

## Learning to sail from scratch

### SailQuest Sailing School Thailand

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The students call him Captain Tim. He strides into the classroom, glances at the eager students and begins, "Thank you for joining the program. Thank you for your money. But let me be very clear, we do not sell certificates."



Students at Pattaya's SailQuest Sailing School must practice all manner of drills as part of the training program.

Many of the students look surprised.

"Having said that," Tim McMahon, owner & head instructor of Pattaya's SailQuest Sailing School, continues after a pause, "upon completion of this course, you will be competent to charter a boat up to 55 feet in length. Now, you may or may not be comfortable, but I assure you that you will be capable."

Over the next 10 days, Captain Tim is to give a course entitled International Yacht Training, which encompasses two parts: a crew course and a "bareboat captain" program. I sit down with him for a discussion on the objectives of the course and the teaching methods he intends to employ.

"You might be surprised at the variety of people who enroll in our sailing-school program," he says. "We get expat men and women from all over the world. Also we get American soldiers on leave from Iraq and Afghanistan. Singaporeans and mainland Chinese are joining up to learn how to sail. And that just shows how the yachting industry is trickling down to the mainstream. Some people show up and expect to complete the course and then [be able to] captain the Titanic! And then we get people who come in and say, 'I know how to sail, but I just don't feel comfortable taking a boat out by myself just yet and I'd like a refresher course.' Sailing is a life-long endeavor; we are constantly learning from the sea."



Students repair a ripped sail – “that will teach ya!”.

It's obvious that he is passionate about sailing and is putting all his enthusiasm into the school. He calls the SailQuest course the 10 Day Bareboat Skipper's Certificate course.

"Our main objective is to teach students to sail in a responsible and seamanlike manner," he continues. "Our focus is on responsibility, seamanship and real knowledge for cruising. We don't worry too much about trimming the last two inches of the sail to perfection. Our Hands-On course is designed to take someone who has never been on a boat before and, after completion of the 10-day course, be competent to charter a bareboat anywhere in the world. You'll be able to jump on the boat, plot a course, take it out of the marina, sail it and then bring it back in again."



Director Tim McMahon familiarizes his students with the cockpit.

There is classroom theory, on-board training and a programme called Mileage Builders - join-in trips to allow the students to gain experience and notch up sea-miles. These "delivery cruises" normally include 12 hours of night sailing and lots of good navigation exercises. And then there are activities like regattas and rallies in which students are allowed to participate as crew members in order to accumulate more experience.

"Here we have a perfect setting for a sailing course. It's like a mini-Singapore. There's a shipping channel, ship traffic, a traffic-separation scheme, strong currents, wind and haze. Everything that you need to know in order to learn how to sail safely."



System orientation, part of the on-board training for sailing at night.

Get in touch with Captain Tim at SailQuest Sailing School Thailand today:

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