

Information Pack for Youth Groups

Short Programmes



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1. Company, Staff and Emergency Information

Sea-Change was formed in March 2007 to provide residential opportunities in order to embed personal development and offer accreditation of learning. This is done by working together on a large traditional sailing vessel. People participate in the whole range of domestic and sailing activities and are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their contribution and group decisions.

All staff are selected for their experience and attributes when working with young people, all have enhanced DBS certificates and are trained in First Aid.

The Trusts primary skipper, Richard Titchener MBE, left a career in Personnel Management in the 80s and has been taking groups of young people sailing on Thames Barges since. Richard is a qualified Barge Master and an RYA Yacht Master Instructor with a Commercial Endorsement.

Hilary Halajko has worked extensively with young people from a variety of age groups and settings. Hilary has sailed as Mate with groups of young people with various organisations for a significant time. A founding member of Sea-Change, Hilary is also our Chair of Trustees.

Diggory Rose joined SeaChange in March 2025 from running Boat House 4 at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Prior to this he had a career in sail training, both on traditional and modern boats. Diggory is also a Yacht Master Instructor and Examiner.

Staff Contact Information

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2. Programme Contents

In 2019 we commissioned our own Sailing Barge *Blue Mermaid* for the work we do. Built and launched in Polruan, Cornwall by C. Toms and Son in 2016 then fitted out and rigged here in Maldon by T.S. Rigging. She is a replica of the last steel barge to be built. The original *Blue Mermaid* was built in 1930 as the last of seven barges commissioned by the Horlock Family in Mistley, Essex but was destroyed when she hit a magnetic mine off the Middle Sand in the Thames Estuary during the Second World War. Ours is the first full-size Thames Sailing Barge to be built for 86 years.

We have retained her original appearance on deck and have kept the open cargo hold inside to allow for possible shipments. The accommodation is located at either end with a total of fifteen berths including the staff cabins. The permanent crew have their own cabins separate from the voyage crew. Cooking and eating are communal, and everyone will take turns in preparation, cooking and cleaning.

Blue Mermaid, in keeping with tradition, has been built without an engine, helping to create greater immersion in sailing as a means of locomotion and to preserve the skills required to do this. The whole crew are fully involved in the sailing of the barge so that after the first few days everyone will play an active and responsible role. Usually there will be a briefing for the day's activities at breakfast and a de-brief with reinforcement of learning after the evening meal to aid understanding and inclusion.

The nature of working on the water is one of variety, whether it be the result of the changing tidal pattern each day, the weather or destination. Therefore, the ship has a routine which runs throughout each day and onto this is superimposed the daily objective. Breakfast is 0830, lunch 1300 and evening meal mid-evening. The crew will often work a watch system whilst on passage. The watch system ensures that each person gets a chance to cover every job and nobody ends up doing only one aspect of the work. It also ensures there are always enough people available for the safe sailing of the vessel.

On arrival, the first session will be touring *Blue Mermaid* and doing an initial safety brief for the vessel while moored. Everyone will be allocated bunks, stow their baggage and food for the week's meals. There will then be an extensive safety brief for sailing and familiarisation with work on deck and facilities below. If possible, on your voyage there will be at least one shore visit with the emphasis on experiencing the estuarine environment, e.g. a beach.

Our sailing area is ideal for exploration, gaining an understanding of the environment and learning the historical context of the barge.

3. The Accreditation Process

All participants will receive a course completion certificate at the end of their time aboard.

We offer the Royal Yachting Association's Start Yachting and Competent Crew certificates requiring three and five days aboard respectively.

As part of the Skippers of the Future Project in 2023-4 we developed the Introductory Certificate in Traditional Seafaring with the National Historic Ships Unit and this may be covered on your trip if requested.

Both sets of qualifications require some study and commitment and although much of the contents are naturally covered in normal activity, it is important to consider whether taking the structured training is right for your group. One of the benefits of working with young people in this environment is that they learn without it seeming like school.

4. What we supply and what you should bring

We supply the vessel, qualified staff and safety equipment including lifejackets, waterproofs and harnesses. On short programmes the group is asked to provide food and cleaning materials for the whole crew. We do not provide bedding, though we do have limited spares for those who have forgotten to pack their own.

You will need to ensure that the student brings: -

Essential

Warm sleeping gear
A change of clothes
Warm clothes
Suntan lotion
Old trainers
Wash kit
Towel
Sun hat
Warm hat and gloves

Desirable

Musical instruments
A little pocket money
Wellington boots
Shorts/swimming gear
Personal reading material

Mobile phones tend to be a normal personal item and may be brought onboard unless agreed otherwise with your staff and group. However, they must not be used when people are engaged in an activity. There will be free time built into each day in which phones can be used. Phones and other personal electronics must not be used on deck when the vessel is moving as they can pose a hazard to safety.

Alcohol, illegal substances/recreational drugs and/or any form of weapon are not allowed. Jewellery must not be worn when working the ship. Long hair should be tied back.

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5. Safety and other policies

Safety is of paramount importance to us. The vessel is operated according to and exceeding the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Every possible attempt is made through explanation and example to instil a safe working attitude and thereby to mitigate risk. Where risk does exist, reasonable steps are taken to guard against accident by using safe working methods, for example, no person is allowed on deck alone after dark and anyone under eighteen years is always required to wear a lifejacket on deck. Certain conditions may make it appropriate for everyone to wear a lifejacket on deck at the discretion of the skipper.

We often have the opportunity for swimming during voyages. Swimming will only take place from a beach when a safety boat is present and at the discretion of the skipper.

No alcohol is to be brought aboard the vessel and the law concerning consumption by young people will be adhered to. No drugs are allowed aboard the vessel unless prescribed by a medical practitioner. Any person found to be in possession of an illegal substance will not be able to continue the trip.

Smoking and electronic cigarettes is not allowed below decks for safety reasons but is permitted on deck when not engaged in activity, and only if pursued with consideration for non-smokers present.

We have a comprehensive Child Protection Policy.

6. Applicant Details

We expect the group leader to have obtained informed parental consent for the sailing trip and swimming if intended. Finally, we would like permission to use photographs which may include students for publicity and fundraising purposes.