral 'blue holes', Belize is a popular destination for water sports fans of all stripes. Whether you're just there to enjoy the laid back yet fun sailing scene or to explore the tropical wilderness beneath and above the waves, Belize has something for everyone.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Belize?

Yes you do, even if you are planning on bareboat chartering a dinghy. You will need a Boat Master's License.

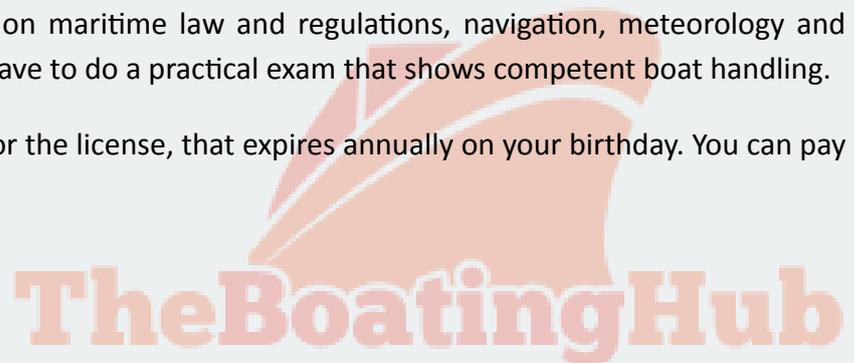
Basic qualifications

Boat Master's License

Belizian citizens must present a Social Security ID card, and foreigners a valid passport, to the Port Authority.

You will then sit a written test on maritime law and regulations, navigation, meteorology and safety. On passing the test you have to do a practical exam that shows competent boat handling.

You then pay USD\$25 per year for the license, that expires annually on your birthday. You can pay for up to three years in advance.



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Intermediate and Advanced qualifications

There is no state accredited advanced qualification system unless you want a commercial license, to charter out boats for example.

Do consider an IYT, ASA, RYA or International Certificate of Competence before you go sailing in Belize as sailing is dangerous and doesn't always forgive stupid mistakes...

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Canada

Whether cruising the islands of the West Coast, racing on the multitude of lakes in the country or enjoying the challenging conditions of the St Lawrence Seaway and South East, sailing in Canada is as challenging or relaxing as you could possibly want.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Canada?

Only if you have an engine on your boat. By law you must get a Canadian Boating License that involves an online multiple choice exam which you must pass with a score of at least 75%.

CAN Sail

This is the rebranded Royal Canadian Yacht Club, and is the principle body that looks after the interests of pleasure boaters in Canada. This is also linked to the disabled sailing association, Able Sail Network, which promotes sailing among people with physical disabilities.

Basic qualifications

Canadian Boating License

This is an online multiple choice test of 50 questions and you must get 75% to pass. You can do it at home, and you can refer to notes you have taken – there is no fail for “cheating”. It must be done within 1 hour and 15 minutes. If you fail you can resit, but once you have passed you don't have to renew the license.

CAN Sail Dinghies

Wet Feet

For 5-8 year old children, learning to sail Optimist sailing dinghies

CAN Sail standards 1 - 2

These two qualifications take the complete landlubber and teaches them the basics of sailing a dinghy. You will be able to launch, tack and gybe, as well as right a capsized boat safely. You will be able to sail either a singlehanded or double handed boat.

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CAN Sail Keelboat

Introduction to Boating

This course shows the basics of going out in a keelboat or powerboat.

Basic Crew Standard

This shows you how to perform basic tasks on a boat, from docking and undocking, to handling sheets and helming. You will be qualified to sail a boat of between 6-10 metres in length.

Basic Cruising Standard

You will be able to skipper a 6-10 metre boat with an inboard or an outboard motor in daylight in moderate conditions.

Basic Keelboat Racing Standard

To be able to handle a yacht of 6 -10 metres in a race, though without a spinnaker. You will understand race management, and how to complete a race without penalty.

Intermediate

CAN Sail Dinghies

CAN Sail standards 3-4

This hones your skills learned in CAN Sail 1 or 2. You will be able to sail a singlehanded or double handed boat well and fast in most conditions.

CAN Sail Keelboat

Intermediate Crew Standard

You will be able to crew or skipper a cruising boat of 9 – 12 metres with an auxiliary engine in moderate conditions in daylight. This qualification is acceptable to yacht charter companies.

Intermediate Cruising Standard

This qualification takes Intermediate Crew Standard and helps you advance your skills as a skipper. It is also accepted by bareboat charter companies as a qualification to take one of their boats out.

Advanced

CAN Sail Dinghies

CAN Sail 5-6

This takes the intermediate sailor and helps hone their expertise to being at the front of the club fleet in a race.

Chutes and wires

This course teaches advanced trapeze and spinnaker flying skills.

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CAN Sail Keelboat

Advanced Crew Standard

This will allow the crewmember to have the skills to be able to sail a boat of 10-15 metres up to 100 miles offshore in difficult weather conditions in daylight or at night.

Advanced Cruising Standard

This accreditation will enable you to skipper a boat up to 10 metres long, up to 100 miles offshore in any weather conditions.

Offshore Standard

You will be able to crew or skipper any yacht of any size on oceanic passages using celestial navigation.

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Cuba

Long the thorn in the side of the Capitalist United States, Cuba is a wonderful if quirky place to sail.

Do I need a license to sail in Cuba?

If you are Cuban and wish to sail, I'm sorry to say but you can't. At all. It is against the law for Cuban nationals to board any boat unless they are a licensed fisherman or are married to a foreign national.

If you are a foreign national and planning on entering US territory afterwards, do your research as you could be banished for life for the crime.

Otherwise, there is no restriction on sailing!

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Dominican Republic

On the same island of Hispaniola as troubled Haiti, the Dominican Republic is one of the most visited nations in the Caribbean. It is famous for its cigars and golf courses...

Do I need a qualification to sail in the Dominican Republic?

No.



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Basic and Advanced qualifications

Consider an internationally accredited qualification from the IYT, RYA, ASA or an International Certificate of Competence from your own country...

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Guadeloupe

One of several islands still run by France, Guadeloupe is a beautiful Caribbean island. It is close to a number of other French islands that accept the same qualifications you need to sail in Guadeloupe.

Do I need a licence to sail off Guadeloupe?

If your boat has an engine of over 6 HP you do.

Being a French island you will be able to sail with an International Certificate of Competence.

Basic qualification

Permis Côtier

This permits you to sail a boat of any size, up to 6 miles offshore, day or night. You can be 16 or older to sit this test.

You need to do a practical course of three hours and then sit a theory test of 30 questions on the Maritime Code.

Advanced qualification

Permis Hauturier

You must have the Permis Côtier, and be 16 or older to qualify to sit this exam.

The course is typically, 42 hours of theoretical training. It covers navigation, tides, meteorology, safety at sea, and Collision Regulations.

The test is 1 hour 30, and will cover all the things you have learned in the course.

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Jamaica

Famed for its sprinters, mountains and laid back atmosphere, as well as the grinding poverty of some of its poorest residents, Jamaica is one of the largest islands of the Caribbean.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Jamaica?

No. If you want to learn to sail it is recommended that you do a course through the ASA, RYA, or IYT. It is also advisable to have an International Certificate of Competence if you are from abroad and wish to charter a boat on the island.

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Martinique

One of several islands still run by France, Martinique is a beautiful Caribbean island. It is close to a number of other French islands that accept the same qualifications you need to sail in Martinique.

Do I need a licence to sail off Martinique?

If your boat has an engine of over 6 HP you do.

Being a French island you will be able to sail with an International Certificate of Competence.

Basic qualification

Permis Côtier

This permits you to sail a boat of any size, up to 6 miles offshore, day or night. You can be 16 or older to sit this test.

You need to do a practical course of three hours and then sit a theory test of 30 questions on the Maritime Code.

Advanced qualification

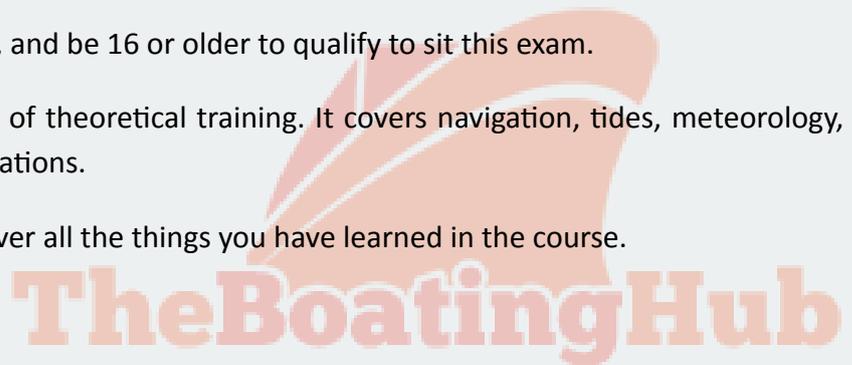
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The course is typically, 42 hours of theoretical training. It covers navigation, tides, meteorology, safety at sea, and Collision Regulations.

The test is 1 hour 30, and will cover all the things you have learned in the course.

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Saint Barthelemy (St Barth's)

One of several islands still run by France, Saint Barthelemy is a beautiful Caribbean island. It is close to a number of other French islands that accept the same qualifications you need to sail in Saint Barthelemy.

Do I need a licence to sail off Saint Barthelemy?

If your boat has an engine of over 6 HP you do.

Being a French island you will be able to sail with an International Certificate of Competence.

Basic qualification

Permis Côtier

This permits you to sail a boat of any size, up to 6 miles offshore, day or night. You can be 16 or older to sit this test.

You need to do a practical course of three hours and then sit a theory test of 30 questions on the Maritime Code.

Advanced qualification

Permis Hauturier

You must have the Permis Côtier, and be 16 or older to qualify to sit this exam.

The course is typically, 42 hours of theoretical training. It covers navigation, tides, meteorology, safety at sea, and Collision Regulations.

The test is 1 hour 30, and will cover all the things you have learned in the course.

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Saint Martin

One of several islands still run by France, Saint Martin is a beautiful Caribbean island. It is close to a number of other French islands which accept the same qualifications you need to sail in Saint Martin.

Do I need a licence to sail off Saint Martin?

If your boat has an engine of over 6 HP you do.

Being a French island you will be able to sail with an International Certificate of Competence.

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Basic qualification

Permis Côtier

This permits you to sail a boat of any size, up to 6 miles offshore, day or night. You can be 16 or older to sit this test.

You need to do a practical course of three hours and then sit a theory test of 30 questions on the Maritime Code.

Advanced qualification

Permis Hauturier

You must have the Permis Côtier, and be 16 or older to qualify to sit this exam.

The course is typically, 42 hours of theoretical training. It covers navigation, tides, meteorology, safety at sea, and Collision Regulations.

The test is 1 hour 30, and will cover all the things you have learned in the course.

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USA

With almost innumerable sailing locations and types, sailing around the US is one of the best ways to see and appreciate this vast and varied country. Whether inland, such as the Great Lakes and Mississippi, lazing in the sun on the Gulf Coast or Southern CA, or on the active racing scenes of New England and Northern CA, you should just dive in and learn how to enjoy life in the slow lane...

Do I need qualifications to sail in the US?

Depending on where you are, yes – though it differs from state to state, including Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Your best bet is to see the table on the link below published by the US Coast Guard to see just what qualifications are acceptable in what state: http://www.uscgboating.org/state_boating_laws.aspx

ASA versus US Sailing

There are two major US sailing associations, both of which run similar, Coast Guard accredited courses in sailing, that are accepted by most states in lieu of their local accreditation. US Sailing operates the US national sailing team, where the American Sailing Association appeals more to amateurs.

For the qualifications described below we will look at the courses – it is up to you whether to go through US Sailing or ASA to gain your accreditation.

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Basic

Basic Small Boat Handling

This teaches you how to sail a boat without an engine that has a centreboard, or is a catamaran in moderate winds without supervision.

Basic Keelboat Sailing

This USCG accredited course teaches you how to sail a keelboat of 20-27 feet in moderate conditions. You will learn the parts of the vessel, and how to gybe, tack and manoeuvre the boat. You will learn the basics of the Collision Regulations so you can avoid trouble.

Basic Coastal Cruising

You should have your Basic Keelboat Sailing qualification before beginning this course.

You will learn how to sail a boat of 25-35ft with an auxiliary engine in moderate conditions. You will learn the language of the sea, how to trim your sails as well as how to manoeuvre the boat under sail, and basic coastal navigation, Collision Regulations, seamanship and safety.

Trailerable Multihull Standard

This course is for people who wish to sail a multihull to Basic Coastal Sailing standard. It is done as an add on to the other course.

Intermediate

Bareboat Coastal Cruising

You should have the two basic qualifications above before beginning this course.

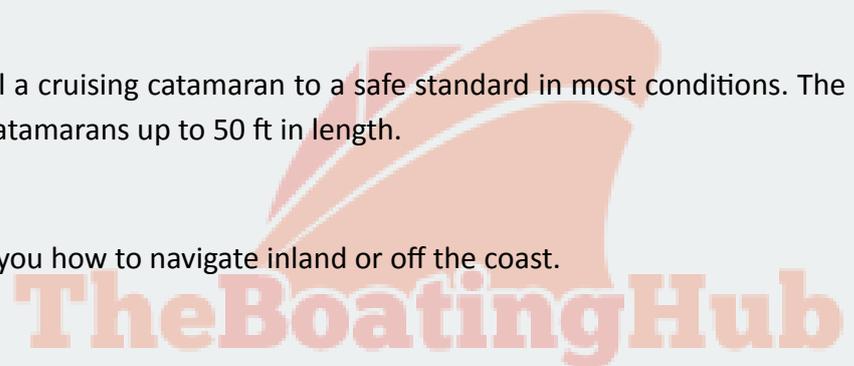
This course is a 48 hour live aboard course, and will teach you how to sail a boat of between 30-45 feet in moderate to heavy conditions – up to Force 7 winds. You will learn how to provision the boat and operate it on a short multi night cruise. You learn about engine operation and maintenance as well as coastal navigation and GPS operation. You will also learn how to anchor with multiple anchors, docking and emergency operations. Finally, you will learn about advanced sail trim and meteorology.

Cruising Catamaran

This is for those who wish to sail a cruising catamaran to a safe standard in most conditions. The standard enables you to sail in catamarans up to 50 ft in length.

Coastal Navigation

This theory only course teaches you how to navigate inland or off the coast.



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Advanced

Advanced Coastal Cruising

You should have done the Coastal Navigation course before beginning this as well as the Bareboat Coastal Cruising qualification.

You will be able to sail anything up to 50 feet in length, confidently in any weather conditions, day or night with this qualification.

Celestial Navigation

This theory based course teaches you how to navigate offshore using celestial navigation.

Offshore Passagemaking

On qualifying you will be able to sail in any boat in any sea state anywhere in the world.

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Latin America

Image by Alex '77

Despite its large size, masses of inland waterways and often dangerous coastline, Latin America's waterways are less regulated than those of North America. Barring Belize's system and Panama's outboard engine license there is very little regulation for sailing until you hit Venezuela, over 1000 miles south of the US.

You don't need qualifications in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, or Costa Rica. You require an 'outboard engine license' to drive a boat in Panama. Further south and then east, you need nothing in Colombia, Guyana or Suriname. Brazil is the same, and then with regulated sailing in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, you go back to unregulated Peru and Ecuador. That leaves mountainous Bolivia and landlocked Paraguay...



Argentina

A country rich in culture that has had its ups and downs over recent years, from military juntas to economic crashes and boom times too with its world renowned beef industry... Argentina's River Plate is one of the major inland waterways of South America and as such has a strong sailing culture.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Argentina?

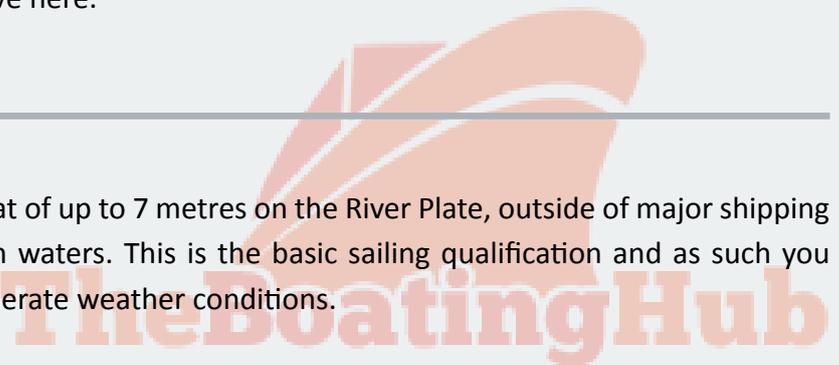
Yes, you do. You must be over 18 to skipper anything.

Argentina accepts sailing qualifications from other countries around the world, so only consider taking such qualifications if you live here.

Basic qualifications

Ship Boy (Grumete)

This limits the user to sailing a boat of up to 7 metres on the River Plate, outside of major shipping channels and not into Uruguayan waters. This is the basic sailing qualification and as such you should only go out in mild to moderate weather conditions.



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Over 17 hours of tuition you will learn basic sail handling, boat handling and seamanship. You will cover navigation and meteorology, safety and fire interdiction.

Boat Driver (Controlador Yate)

You will be able to skipper a boat of up to 7 metres to a maximum engine size of 140HP, though any watersports equipment to include jet skis. You will be limited to the same waterways as the Grumete. This is the basic motorboat qualification and as such only qualifies you to sail in mild to moderate weather conditions.

Over a 17 hour course you will cover basic engine maintenance and manoeuvring, seamanship, navigation and meteorology and safety.

Intermediate

Helmsman (Timonel de Yate)

This entitles the bearer to sail a sport boat of up to 20 feet in length on all inland waterways but not into Uruguayan waters. The course length is about 64 hours in theory.

You will cover navigation to a greater depth than the prior two qualifications, though it is not expected you have any prior knowledge when introduced to day and night river navigation.

Yacht Master (Patron de Yate)

This entitles the bearer to skipper a boat on all inland waterways, the River Plate without limit, and up to 12 miles out to sea. You should have the Timonel de Yate, and not less than 60 verified hours' skippering, to include two passages in the last five years.

The course takes navigation, safety and seamanship to a far greater depth than that of Timonel de Yate. You will be able to read the weather both from weather reports and analysing local conditions on the ground.

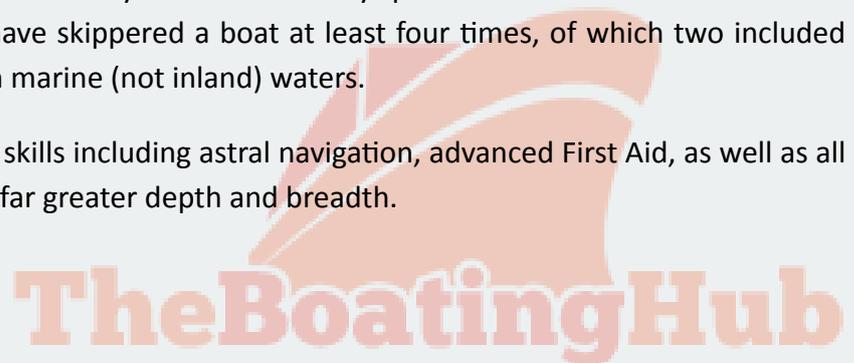
Advanced

Yacht Pilot (Pilot de Yate)

You will be able to sail on any waters in any conditions on any sport boat. You must have the Yacht Master certification. You must have skippered a boat at least four times, of which two included night passages, and two were on marine (not inland) waters.

This covers advanced navigation skills including astral navigation, advanced First Aid, as well as all of the skills of Yacht Master to a far greater depth and breadth.

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Belize

Famous for its coral 'blue holes', Belize is a popular destination for water sports fans of all stripes. Whether you're just there to enjoy the laid back yet fun sailing scene or to explore the tropical wilderness beneath and above the waves, Belize has something for everyone.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Belize?

Yes you do, even if you are planning on bareboat chartering a dinghy. You will need a Boat Master's License.

Basic qualifications

Boat Master's License

Belizian citizens must present a Social Security ID card, and foreigners a valid passport, to the Port Authority.

You will then sit a written test on maritime law and regulations, navigation, meteorology and safety. On passing the test you have to do a practical exam that shows competent boat handling.

You then pay USD\$25 per year for the license, that expires annually on your birthday. You can pay for up to three years in advance.

Intermediate and Advanced qualifications

There is no state accredited advanced qualification system unless you want a commercial license, to charter out boats for example.

Do consider an IYT, ASA, RYA or International Certificate of Competence before you go sailing in Belize as sailing is dangerous and doesn't always forgive stupid mistakes...

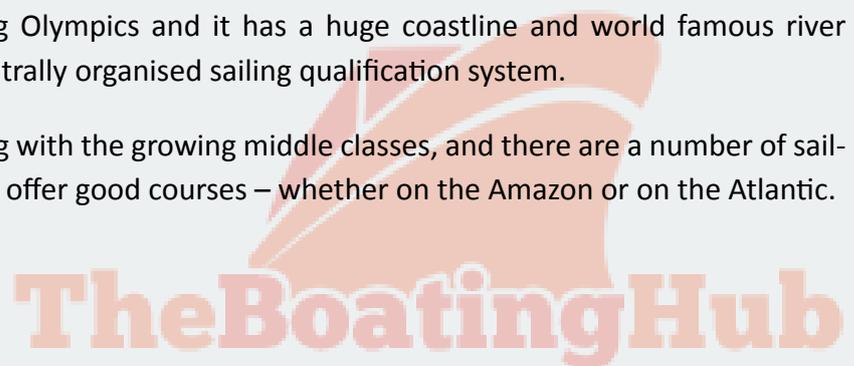
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Brazil

Though hosting the 2016 sailing Olympics and it has a huge coastline and world famous river system, Brazil has no formal, centrally organised sailing qualification system.

Yachting and sailing are emerging with the growing middle classes, and there are a number of sailing schools in various states that offer good courses – whether on the Amazon or on the Atlantic.

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Chile

Running over half the length of the South American continent, Chile has a great variety of sailing, whether on the South Pacific or in the Straits of Magellan, including the infamous Cape Horn...

Do I need qualifications to sail in Chile?

Yes you do. From the age of 14 (with parental permission) you can get government qualifications to sail.

Chile accepts sailing qualifications from other countries around the world, so only consider taking such qualifications if you live here.

Basic

Inshore and Bay Patron (Patron Deportivo de Bahia)

You can be 14 years old, with parental permission, to get this qualification. You will be entitled to sail in protected harbours, rivers and lakes. The exam comes in two parts, the theoretical exam covering basic navigation and rules of the road. The practical exam shows you are safe with basic seamanship and boat handling skills.

Intermediate

Coastal Captain (Capitan Deportivo Costero)

You must be 17 or older to take this qualification, which entitles you to command a sports boat for coastal navigation.

The course covers navigation, meteorology, and VHF use. You will cover engine maintenance, First Aid, and Search and Rescue. You will also cover international and Chilean maritime regulations. The course comes with a practical and a theory exam.

Advanced

Sports Boat Captain of the High Seas (Capitan Deportivo de Alta Mar)

You will be entitled to sail any sports vessel on all waters with this qualification. This advanced course should be taken if you're planning on venturing further afield, on oceanic passages for example. You will be rigorously tested on advanced navigation, to include astral navigation, meteorology, and safety at sea. You will do advanced First Aid, and learn how to repair the boat and engines in difficult conditions at sea.

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French Guiana

A French Dependency, French Guiana has only had its waterways regulated in the last few years to promote safety on its coast and inland waterways.

Do I need qualifications to sail in French Guiana?

Yes you do. There is a simple system of certification that ensures you can sail or motor safely.

French Guiana accepts sailing qualifications from other countries around the world, so only consider taking such qualifications if you live here.

Basic qualification

Bateau Mer Cotier

This is for coastal waterways in French Guiana. You must have this accreditation if you wish to drive a boat with an engine greater than 6HP. You must be 16 or older and pass a medical.

This covers basic safety, engine maintenance and boat handling. The exam comes in two parts – the written test which is multiple choice, and a three hour practical exam. The exam will be in French.

Intermediate

Bateau Eaux Intérieures

You are required to pass this test if you wish to drive a boat on any inland waterways on a boat of under 20 metres long and 6HP of power or greater.

The course looks at seamanship, and the particular navigation rules associated with the French Guianese inland waterway system. You will learn police regulations as well as the law.

The test comes in two parts – the multiple choice questionnaire that you must get a minimum of 21/25 correct, and a three hour practical exam.

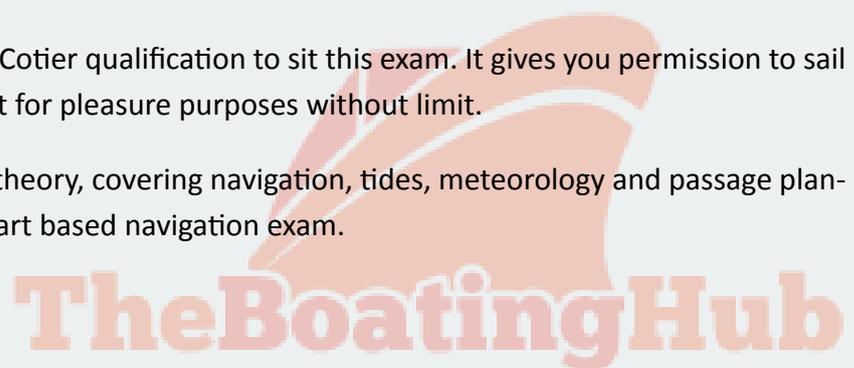
Advanced

Bateau Mer Hauturier

You must have your Bateau Mer Cotier qualification to sit this exam. It gives you permission to sail a French registered boat or yacht for pleasure purposes without limit.

The course involves 20 hours of theory, covering navigation, tides, meteorology and passage planning. The exam is a 1 hour 30 chart based navigation exam.

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Mexico

There is no national certification and education system for learning to sail in Mexico, unlike its northern neighbour the US.

Learning to sail in Mexico is generally done through your local sailing club. Standards and systems differ between sailing clubs.

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Uruguay

At the mouth of the River Plate on the South Atlantic, Uruguay has a great and varied maritime history, as well as wonderful places to sail.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Uruguay?

Yes, you do. The government requires a license for all vessels with an engine. This precludes sailing dinghies, but in most cases if you're venturing out for more than a few hours it is sensible to have an engine...

The system runs with Brevet D – A with A being the advanced course. You must pass a medical exam in order to take any sailing qualification.

Uruguay accepts sailing qualifications from other countries around the world, so only consider taking such qualifications if you live here.

Basic

Brevet D

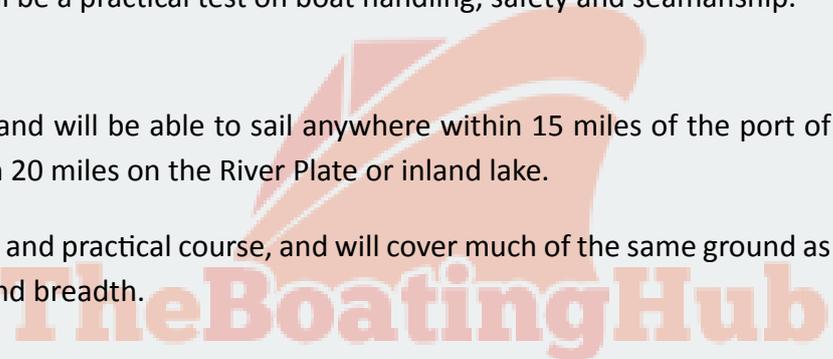
This enables the holder to sail within five miles of the port of origin on open sea, or within ten miles if on inland waters or lakes. You must be 16 to sit this course.

You will be tested on the basic principles of navigation, communications, weather and tides, as well as Collision Regulations. There will be a practical test on boat handling, safety and seamanship.

Brevet C

You must be 18 to sit this exam, and will be able to sail anywhere within 15 miles of the port of dispatch on the Atlantic, or within 20 miles on the River Plate or inland lake.

The course is broken into a theory and practical course, and will cover much of the same ground as Brevet D but to a greater depth and breadth.



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Intermediate

Brevet B

You must be 18 to sit this course, but will be entitled to sail anywhere on the River Plate and anywhere within 15 miles of Arroyo Choy on the Atlantic.

You will cover the same concepts as Brevets C and D only to a greater depth. However you will now progress to learning how to use charts for navigations, something that you won't have covered in the previous two Brevet courses.

Advanced

Brevet A

You must be 21 to sit this course. You must hold a Brevet B. Having this accreditation allows you to sail on oceanic voyages.

Over the theory and practical tests you must prove your ability to sail safely in all conditions. You will learn astral navigation and advanced First Aid, as well as the IALA A and B navigation systems. You will learn advanced boat handling techniques and safety skills. Finally, you will learn engine mechanics and maintenance to help you get home safely in the event of most incidents.

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Venezuela

An oil rich nation with a huge range of peoples and cultures, Venezuela sits on the southern edge of the Caribbean.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Venezuela?

Yes you do. Under the law you can get qualified to sail if you are over 16 years old. Once you have passed the exam, if you have a Permit will have to renew every two years and if a License, you will have to renew the license every five years by presenting a valid medical certificate to the authorities.

Venezuela accepts sailing qualifications from other countries around the world, so only consider taking such qualifications if you live here.

Basic qualifications

Third Pattern Deportivo Permit (Permiso de Patrón Deportivo de Tercera)

This qualification is valid for two years and is available for people over 16 who wish to skipper a boat of up to seven metres long in sheltered waters.

You will be tested on basic seamanship, navigation and boat handling.

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Intermediate

Second Pattern Deportivo Permit (Permiso de Patrón Deportivo de Segunda)

This allows you to sail a vessel of up to 40 Gross Tons in the waters of the Republic. You must show to the authorities you are trained in the operation of the vessel in question, by sailing it in a harbour. This is a Permit and lasts two years.

Advanced

Licencia De Patrón Deportivo de Primera

This entitles you to sail anything up to 150 Gross Tons in the waters of the Republic and up to 15 degrees Parallel North and the meridians of 58 degrees West and 72 degrees West.

You must do 30 hours of training in navigation, meteorology, boat handling, and international Collision Regulations, as well as safety at sea.

Licencia de Capitán de Yate

This entitles the bearer to sail any pleasure or sports boat up to 300 Gross Tons on any waters. You must have had your Licencia De patron Deportivo de Primera for at least five years and have kept a verified log of your passages.

Qualification involves advanced navigation to include astral navigation, safety at sea to include a First Aid Certificate and proof of understanding of man overboard techniques. You will have to show an understanding of engine maintenance and repair. You will have to show an advanced knowledge of international collision regulations, and meteorology.

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Australia, Oceania and New Zealand

This section covers the greatest geographical expanse of the book. Thousands of islands and a large number of jurisdictions with differing views of sailors and sailing, from the very best in elite sailing in Australia and New Zealand to island countries that will be drowned by sea level rise in the coming century.



Australia

A regular at the top of the leader board of Olympic sailing medals and home of many an America's Cup winner, Australia is one of the world's leading sailing nations. As with many developed sailing nations it has a somewhat complex recreational sailing licensing and qualification system.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Australia?

Depending on what you plan on sailing and where you are sailing it you may well need to have a license to sail a boat, certainly on the Australian mainland and Tasmania.

There are two sets of qualifications you should consider. The first is that the legally required sailing license that differs between states. A very good article on the subject can be found on the Australian [Yacht and Boat website](#), and this tells you what you will need as well as how to get it. Have a look on that page to see what is required.

Yachting Australia is the nation's sailing governing body. It administers a range of courses that takes you from a very basic level to as specialised or expert as you could wish for. We will cover these qualifications below.

Yachting Australia has worked in partnership with the RYA for many years and recognises all RYA qualifications, as well as administering courses developed by the RYA for Australia in Australia.

Australia accepts the International Certificate of Competence (ICC) and other national sailing qualifications for people from outside the country to sail in Australian waters or to bareboat charter. See the ICC page elsewhere in this e-book.

UK citizens can do their ICC in Australia in the same way as they would in the UK. Essentially, you get an RYA qualification and apply for the ICC through the RYA. Since Australia recognises but is not a signatory to the ICC scheme, Australian citizens cannot do this course.

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Basic

Discover Sailing

You can do the Discover Sailing course, a three hour course designed to show you how much fun you can have on a boat. This is available on keelboats or dinghies.

Dinghies

Tackers

This scheme is run for 7-12 year olds who wish to learn to sail – and perhaps become the next Jimmy Spithill!

Start Sailing 1 and 2

This scheme takes the complete novice from learning things such as where the bow is to being able to sail the boat safely in sheltered waters in a good wind.

Keelboat

Start Crewing and Start Helming

These schemes take you from very basic boat handling to being a competent helmsman, with regard to crew safety and being able to navigate a straight course on a given point of sail.

Yachting

Start Yachting

This is an experience oriented course designed to show you the ropes. You get experience helming, rope handling, and hopefully a great day on the water that fuels your enthusiasm to pursue sailing as a past time!

RYA Competent Crew

This takes the person who has been a passenger on a yacht and enables them to play a part in the running of a boat.

RYA Day Skipper

This course is divided into two parts – the theory and the practical. The best way to do the theory course is through a night school over a number of weeks. This teaches you navigation, chart work, tides, meteorology, and Collision Regulations. The practical side takes you through things like basic engine maintenance and operation, man overboard drills, preparing a passage and onboard navigation.

Intermediate

Dinghies

Better Sailing

As your confidence improves on dinghies consider a Better Sailing course. This teaches you how to sail faster in stronger winds, and safely.

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Keelboat

Start Skippering

As the name of the course suggests, Start Skippering takes you from being a competent member of crew and gives you the competence and confidence to be able to skipper a boat in sheltered waters.

Yachting

RYA Coastal Skipper

You should have experience skippering a boat, both in daytime and at night. You should be trained to at least RYA Day Skipper. In a theory and practical course, this takes you through the skills and abilities required to sail a medium length coastal passage as skipper in all conditions, day or night.

Advanced

Dinghies

Start Racing and Better Racing

These courses take the competent dinghy sailor and puts them into the middle of their club's racing fleet. You will learn racing techniques that will get you first to the start line, but also work out the best route to an upwind mark, as well advanced sailing skills such as flying a spinnaker and using the trapeze.

Keelboat

Spinnakers and Start Racing

For the advanced coastal keelboat sailor, Spinnakers shows you how to best fly a symmetric and an asymmetric spinnaker. Start racing shows you the ropes of racing, to include tactics and what to do as a racing crew.

Yachting

RYA Yachtmaster and Yachtmaster Ocean

These accreditations show that the bearer can competently sail a boat in any seas, anywhere in the world and in all conditions. You should have a great amount of experience to even sit the exam, and even so the test will be very difficult.

Yachtmaster Ocean involves celestial navigation, proving your competence in oceanic sailing.

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French Polynesia

One of the many chains of paradise islands in the region, the 29 islands of French Polynesia have a scheme similar to all of France's overseas dominions.

Do I need qualifications to sail in French Polynesia?

If you wish to sail a boat with an engine of over 6HP then yes you do. French Polynesia recognises other countries' accreditation systems however, so an ICC, IYT or RYA qualification, for example, is accepted if you have one and wish to bareboat charter among the islands.

Basic

La Carte Mer (Vert)

This very basic certificate is very rarely issued because you are hardly allowed to go anywhere once you have it. You are limited to within five miles of shelter and to a boat of less than two registered tonnes in daylight.

The test is in two parts – a five question multiple choice exam of which you must get three questions correct. You will also do a practical exam to prove your capability and safety at sea.

Intermediate

La Permis Mer Cotier (bleu marine)

This allows you to sail a vessel of over 6HP up to five miles from shelter in daylight or at night.

You are expected to do a course of around 10 hours over a week, though you can do this as a weekend course instead. You will sit a 20 question multiple choice exam, of which you must get 17 questions correct. If you pass this you will do a 15 minute practical exam to show your basic safety and boat handling skills.

Advanced

La Permis Mer Hauturier (bleu fonce)

This permits you to sail a boat of over 6HP anywhere in the French Polynesian archipelago and beyond. The test is somewhat more involved than the Permis Mer Cotier.

You should have your Mer Cotier certificate to sit this exam though you will be allowed to be examined for your skills and knowledge if not, in addition to the test itself.

You must sit a theory exam covering tides, navigation and safety. If you have the Permis Mer Cotier already you do not have to sit a practical exam. However if you do not possess this you must do an identical practical exam to the Permis Mer Cotier, as well as a general knowledge and navigation test.

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This archipelago of over six thousand islands is at the same time one of the world's economic powerhouses and also one of the most beautiful places to sail in the world. On the world's volcanic 'Ring of Fire' you never know what you might see as you cruise through the islands at night. They also say that being far out to sea is the safest place to be in an earthquake or tsunami...

Do I need qualifications to sail in Japan?

Yes you do, but only if your boat is over 3 metres long or has an engine of over 1.5kW output – most boats basically... There are three grades of license, which you can only get if you are a Resident or Citizen of Japan.

There are now English speaking sailing schools so you don't have to be fluent in Japanese to get a sailing license.

Health

Prior to taking any course for a license you should undergo a health examination which tests your eyesight and physical fitness. The eyesight limitations are similar to commercial seafarers, though you are allowed to sail wearing spectacles.

Basic

Personal Watercraft Operator

This entitles the owner to take a personal watercraft, such as a jet ski, out to two nautical miles from the coast, whether inland waterway or sea.

You will learn general boating knowledge and rules of the road, steering and sailing rules, as well as a certain amount about the operation of the vessel.

You will sit a 50 minute written exam with 40 questions.

Intermediate

Second Class Boat Operator

This qualification entitles the bearer to sail a vessel of up to 20 Gross Tonnes, up to five miles from the shoreline, on both inland waterways and the sea.

This course is somewhat more involved than the PWC course. It is typically done over five days, one of which will be aboard a boat. At the end of the course you will sit the exam.

You will learn navigation, as well as the knowledge required to pass the PWC course. The test will be 1 hour and 10 minutes and you will have to answer 50 questions.

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Advanced

First Class Boat Operator

This entitles you to sail anything up to 20 Gross Tonnes as far out to sea as you wish, though under Japanese law you must have a licensed 6th Grade Maritime Officer Engineer if you are to sail beyond 100 nautical miles.

You can do this with a five day, two exam intensive course. The first two days are in the classroom with the first exam on day 2 and the second on day 4.

Over two, 1 hour and 10 minute exams you will be examined on much the same as the Second Class Boat Operator, though you will be tested on advanced operations as well, to include First Aid, engine repair and advanced navigation.

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New Caledonia (Nouvelle Calédonie)

Properly known as Nouvelle Calédonie and not by its original British name, the islands have changed hands between empires over the years, and are now a far flung part of France. As with so many other Francophone nations, there is a basic maritime training system that residents must observe in order to go to sea here.

Do I need qualifications to sail in New Caledonia?

If you wish to sail a boat with an engine of over 6HP then yes you do. New Caledonia recognises other countries' accreditation systems however, so an ICC, IYT or RYA qualification, for example, is accepted if you have one and wish to bareboat charter among the islands.

Basic

La Permis Mer Cotier

This allows you to sail a vessel of over 6HP up to five miles from shelter in daylight or at night.

You are expected to do a course of around 10 hours over a week, though you can do this as a weekend course instead. You will sit a 20 question multiple choice exam, of which you must get 17 questions correct.

Advanced

La Permis Mer Hauturier

This permits you to sail a boat of over 6HP anywhere in the New Caledonian archipelago and beyond. The test is somewhat more involved than the Permis Mer Cotier.

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You should have your Mer Cotier certificate to sit this exam though you will be allowed to be examined for your skills and knowledge if not, in addition to the test itself.

You must sit a theory exam covering tides, navigation and safety.

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New Zealand

Per capita probably the most boating crazy nation in the world, New Zealand is one of the best places on the planet to enjoy sailing. It shows too – the country's America's Cup challenger came close to taking the Cup home in 2013 until one of the greatest sporting feats in history stole it from just outside their grasp (not cheating, honest...). In a country of five million, yachting and sailing is prime time television in much the same way as soccer is in other countries...

Do I need qualifications to sail in New Zealand?

No, but you'd be stupid not to learn. With the amazing scenery comes weather conditions peculiar to the islands that can catch even the best off guard...

There are two parallel sets of qualifications, one run by New Zealand's Coastguard Boating Education and the other run by the sport's governing body, Yachting New Zealand. You can also do RYA courses through Coastguard Boating Education, and a number of clubs have their own, non standard take on teaching sailing. Your best bet to learn in New Zealand? Yachting New Zealand, as this teaches theory and practical – the Coast Guard only teaches theory, as will be covered below.

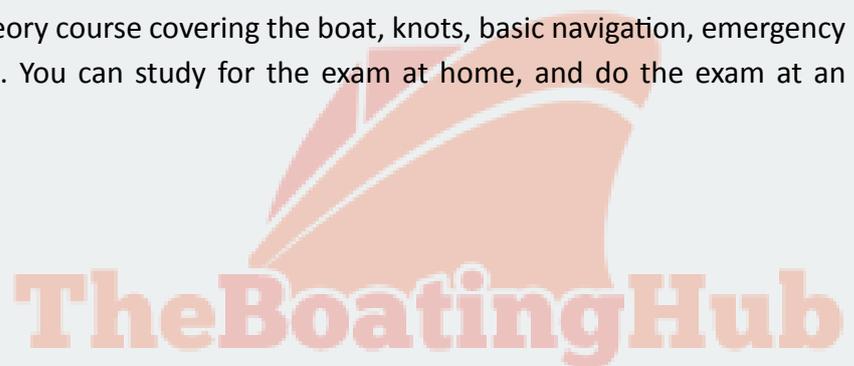
For those planning on sailing further afield, the Coastguard Boating Education scheme also runs VHF courses, an essential for the sailor planning anything more than a jaunt round the bay or buoys...

Basic

Coastguard Boating Education

Day Skipper

This is a five module, 15 hour theory course covering the boat, knots, basic navigation, emergency skills, and rules and regulations. You can study for the exam at home, and do the exam at an accredited centre.



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Yachting New Zealand

Dinghies

Start Sailing Level 1

From rigging the boat to launching and sailing safely, this course takes the landlubber and gives them sea legs. From the very basics, you will learn how to sail safely in moderate weather conditions.

Keelboats

Keelboats differ from dinghies as they don't capsize and are far more stable than dinghies. You can also spend the night on larger ones...

Introduction to Keelboat Sailing

As with the dinghy sailing course this takes the person with very basic knowledge or no knowledge at all and acquaints them with all they need to know to sail a boat in moderate weather. You will learn rigging, points of sail and boat handling, basic navigation and meteorology as well as the Collision Regulations and how to avoid an expensive bump at sea.

Intermediate

Coastguard Boating Education

Boatmaster

This 30 hour theory only course takes the person with a certain knowledge of boating and shows them the intricacies of slightly more advanced navigation, boat handling skills, Collision Regulations, how to act in an emergency, and how best to equip your vessel for a passage.

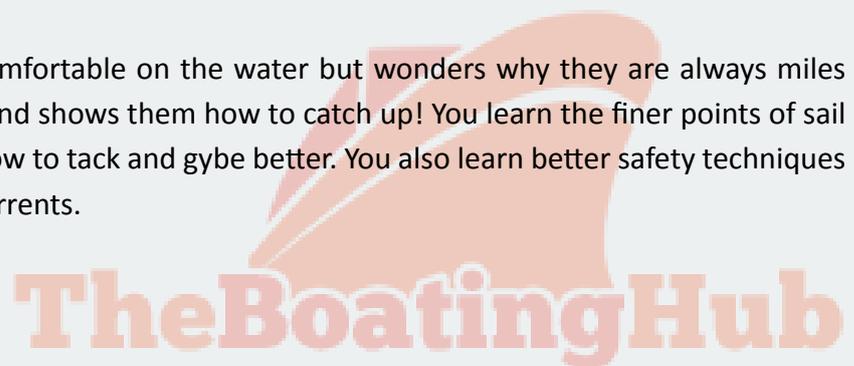
The course is only available to residents of New Zealand. This is also the most advanced Coastguard Boating Education course – if you really must use the government system, look at doing the RYA set of courses that can be found elsewhere in this e-book, as the NZ government approves of the courses.

Yachting New Zealand

Dinghies

Learn to sail... Fast (Level 2)

This takes the person who is comfortable on the water but wonders why they are always miles behind the fleet in a club race, and shows them how to catch up! You learn the finer points of sail trimming, balancing the boat, how to tack and gybe better. You also learn better safety techniques as well as about weather and currents.



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Keelboats

Competent Cruising Crew (Level 2)

With the option of a night sail as part of the course, you learn how to be a useful crewmember at all times aboard. You will learn things like how to pick up a man overboard under power and sail, as well as a range of boat handling and safety skills. You will learn about buoyage and navigation, as well as basic engine operation. Finally, you'll learn more about meteorology, tides, and how to dock and undock safely.

Advanced

Yachting New Zealand

Dinghies

This takes the competent sailor and puts them in the middle of the club fleet. You learn about double handed sailing, how to fly a spinnaker, and racing skills and techniques such as how to be the first to the start line after the gun and how to finish with finesse... You'll learn about Voyage Made Good (VMG), a calculation that can win or lose a race, and is dependent on current and wind direction.

Keelboats

Overnight Skipper

You will learn the finer points of overnight and offshore cruising on this course. At sea you are often alone and dependent only on yourself when you get in a scrape. This course ensures you don't call in the Coastguard unnecessarily. You will learn navigation techniques, engine maintenance and operation, and how to handle rough weather. One of the key skills will be how to plan a sailing trip of over three days in length, to include victualling and crew preparation.



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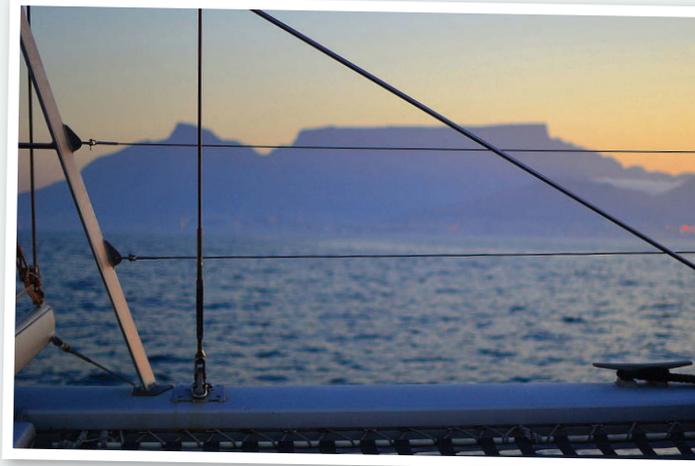


Rest of the World

Image by Carolina Odman

The Indian subcontinent, Africa, the Far East, Middle East and Russia – most of the world's population – have little in the way of centralised, formal licensing or sailing accreditation schemes. It is somewhat unfortunate that only two countries with national schemes are represented in this section for what amounts to over 2/3rds of the world's population.

If you are from Oman there is a centralised scheme for children to learn sailing, and 30 women a year are entitled to join their women's sailing scheme. The UAE has a few sailing clubs where you can learn to sail. Israel, Egypt and Turkey have a number of RYA and IYT sailing schools.



In Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Ghana and Mozambique have sailing schools run through sailing clubs.

China and Russia, two of the biggest countries in the world, have a few RYA and IYT sailing schools.

If you wish to learn anywhere else in the world other than the regions comprehensively covered in this e-book, search on the web for a sailing club near you. You will almost certainly find somewhere to go sailing or learn through a club. Sailors as a whole are a friendly bunch and most of the time will be happy to take you out to learn the ancient and mystical arts of the sea!

China

See International Qualifications elsewhere in this e-book. Use a sailing club in your locality that teaches RYA, ASA or IYT sailing.

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India

See International Qualifications elsewhere in this e-book. Use a sailing club in your locality that teaches RYA, ASA or IYT sailing.

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Russia

See International Qualifications elsewhere in this e-book. Use a sailing club in your locality that teaches RYA, or IYT sailing.

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Singapore

An old hub for seafarers in the Far East with a strict regime, Singapore is an important city state with some great sailing potential.

Do I need qualifications to sail in Singapore?

Yes, you do if your boat has an engine. There are two grades of sailing license – the PPCDL for vessels of under 24 metres and the APPCDL for vessels over 24 metres.

Where you must learn the law and regulations around boating for a powered boat, you can learn to sail dinghies and engineless keelboats through one of a number of sailing clubs. These sailing clubs are also where you do your government courses.

Health

You must pass a physical test to ensure you have good eyesight and 'have no disabilities'.

Basic

Powered Pleasure Craft Driving License (PPCDL)

This course must be done at one of several accredited sailing clubs in Singapore. You will then sit the examination at the Singapore Polytechnic.

Over three evenings you will learn navigation, Collision Regulations and local laws pertaining to boating in Singapore. On the fourth evening you will run through the practical skills to pass the test.

You will then sit the theory exam at Singapore Polytechnic. On passing the exam you will be entitled to take the practical test on boat handling. Only then will you be issued with the PPCDL.

Advanced

Advanced Powered Pleasure Craft Driving License (APPCDL)

In January 2012 the Singapore authorities instituted the APPCDL after an increase in numbers of vessels of over 24 metres in size using Singapore waters. A 24 metre long vessel is best described as large and comfortable as vessels go, and not something your lower middle class yachtie would be able to buy unless they sell their house!

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In order to qualify to take the APPCDL you have to have experience sailing a vessel on the PPCDL, logged on an official Logsheet, which must be filed with the Singapore Maritime Authority prior to doing the course. You should have skippered at least 24 trips during the last two years.

The APPCDL is an add on to the PPCDL, but covers rules and regulations, as well as the boat handling skills peculiar to large vessels. You will sit a course run by the Singapore Maritime Authority and then must pass an exam.

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South Africa

The Rainbow Nation has one of the most established sailing communities and sailing education systems on the African continent. It is also an important stopover for people travelling around the world. Cape Town was the first stop for the 2014 Volvo Ocean Race...

South Africa Sailing (SA Sailing)

This is the country's sailing association, dealing with everything from introducing people to sailing, to the country's sailing Olympics team.

SAS has been made the awarding body of the South Africa Maritime Safety Authority's (SAMSA) national sailing accreditation.

Though you can take RYA qualifications in South Africa these do not automatically entitle you to SAS – and therefore SAMSA qualifications. Consider doing a SAS course before an RYA course as it is cheaper and more relevant to local sailing than the RYA courses.

Do I need qualifications to sail in South Africa?

If you wish to sail a vessel of over 9 metres, sailing qualifications are mandatory in South Africa. This allows you to sail most dinghies and many keelboats – 29ft 6 inches is a fair sized boat...

You do not need to do a course prior to an exam. You may have accrued your knowledge by being afloat since an early age and be able to pass the exam in your sleep. Remember though that people develop bad habits in practice and it is best to learn the way you will be tested rather than just the way you know.

Basic

Inland Waters Skipper

This allows you to sail on any inland waterway by day or by night.

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Day Skipper Category E

This entitles the bearer to sail no more than one mile offshore.

Day Skipper Category C

You are qualified to sail a boat between sunrise and sunset, within 15 miles of shore and no more than 25 miles from your home port, as long as you are within 15 miles of a place of safety.

International Certificate of Competence

This is a primarily European skippering certificate of competence. With the Day Skipper Category C you will be automatically entitled to apply for the ICC that will give you freedom to roam European and Mediterranean waters on boats of under 24 metres in coastal waters. This is valid for five years after award.

Intermediate

Local Waters Skipper

This allows you to sail within the same boundaries of the Day Skipper only at night as well.

Coastal Skipper

This allows the bearer to sail up to 40 miles offshore by day or by night.

Advanced

Yachtmaster Offshore

You will be able to sail any offshore or extended passage.

Yachtmaster Ocean

This shows the holder has mastered celestial navigation.

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