

Sailing trips bring out the best in families

One of the few activities where several generations can enjoy the outing

BY CHRISTOF MARTI, VANCOUVER SUN JULY 17, 2013



Children are quick to help out with sailing chores.

Are you looking for an entertaining and exiting family activity for this summer? You may have never thought about this, but sailing is one of the only sports I can think of where you can have three generations on board and have a good time.

Normally I see mom or dad taking their kid to a ball game, a tennis lesson or a some other sport activity. They support their kids from the sideline or, at the most, get involved in coaching them or their team.

When you take your children sailing, you don't have to be on the sideline. You are part of the team, working together. It is not uncommon to have the young sailors teach their parents a trick or two they picked up during a sailing class.

Sailing can be physically demanding, but it doesn't have to be. Steering the boat or navigating between islands in a light summer breeze do not require strength. Let the strong one in the family heave on the

lines, hoist the sails or pull up the anchor.

There are plenty of examples of families embarking on tremendous sailing adventures: Last year during the Vic-Maui yacht race there was a boat called Family Affair owned by a couple and their son. Kinetic another boat was crewed by a family with their teenage kids. Not everybody wants to cross oceans, and there are countless families who sail on local waters in English Bay or cruise the Gulf Islands during the summer.

Just imagine yourself anchored in a beautiful bay; you just came back from a stroll along a sandy beach, now the barbecue is sizzling and everybody is lounging in the cockpit or enjoying some private time on the foredeck of the boat.

There is really no age limit: We have regularly taken our son out sailing since he was three months old. Aged two-and-a-half now, he has already grown his sea legs and moves around the boat like a pro. He takes his naps in a hammock like a true sailor and happily cranks on the winches to help with sail trim. Your parents may enjoy a day on the water, too. This is one of the occasions where being the “sandwich generation” can be fun.

We often get asked if our son gets bored on the boat. In our experience, younger children, often accustomed to being with just mom or dad, love being with both their parents. The simplicity of boating life, away from the hustle and bustle of our regular lives, is amazingly conducive to quality family time.

A few things to consider when sailing with the family:

- Plan on shorter trips, especially with infants. Nobody will enjoy the “gruelling 12-hour slog” just because dad loves to keep on sailing.
- If you go cruising for multiple days, plan to stop at marinas or marine parks where you can get off the boat and enjoy some shore-based activities: Ganges on Saltspring Island has a wonderful playground right next to the marinas. On Wallace Island you can explore remnants of a long gone vacation resort and in Pirate’s Cove a treasure chest filled with toys awaits the young sailors (I will write about different destinations later this month).
- A boat offers endless opportunities to play, but it’s not without hazards: Pad rough edges with foam. Consider a soft hat for infants.
- Diapers are an issue: Plan on stops where you can dispose of them.
- While sailing, our son wears a lifejacket and safety harness when on deck. Older kids will no longer need the harness, but the life-jacket is a must. Lead by example and put your life-jacket on.
- Before planning a longer excursion: Try it out for a day first. Take your family for a short sail on English Bay, you will soon find out what works and what doesn’t.
- For longer excursion bring a dinghy or kayak to explore nearby islands and beaches.

• Most families don't own a boat. Sailing clubs and co-ops are great alternatives to boat ownership, and they often provide training for new sailors. Discovery Sailing Club, for example, offers a family membership and they own a small cruising boat perfect for day sailing on English Bay.

If you are intrigued now but don't know where to start, stay tuned for the next blog entry. There are countless opportunities in B.C. how to get involved in sailing. You will be surprised, and it does not have to be expensive.

Christof Marti is the owner of Simply Sailing School in Vancouver (simplysailing.ca) and is a director on the Board of BC Sailing. Trained as an engineer and with an MBA in finance, Christof is also a qualified sailing instructor and a certified Yachtmaster. He will be filing reports from B.C.'s coastal waters over the season.

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



Children are quick to help out with sailing chores.

