

RYA Competent Crew Course

Who is this course for?

The RYA Competent Crew course is for both complete beginners and those who have a little sailing experience. Anyone from the age of about 11 can take this course.

How Should You Prepare for the Course?

It is not necessary to do any preparation but you may like to read a Competent Crew book before you come. You can find suitable books on Amazon here.

What Will You Learn

You will learn how to become a useful member of the crew of a cruising yacht. The syllabus includes nautical terms, rope-work and knots, handling the sails, steering the yacht under power and sail, leaving and entering harbours, anchoring, keeping a lookout, using the dinghy, personal safety, sailing manners and customs, and how to live afloat.

Who Will Be On Board?

There will be a maximum of five students on each yacht, and often we only have four. All the students may be doing a Competent Crew Course or you may find that one or two are on a skipper's course. This combination works well as you will see what is expected on the higher level courses, and they will have the opportunity to learn how to handle crew - you! Your instructor will be a commercially endorsed RYA Yachtmaster and he or she will also have an RYA instructor's certificate and be qualified to teach sailing. We pick our instructors for their personality as well as their teaching skills, and keep a close eye on customer feedback to ensure we only use instructors who create a happy, encouraging environment on board the yacht.

The Start of your Course

If you have booked on a group course you'll meet the other students as well as your instructor on the first evening. Your instructor will brief you on the plan for the week and give you a weather forecast. You'll be shown your cabin and you'll learn how to open lockers and to operate basic domestic equipment such as the water pump, electric lights, showers, and marine toilets. You'll then go for a traditional Greek meze meal at a taverna by the harbour. If we have two or more yachts sailing the crews normally eat together on the first night, and those who are not tired may follow this with drinks at a local bar.

The first morning of your course your instructor will carry out a safety briefing. Everyone must know where important emergency equipment is stowed. You will be issued with a lifejacket and harness and shown how to fit it. Your instructor will show you where various controls are located – how to start and stop the engine, how to control the sails, the navigation equipment, and radio. You'll be shown around the upper part of the deck and will be taught how to use the anchor winch, which is essential for 'Med-mooring', the way yachts berth in Greece. You may do a little practice with ropes, learning how to throw them properly and coil them neatly. Don't worry if you feel a bit overwhelmed at this stage; it is perfectly normal! If you are completely new to sailing there is a lot to take in. It will gradually make sense to you over the following days. Most things will be covered several times until you understand them, and you should feel free to ask to be told again about anything you find difficult.

What Will Happen During the Course?

You will leave port late morning and head off for your first destination. En route you'll practice using the ropes and winches, trimming the sails, and you will get your first opportunity to steer the boat. Usually you'll carry out a Man Overboard drill so that everyone knows what to do in case of such an emergency. Normally the yacht sails to a different place each day but the exact route depends upon the wind at the time. Over the five days you'll be shown how to do all the tasks that would be expected of a crew member. You'll learn to tie various knots and what they are used for, what each of the ropes do, how to steer the yacht under sail and power, and what needs to be done when entering or leaving port. You will also learn how to move around the yacht safely and how to keep a lookout.

An important part of the RYA Competent Crew course is learning to live aboard a cruising yacht. You will be expected to play a full part in looking after the boat and crew. This includes preparing meals, keeping the yacht tidy, writing up the Ship's Log Book, and learning to conserve water and power



Is there time to relax?

Definitely! Most people who come to learn to sail in Greece are looking for a holiday, as well as a course. There will be time each day for swimming and sight-seeing. Normally the yachts anchor for lunch in a pretty bay and you can swim or snorkel in the clear blue water. Some of the places you visit will have little shops and others have interesting historical sites within reach. In the evening you'll enjoy leisurely meals ashore. Greeks tend to eat late and enjoy a 'café' lifestyle in the evenings.

We don't allow alcohol to be drunk while at sea, but you are welcome to bring beer or other beverages on board to drink in the evenings. Smoking is not allowed below decks but you may smoke with care at the stern of the yacht. Smoking is still more prevalent in Greece than in northern Europe. Most places ban it indoors but you may find smokers in outdoor public areas.

What Problems Might there be?

The main problems that you are likely to face as a new sailor are getting used to the confines of a yacht cabin, and the operation of the marine toilet. In the summer months you may find it hot and humid below decks and many people choose to sleep in the cockpit where it is cooler. You will get the hang of the toilets with practice, although when in harbour you should use toilet facilities ashore. Many people worry about living in close proximity to strangers for five days, especially if they are travelling alone. It is extremely rare for students not to get on with each other, and we try, where possible, to put you with people of a similar age and native language. We're usually pretty successful with our crew match-making. You'll often meet up with the other yacht/s during the week as well, which adds variety to the social side of your course.

What is provided?

All students get an RYA Competent Crew course book, full of illustrations to show what you will do during your course. You'll also get an RYA Logbook in which to record details of your trip, and into which you can paste your certificate. The yacht will be provisioned with sufficient food for continental breakfasts and buffet lunches each day. There will be bottled water to drink, coffee & tea, and there is a kitty for fresh food to be bought for lunches during the week.

We provide linen, bedding, and towels, but not swimming towels. Please bring these if you are sailing in summer as you are sure to want to go in the water or on a beach. The yacht carries a First Aid kit which includes remedies for sea-sickness, insect bites, diarrhoea, etc. plus an assortment of bandages and plasters. Your Instructor will be qualified in First Aid. All our yachts are fully coded for commercial use and meet both the Royal Yachting Association and Hellenic Registry standards for safety equipment, which are among the highest in the world.

Extras - What else will I Need?

Unless you regularly use your hands for hard physical work, you will need sailing gloves to protect your hands when using the ropes. We recommend that you use a pair of sailing gloves with open-ended fingers for the warmer weather. You should budget for about 20€ a night for meals in tavernas ashore.

Please ensure that you are covered by holiday insurance that includes sailing. It is possible to injure yourself on a yacht and require medical assistance or help getting home. You will not be sailing more than 10 miles offshore.

At the End of the Course

Your instructor will debrief you on your performance. If you have managed to achieve all the tasks in the syllabus, you will be awarded the RYA Competent Crew course completion certificate. It's very rare for someone not to pass at Competent Crew level, so don't worry about it too much. You can enter the details of the yacht, your mileage and wind conditions into your Log Book, and the Instructor will sign this off.

All students are provided with a Feedback Form to report on their experience, and we use this to improve our service where necessary. We're sure you'll be one of our many hundreds of happy customers.

