

HOW TO BECOME CREW IN A CRUISING YACHT

Bill McIndoe has written a few tips if you are keen to go to sea in a cruising yacht.

By racing or cruising in the harbour and on the Otago Coast you will gradually acquire the skills to equip yourself for your first proper long offshore coastal cruise to Stewart Island or the Marlborough Sounds.

In Bills own words – “It may sound blunt but however it is expressed these are some of the facts”

How did I learn to sail?

I learnt to sail in 1945 in a “P” class which I had built myself when I was 16 years



Bill McIndoe aged 17 years, in his “P” Class yacht *Gull*, Otago Harbour, 1946

old. During my naval training in UK 1946 to 1951 I was fortunate to be able to race offshore and cruise as crew in several keelers ranging in size from 8m to 24m and in various centerboard sailing craft.

Later back home in New Zealand I owned an Idlealong and a Flying Fifteen. In 1968 I bought my first keeler, 8m “Caravelle” (Westerly 25), followed by 10m yacht “Lenticular” (Cavalier 32) in 1978. In 1982 we bought the 12m yacht Avanti (Cavalier 39) which we have owned and sailed for 37 years.

What have I done?

I have been sailing for 74 years, 55 of them in my own keeler and I still have heaps to learn. Margaret and I sailed transocean to the Pacific Islands, Australia and have circumnavigated the North Island and the South Island ie cruised the entire New Zealand coast and 28 voyages from Dunedin to the Marlborough Sounds, Nelson and return. We are still coastal cruising and I gain a great deal of pleasure in writing about the voyages Margaret and I have done and are still doing.

How can you go cruising?

- Join a yacht club where they run dinghy sailing classes and some members own keeler yachts.



Bill McIndoe aged 90 on his Cavalier39 class yacht *Avanti* Careys Bay, Otago Harbour, 2019

- * Find out how seasick you get aboard a small boat at sea and how to develop the reflexes that might solve the problem. Also trial anti-seasick tablets at home before you go to sea. They may make you drowsy or not agree with your stomach, even on dry land. But you should know.
 - On most cruising yachts smoking is forbidden.
 - Learn the customs required to live happily in a yacht at close quarters and maintain good relationships with the other crew and how to keep clean and healthy in tropical climates to which you are unaccustomed.
 - Learn how to live using very little water. On a long 12 day voyage or if filling up the tanks is not possible, your personal ration may be 2 litres per day. Try it!
 - Bring with you a skill that will make you a valued crew member.
 - Read how-to-cruise books by Lucas and repair manuals such as written by Calder. Then you will get an idea of the complexity of a yacht and how much the owner and crew must know to effect repairs and carry out ongoing maintenance.
 - Become computer literate especially with the navigation programme used by your skipper.
 - Obtain a Radio Operators License so you are able to legally operate a transmitter, use the correct voice procedure and understanding the distress calls Mayday, Pan-pan and Securite
 - If you claim to be able to cook at sea (or the land) you will always get a berth on a boat. If necessary read the literature or go to classes and learn to victual and cook the sort of meals that are normal aboard a yacht. Caravan cooking is similar.
 - Work out how to travel light. You will be allocated very little room to stow gear aboard a yacht.
 - Find a mentor and learn the fundamentals from a skilled mariner. If you obligate yourself to an owner by working on his boat he surely will take you sailing.
 - A yacht is not a democracy. The Skipper speaks for the boat in all voice and written communications. His word is law and a “request” may be an order. Pick-up on the Skipper’s preferences.
 - Purchase your own quality heavy weather sailing gear and lifejacket.
- Learn how to sail in small boats or a trailer-sailor and participate on day sailing and small adventures. Know how to row a dinghy, coil a rope and steer a

compass course. Learn the six important knots and when they should be used.

Study the skills required for sail changing, working the anchor winch, picking up a mooring, how to throw a heaving line and securing the mooring lines to a wharf.

- Every day read the weather in the paper, on television, on your computer and raise your eyes to watch the clouds and touch the wind.
- Learn the seaman's terminology and read how-to books on cruising under sail.

Consult this writer i.e. me; I written a paper on marine terms.

All Basic Seamanship

This is all basic seamanship and your aim should be to go aboard a cruising yacht with sound small-boat sailing skills and good theoretical knowledge of seamanship. There is so much to learn but it is all wonderful fun, even the grotty bits are fun – in retrospect.

A final point is keep writing up your Log Book; brief but accurate, otherwise your sailing life will become a muddle in your mind and your memories a blur.

When time allows you can write up the story in full.

After you have mastered the basic skills you will no doubt be welcomed aboard a well found cruising yacht. Go to sea as a crew member and learn the ways of the cruising mariner. You do not have to sail transoceanic or round the world. There is much fun and many adventures to be had on our own rugged and fascinating New Zealand coast. If you can sail the New Zealand coast, you can sail anywhere.

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