

# Sail Away!

Have you ever wanted to run away from it all? Sometimes I do, and my sail boat is my little escape from real world stresses!

We all lead busy, stressful lives. jobs, kids, mortgages, deadlines and the constant media barrage of terrible world events. Battered by all this stress, sometimes I get the urge to run away from it all. In reality, most of us can't really run away, nor would we want to. I have found an easy way to run away for a few hours each week. (And sometimes, if I'm lucky, for a couple of days in a row!) Many of you have found something in life that does that for you: golf, running, reading. I tried all these things but none has given me the peace I find with sailing. By sailing I escape to another world and put everything else aside. There is not enough room in my mind for anything else than to deal with the outdoor elements while I practice my boat handling skills. I know I have found peace. For me I'm always sad to put the sails away!

I want to share with you some of the things I enjoy about sailing.

## **Sailing is Physical and Mental Challenge:**

Sailing offers an unlimited learning experience: Constant concentration on wind, weather conditions, safety, working as a team with crew members, problem solving, improving your sailing knowledge and skills, struggling with your inner fears.

I will always remember a very windy day my sailing buddy and I went out alone for the first time on a 22 footer. My buddy and I were scared to death, not of the weather or the water but that somehow we would damage the boat or worse, damage one of the very expensive boats in the harbour. After a bit of a lecture from the Harbour Master, regarding our swearing and erratic boat moves, we got out and back by ourselves. The crew and boat came back in one piece! That was a mental challenge. And we conquered our fears. It has given me a fearlessness of all other things in life.

It's never boring! No sailing day is the same. It is a constant challenge to rig the boat correctly for the conditions and anticipate weather and how it might affect your boat.

Physically, sailing can just be a pleasant afternoon of very little work, just making small adjustments to the sails and occasionally changing course.

But on some boats and in windy conditions, your physical strength is pushed to its limits. On race nights in particular, you don't want to let the team down, you work as hard and as fast as you can to get the most speed out of the boat.

All of this physical and mental work makes me leave my life stresses on shore.

### **Sailing is Good for your Soul.**

I have learned to appreciate the gorgeous outdoor world as I work with the elements to move the boat to its destination. I watch the wind move across the water making ripples or white caps to tell me when the gusts of wind are coming. I feel the wind on my face to tell which direction it is coming from. I listen to the water rush over the hull to hear if our speed is changing. I have learned to use my senses to better handle the boat and as a result you are aware of things more in life generally.

My ideal sailing day is a windy afternoon, followed by a setting sun and feeling the wind calming down. After the adrenaline rush of the working the boat in windy conditions, seeing the day ending quietly makes me very peaceful.

### **And Finally, the Best Part: Sailing is Just a Big Party.**

Sailing comes with a wonderful lifestyle and social life. Most people need a crew to help them sail, so once you have mastered the basic skills, you can quickly gather a circle of friends who want and need you aboard. You don't even need a boat of your own, as long as you: love to sail, get along with other people, work hard and are eager to learn you will be welcomed on board.

### **Interested?**

As a skipper, I love to encourage others to give sailing a try but remember: the skipper needs help, so come prepared with some basic sailing skills, be available when the skipper needs you and bring food! A day on the water is a day of prep for the skipper. The last thing a skipper needs is to worry about your safety and feed and entertain you too.

If you are interested in a physical and mental challenge, the unexpected effect your soul, and a great social life I encourage you to give sailing a try. It might not be for you but never know how it might just change your life. I know it changed mine.

If you are interested in the learning to sail, the Ottawa Sailing and Power Boating School has a great program. ([www.boattraining.com](http://www.boattraining.com)). They have basic cruising courses up to advanced instructor courses as well as a boat sharing program and even sailing holidays!

I hope to see you on the water!