

I, CAPTAIN

WITH A FEW LESSONS, EVEN YOU CAN LEARN HOW TO
NAVIGATE THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AND TAKE IN THE
 CITY SIGHTS FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN SAILING SHIP.

BY ALEXANDRA P. KARPLUS



Head to Fisherman's Wharf, and you'll find plenty of people ready to guide you on a sailing trip past the sea lions and around Alcatraz Island.

But wouldn't it be more fun to take the tour on your own? Just sign up for classes at a local sailing school and learn to control the tiller yourself.

According to Alejandro Berrios, a sailing instructor at **OCSC Sailing** (www.ocsc.com) and four-time Rolex Regatta winner, San Francisco Bay is the most rewarding place to learn how to sail.

"San Francisco Bay is very challenging because of the constant changes in current, wind and waves," he says. "I believe that if someone learns how to sail in [it], they will be able to sail any other bay in the world."



Balclutha on Fisherman's Wharf

MARITIME MARVEL

If you'd rather stay on dry land, visit the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (www.nps.gov/safr), located near Fisherman's Wharf. Check out the collection of six floating National Historic Landmark ships, including *Balclutha*, a three-masted, steel-hulled ship built to carry a variety of cargo all over the world. Observe and join in on sailing demonstrations aboard the ship.

THE CITY is also a great sailing locale due to its temperate climate and variable conditions. "Every part of the year has something special to offer," says Richard Jepsen, CEO of OCSC Sailing. "March through May is, on average, the windiest, but it has the biggest fluctuations, so you can have a light day on one day and a windy day the next."

Plus, sailing is something the entire family can do. "For me, the most important thing is that children have fun while sailing," Berrios says. "If they are happy, they will love what they are doing and will start sailing faster."

While OCSC Sailing falls in the upper echelon of schools, Jepsen recommends other high-quality programs across the bay that may be more kid-friendly, such as the nonprofit **Treasure Island Sailing Center** (www.tisailing.org). "Kids mostly want to be in really small boats that they can control and be on by themselves," he says. "The J24 (the type of boat used at OCSC Sailing) makes that a little less possible." Upcoming classes at TISC include

SET SAIL: OCSC Sailing students navigate the bay

beginner/intermediate dinghy classes

for kids (March 22 and 29, April 5 and 12), and adults can get in on the action with two consecutive Saturday classes (March 8 and 15, April 5 and 12). Each sailor will learn how to skipper and crew, from knot tying and capsiz recovery to tacking. In addition, TISC—which has dedicated sailing programs for underprivileged and physically disabled children—hosts a variety of special events throughout the spring.

WITH a few lessons under your belt, you're ready to tackle water alone. Renting a boat is easier than you think: There is no official diploma or certificate for schooled sailors, and you may not be required to show a license. However, companies will often test you before trusting you with a boat, so taking classes is imperative.

Worried you won't remember the meaning of *tacking* (turning the bow of the boat through the eye of the wind) and *cleat hitch* (a knot used to attach a line to a boat or port)? Have no fear.

"The terminology tends to be the

stuff that sticks with you the easiest," Jepsen says.

One thing's for sure: In order to captain your own boat, you (and your traveling companions) must be familiar with the announcement, "Ready about," and expect the swinging of the boom. If you're ill-prepared, this long metal bar could whack a crew member on the head. You may also be quizzed on dousing the main sail and general nautical conduct.

ONCE you step aboard a sailboat, your entire orientation to the world will change. North and south will become *windward* and *leeward*, left and right, *port* and *starboard*. While you navigate this world of new vocabulary—with the waves as your road and wind as your fuel—you'll feel like you truly earned the breathtaking view of the San Francisco skyline. ✂

Balclutha: Lewis Sommer

ON DRY LAND

THESE HOTELS ARE A PERFECT PLACE TO DOCK AFTER A DAY AT SEA.



HOTEL DIVA
www.hoteldiva.com; 866-427-2861
 Sleek and stylish, this hotel features "Diva Lounges," which offer complimentary use of Mac computers, and "The Diva Sidewalk of Fame," featuring signatures of celebrity guests.

THE CLAREMONT RESORT & SPA
www.claremontresort.com;
 800-551-7266
 This luxurious AAA Four-Diamond resort is perched high in the Berkeley Hills. The spa's hydrotherapy baths offer panoramic views of the property below.

OCSC BOAT
www.ocsc.com; 510-843-4200
 Sailing students can spend the night onboard an OCSC Sailing boat. Classes begin early in the morning, so you'll avoid getting stuck in traffic while crossing the bridge.