t's a question many of us ask ourselves once we definitively catch the sailing bug. It usually goes something like this:

First, thoughts of sailing infiltrate nearly all our waking moments. Next they take over our dream state, and then, with the bug firmly rooted, this innocent little question politely creeps in: "Can I make a living doing this?"

Perhaps it's not the first question—it may likely follow, "how can I sail more often?" or "how can I afford to sail more often?" There are variations on this theme, but the point is, once you understand that you truly love sailing, the desire and pursuit of finding ways to do it as often as possible are completely natural, almost necessary. And here's the good news: sailing as a career is well within the realm of possibility. It just takes a bit of devotion, study, fortitude and the ASA!

Over the past 35 years, the American Sailing Association has certified over 7,000 instructors helping so many to choose sailing instruction for their livelihood. The organization's database is full of people who decided to get off the hamster wheel and take the leap towards a life where winds, currents, sunshine and boats are the centerpiece.

“My husband and I were sailing on a Hobie Cat in Santa Rosa Sound [in Florida] and asked ourselves, ‘what would be our dream job?’” said Kathy Struchen who operates the Lanier Sailing Academy in Pensacola, Florida. “Well, running a sailing school in Pensacola seemed like a good option. We had been sailing for years, and our current jobs entailed lots of participatory education and theater. So we knew we could make it work.

“I have always been an entrepreneur, so when the opportunity presented itself, we just took the leap. We sold our house and a lot of belongings and totally committed to changing our lives.”

That was 20 years ago when Struchen and her husband took that plunge (with no regrets), which is actually not an uncommon story. However, there are also other ways to sail for a living that don't involve the all in move of selling the house and belongings.

Lots of sailors make their way steadily through the ASA ranks with an eye towards obtaining their teaching credentials and becoming ASA certified sailing instructors. The first step towards this goal is to attend an ASA Instructor Qualifying Clinic (IQC).

With ASA credentials in hand they can now head out to a beautiful exotic location or favorite sailing ground to teach sailing as a certified professional, and live that simpler life—maybe even get a colorful bird and a convertible! Why not?

“One fine spring day I found an ad in a sailing magazine for a sailing instructor,” said long time Instructor Evaluator, Bob Diamond from Redwood City, California of his beginnings as a teacher for hire. “Sailing Instructor! I didn't know that was a job!”

As fate would have it, it was indeed a job and one that would occupy Bob for the next 30 years.

Becoming an ASA instructor is a great first step to having a lifetime career of traveling to wonderful places, being in greater harmony with the earth, meeting new people and making lifetime friends. In the case of Bob and Kathy, they made sailing their life's work, but it's also a great opportunity for a second career.

“As I tell my students when we are enjoying a great day on the water, 'Sure you guys are having fun, but this is just another hard day at the office for me...’” said Instructor Jim Stewart with a smile who retired in 2001. "That always gets a lot of groans.”

Students who take the IQC course seem to agree that, while it's challenging, it's not grueling or overly difficult. The process involves completing a comprehensive written exam, preparing a mock classroom demonstration and executing various on-water skills including heave to, man overboard and docking, but it's main purpose is to familiarize instructor candidates with ASA's curriculum and to hone their teaching skills.

“We're always mindful of ensuring that our instructors are well-trained both as sailors and as organized communicators,” said Adrienne Bell who is in charge of the IQC program for ASA. “The better their training is, the more successful they’ll be in earning a living as a professional sailor. And we're proud of the level of instructor we've sent out into the world.”

For a complete list of ASA's 2016 outstanding instructors of the year please visit asa.com/2016-outstanding-instructors.

To learn more about becoming an ASA sailing instructor contact abell@asa.com.
One of the coolest things about sailing is the access it provides to some of the most amazing places the planet has to offer. Although plenty of these places are right here in the United States, many of us crave destinations far far away, and making that possible is a big part of what the American Sailing Association is all about.

Chartering overseas is on the bucket list of many a sailor, but making it happen comes with a stipulation or two. A sizable number of countries require an International Proficiency Certificate that lets them know the charterer is trained, qualified and prepared to take one of their boats out to sea. In fact, it’s mandatory when chartering in most European/Mediterranean waters - dozens of countries insist the charterer hold an International Proficiency Certificate.

Fortunately, the ASA 104 course is quite similar to the IPC, so once you are certified to 104, simply fill out the application for the IPC, pay the fee and become internationally certified. To get the full scoop go to asa.com/ipc. Once that's done, we highly recommend chartering and sailing the Med - you will never forget it.

Just because you’re sailing in 20-knots and it’s 45-degrees, doesn’t mean you can’t be stylish! The ASA online store has great gear, is loaded with stylish apparel (created for both men and women) and it all looks quite awesome!

There are beanies, jackets, knives, tools, PFDs, emergency beacons and all kinds of other sailing related things to be found—it’s all good quality and reasonably priced. Check out the selection of sailing goodies and cool apparel at asa.com/store.

ASA loves to give back to the sailing community. Like the Docking Made Easy video series that's available for free on line or the GO SAILING social app that's a completely free download, we're here to help. And now there are free desktop screensaver calendars for your phone, tablets and regular ol' computer screens. Also, later in the year, a printed traditional calendar of this collection of great pics will be for sale.

Go to ASA.com/wallpaper to get your download and keep track of the date the sailingest way possible!