

ALBA SAILING

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RYA COURSE JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

Taking an RYA practical course should be a learning experience, thoroughly enjoyable, challenging and ultimately rewarding.

If you have never been to sea before or don't have much experience or even if you are taking your Yachtmaster test you may well be apprehensive, a little frightened and possibly intimidated by the power of the sea. Good, you should be – a healthy respect for nature will get you a long way.

We have hand picked our RYA trained Instructors as much for their interpersonal skills as their ability to teach sailing – we only employ likeable, personable professional instructors – if you want a salty old seadog who shouts and swears all the time I am afraid we can't help you! Their primary focus is to assess your current knowledge and abilities, agree a plan of action then deliver to that plan and ultimately reward your ability with a certificate. Our instructors know that this MUST be an enjoyable experience and will do everything they can to help you get out of it what you want out of it.

The instructors are on board to help you pass – not to try to trip you up so they can fail you!!!

Attached is a suggested list of things you will need to bring – please feel free to bring anything else you like but be aware that space is limited on a boat and almost everyone brings far too many clothes. Soft bags are a must – imagine the situation if everyone turned up with a hard bodied suitcase!!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS –

Where will we go?

It depends on the wind and the tide and the wishes of the group. Sorry to be vague but I can't control the weather! The Instructor will help you plan a route according to the conditions

Can I bring my own lifejacket, safety line, GPS, binoculars etc

YES! But do make sure that safety equipment is suitable for the job and is 'in date'.

Do we come back to the Marina each night?

NO – with so many lochs and hidden gems to explore why would you want to come back to a noisy marina? The art of anchoring will be explored and you should seize the opportunity in a remote sea loch to enjoy real darkness and true silence which comes as a shock to many people. If you are lucky you may see the 'green flash' or the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). More likely you will see some breathtaking sunsets – so don't forget to bring your camera!

Can I bring my mobile phone?

YES but leave it switched off except in case of emergency.

What shall I wear?

See the attached packing list. You will need heavy duty waterproofs – if you don't have your own we can hire them to you or you can buy a set of breathable waterproofs from us for just £180 for jacket and trousers. You will also need sea boots – specially designed to grip wet decks – we don't hire footwear for obvious reasons but we sell sea boots from as little as £37.50. We strongly suggest wearing a comfort layer (T-shirt or 2 and long johns/woolly tights) then a warmth layer (e.g. fleece and tracksuit bottoms or thermal 'romper' suit) then a protection layer (anything from a lightweight jacket to offshore standard oilies.) A warm hat and gloves is essential. Being cold and wet at sea is no fun and is entirely avoidable – if you need advice please call me.

Can I go ashore?

Some nights will be in remote sea lochs – you may want to go ashore to view the wildlife or just to explore. Other nights you may be near a small village like Tobermory and you may wish to visit the shops. Ask the skipper but if its safe to do so there is no reason why not. Please don't expect a water based shopping trip.

Who does the cooking?

You do! Everyone takes it in turns and helps each other. If you can't cook don't worry - someone will help you. Everyone can wash up! The food is good and plentiful and it's all provided by us. Please feel free to bring along your favourite chocolate, sweets, biscuits etc but be prepared to share them!

Can I smoke?

YES – on deck, when you are plain sailing i.e. never whilst sails are being hoisted or lowered or tacking, gybing etc. Even then you may only smoke on the aft leeward side so that the smoke doesn't affect anyone else. Smoking is never permitted below deck.

Can I bring a bottle of whisky with me?

Of course! Drinking in moderation is fine. Be aware that if the wind pipes up in the night you may have to get up and move the boat or reset the anchor so don't over do it. The Instructor has the power to stop anyone drinking if s/he feels it is wise. If an anchor watch is required the boat will remain dry.

What happens if I am sea sick?

You get a glass of water and carry on! Many people are seasick – there are tablets available – 'Stugeron' for instance – but you need to start taking them the day before you go to sea and they can make you drowsy. There are wristbands available that work on your acupressure point – some people swear by them. There is nothing to be ashamed of – one of our instructors is badly sea sick – always has been – always will be. We sell Stugeron and wrist bands in the shop.

Sleeping arrangements

We always use a yacht bigger than required to allow flexibility of sleeping arrangements. Obviously not everyone can have a cabin to themselves and some sharing may be required. The yachts have a mixture of single and double bunks and depending on the mix of the students we try first to allocate bunks to couples (whether mixed or single sex) then to allocate bunks to avoid any sharing then ask men to share and as a last resort, women to share. Most people sleep in their comfort layer or warmth layer depending upon the season and this helps to avoid any embarrassment if you have to get up in the night to use the heads or relay the anchor etc.

When do we get back?

The yacht usually returns to base for the final evening – it provides an opportunity to get a nice hot shower and maybe a beer at the bar and makes sure you are up early to clean the boat the following morning. You should be away by late morning.

We have plenty of car parking on site and you should aim to arrive at 1400hrs on the day of departure. We are in the large white building in the Marina at the waters edge. The afternoon will be spent sorting people out with hire items, loading the food onto the boat, meeting each other, the Instructors briefing, stowing your kit, adjusting life jackets etc and generally getting ready to get underway. We know many of you will have had a long journey and will be tired so the first night is usually spent not too far way – Loch Aline for instance.

As well as hiring waterproofs we also hire freshly laundered sleeping bags, pillows and towels to avoid you travelling with bulky items – please let us know in advance if you would like to hire any of these.

Our chandlery is very well stocked and if you need last minute purchases such as a sailing knife, deck gloves, woolly hat etc you will have time to buy these items. We also sell the full range of RYA publications such as log books (G15) to record your adventure and keep your certificates all together as well as the usual navigation items. Many people like to take a chart of the West Coast home as a souvenir and we have them rolled instead of folded along with a wide range of gifts for sailors.

Accommodation the night before or after the course?

We can recommend local B&B's and hotels. Please allow plenty of time for your journey home – particularly if you are driving. You will be very tired and will have got used to travelling in quiet isolation at 6 knots – a busy motorway at 70 mph in a warm, smooth and quiet car will be a scary place until you readjust to life back on land.

If you have any questions that have not been answered in this document please contact me – I am here to help you get the maximum possible enjoyment and learning from your course.

Good luck and I look forward to meeting you in due course.

David Banks
Alba Sailing – RYA Principal.