The Educational Aspect of Chartering

We often say that a great charter experience is truly the reward of a superior sailing education and we believe that's exactly right. There is nothing better than exploring, with complete confidence, some incredible stunning location from the vantage point that only a sailboat can provide.

When we started ASA over 34-years ago our primary goal was to get people sailing safely and competently so they could reach the goal of buying their own boat and living happily ever. At that point, charter companies were few and far between, however, as time went on, the bareboat charter industry became more and more substantial and omnipresent. Now sailors can rent all different kinds of boats, in nearly any location in the whole world. It has been great to watch chartering grow and prosper.

Of course, bareboat chartering is tons of fun, but from the perspective of an educational organization like ours, it is nothing less than a culmination of well taught cruising skills that set you free to sail almost anywhere. Although it's not written anywhere in the ASA universe, going through the hard work of completing the 104 courses, practicing diligently and then chartering in some beautiful cruising ground is almost like a Master's Degree in sailing. Perhaps the analogy isn't perfect but this is certain: When a student goes through the ASA system and ends up on a heaven-sent broad reach in a 15-knot tradewind, heading towards what most imagine as paradise, we have proudly done our job.

Today it's completely common for students to move through the ASA curricula and use their education to bareboat charter, be part of a sailing club or get involved in fractional ownership programs. In fact, many of our students don't own a boat but sail as much or more than their boat-owning cohorts. There are tens of thousands of ASA sailors who are enjoying the experience of sailing in the most wondrous places on earth in beautiful brand new sailboats, never having to flinch as they stare down the barrel of a haul-out invoice or an engine repair bill.

With all that in mind, chartering is something ASA encourages and embraces. It's fascinating and rewarding to hear students talk about their adventures in Belize or Croatia or some other amazing area, knowing that learning to sail has changed their lives forever - for the better...

There are ASA sailing schools everywhere - visit ASA.com and click on the “schools” tab to find one near you.
Your First Charter - Cat or Mono?

It's a fair question...We've seen quite a few monohull purists research the ins and outs of a potential bareboat charter trip on a catamaran and say, "Well, I suppose it wouldn't be bad to split the cost with three other couples and still have our own private stateroom with a queen-sized bed and a flat screen TV."

More and more would-be charterers are running the numbers of that equation and finding that: while a cruising cat isn’t what they might choose to own, they cannot argue with its comfort and roominess for a vacation with friends and family. You love Marvin, but God knows, he can rattle the barbecue lid with his snoring - not a problem. Marvin and his wife will be stowed away nicely in a pretty soundproof stateroom. Big cats also make a pretty fast passage, get into shallow water, and be extremely comfortable once the hook is dug into the sand.

Having said that, we know for the single couple who wants to explore a new and perhaps exotic cruising ground in the way they best know how, a nice new cruising monohull can also be an absolute blast. And let's not forget that chartering monohulls is a less expensive prospect. Although your drink won't spill on a cruising cat that's sailing along at seven or eight knots, there's no feeling like being perfectly trimmed and heeled on a beam reaching monohull.

ASA, of course, endorses either choice and has the means to prepare you for whichever you choose. Between Bareboat Cruising Made Easy (ASA 104) and Cruising Catamarans Made Easy (ASA114), it's all covered. We say get your skills up to speed and charter a cat or a monohull - either way, it's sailing and you will have an amazing experience regardless of how many hulls there are.

5 Considerations Before You Charter

1. Navigation fundamentals
Sailing in a completely new environment requires a solid navigational skill set. If this is a weakness in your game - fix it before you board that boat.

2. Know how to anchor and moor in varying situations
There will be anchoring and mooring so knowing the ins and outs of those skills are a must. "Bareboat Cruising Made Easy" (ASA104) illustrates it all quite comprehensively. There's also lots and lots of other very important and pertinent information in the book. It's a good book to pack or you can download it on iBooks and bring it on your trip.

3. Brush up on first aid and emergency protocols
It will in all likelihood be a great trip, free of drama, but being prepared for the opposite is extremely important. Ask fellow charter-mates about any medications they might be using and ensure the boat has the necessary emergency gear and then some.

4. Watch ASA’s Docking Made Easy video series!
If you’re about to charter you should have your docking act together, but it doesn’t hurt to practice the drills and other information that are a part of our well-thought-out 3-part series. Visit asa.com/new-sailor-resources.

5. If it's a cruising cat, there is a great book out!
Shameless plug number 3! Cruising Catamarans Made Easy really is a perfect book for those who are used to monohull sailing but want to have that luxurious

With an entire award-winning textbook devoted solely to bareboat chartering Bareboat Cruising Made Easy (ASA104) and another, Cruising Catamarans Made Easy (114), that addresses transitioning from monohulls to big cats, ASA books and courses put you in a position to come up to snuff quickly and safely.

Bareboat $29.95 Catamaran $24.05

Purchase at asa.com/textbooks