Dinghy

Running Day Sailing courses

Following on from our previous article, Nic Wymer, who designed the Day Sailing course programme for Plas Menai National Watersports Centre, offers some practical advice on successful course organisation.

Every course should include a short passage, planned and executed by the course participants with the help of their instructor. Planning and leading such a trip can be unnerving the first time, and the course should be run under the close supervision of a Coastal SI.

The Menai Strait offers a particularly interesting venue for running the dinghy day sailing course. The tidal current, if used correctly, proves to be a real asset, adding a couple of knots of boat speed and making quite long passages viable in a day. More than 20 miles of categorised water with lateral and cardinal buoyage, along with many varieties of water-frontage create an interesting and challenging location. So how do we put together the course?

We have an outline plan for the two days it should take to cover the syllabus:

We tend to run most of our Day Sailing combined with other courses. frequently Seamanship Skills which gives us the luxury of being able to plan the Day Sailing element around the most useful tides. Generally we try to have slack between 12.00 and 14.00 to allow optimum distances to be covered and avoid issues with late returns.

It is useful to spend a while getting students used to their boats. A short session on boat-handling, including some land drills can pay dividends.

The next session ashore involves kitting the boats out for the following day. An anchor and paddles can be packed securely and care is required that nothing is fastened in such a way that it can be hazardous. Retaping and checking the rigging, spars and foils is normally done at this time. I would normally set a

Day 1	Day 2	
 Meet and greet Rig boats, short free sail, some coaching on technique Session ashore: boat preparation including stowage, improvised repairs and sailing in difficult conditions Session afloat: ideally with some equipment stowed including reefing afloat, anchoring off a lee shore and inversion capsize. Session ashore: pilotage as shown in G14, working out the tides, forecast and an outline route for the following day. 	 Possible early start for day trip depending on tides and student departure times Possible venues: SW, Abermenai, 4.5 Nm Llandwyn Island 8 Nm Escape- Caernarfon 2 Nm NE, Britannia Bridge 3.5 Nm Menai Bridge 4.5Nm Beaumaris 8 Nm 	
During the evening session students can	Menai Bridge and Beaumaris	

prepare equipment for the following day, route plans including escape routes and gain experience using the handheld GPS. involve transiting the Swellies. Refer to staff guidelines.





challenge of trying to replace some parts such as goosenecks or fairleads with limited spares.

The final session afloat on day one normally gives an opportunity to explore the immediate area, practice anchoring and evaluate how well the boat is packed, especially after the capsize drill.

For the navigation session the following equipment is gathered:

- current almanac
- local charts
- dividers
 - pencils and paper
 - chinagraph pencil and blank sheet of laminated card
 - handheld gps
 - handheld compass ('silva' type and/or hand bearing)
 - if possible, a selection of dummy flares.

We try to leave as much of the planning as we can to the students, with the advice to be optimistic in their planning and checking they are heading in the right direction. It is far easier to shorten the trip than lengthen it.

The trip

This can be interesting. We give special consideration to group control in the briefing, so that once a set of tasks is given out, the instructor can take on a purely safety cover role. Tasks may include finding objects at grid locations, doing a section under paddle power, pilotage exercises etc.

Fenders can be used to take boats ashore over lunch. Six of them can be used to roll a boat over a surface but I prefer to leave the boats afloat.

In conclusion

Make sure you have the necessary equipment:

- suitable boats with sails which can be reefed. With a bit of ingenuity even a Laser 2000 is suitable if you use the foredeck and the area under the tiller for storage).
- paddles
 - anchor
 - dry bags
 - flasks
 - charts
 - almanac
 - access to a good local forecast •
 - flare packs etc, if necessary

Make sure your students have the right kit:

- suitable clothes
- spare clothes
- snacks, medication etc they may be away for most of the day

Try not to fall into the trap of spending all morning sailing to a spot to do nothing but eat lunch and sail back. A little planning can make it much more rewarding.

Time should be spent improving sailing or navigation skills.

Don't forget, you can always take a tent and spread it out over another day!