



INFORMATION PACK FOR GROUP LEADERS

THINGS TO KNOW A BEFORE YOU BRING A GROUP...



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1.The Charity

Sea-Change Sailing Trust is a registered charity. It was formed in March 2007 to provide residential opportunities afloat, to embed personal development and offer accredited 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.

Our Staff

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



Barge Skipper: After a career in Personnel Management, Richard Titchener has spent 15 years taking groups of young people sailing on a Thames Barge and is a qualified Barge Master, Yacht Master with a Commercial Endorsement, and First Aider. He is the primary skipper of 'Blue Mermaid' and the Executive Officer of Sea-Change Sailing Trust.



Barge Mate: 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.



Youth Mentor: Hilary Halajko has worked extensively with young people in a variety of age groups and settings. She has sailed with groups of young people as mate for 8 years. She is the retired Officer in Charge of a 24-place day nursery linked to an educational establishment. Hilary is also the Chair of Sea-Change Trustees.

Staff Contact Information

Richard Titchener	07895 063838	richard@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk
Hilary Halajko	07597 355782	hilary@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk
Diggory Rose		diggory@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk

Environmental awareness:

We are a very low carbon organisation. Our Thames sailing barge Blue Mermaid does not have an engine. Our voyages are carried out using just wind and tide. We pay to offset the little carbon that we do produce.

We are very proud to be the very first operator on the River Thames to be awarded the Gold Award under the Thames Green Scheme, and to have received the ASTO Environmental Excellence Award in 2022.

2. The Thames Barge 'Blue Mermaid'



We successfully raised the money to build our own Thames Sailing Barge. 'Blue Mermaid' was commissioned in 2019. She is built of steel and is a replica of the last Thames Barge to be built in 1930 which became a casualty of WW2. She is the first full-size Thames Sailing Barge to be built for 86 years. Her deck is 26 metres long and provides a wide and stable platform for the inexperienced sailor.

We have retained her original appearance on deck and have kept the open cargo hold inside to allow for possible shipments.

Blue Mermaid meets or exceeds all current Maritime and Coastguard Agency safety standards for carrying passengers and is equipped with lifejackets, safety harnesses, and waterproofs for each passenger to use whilst on board.

Blue Mermaid does not have an engine. This means that life on board has a special connection to the natural elements, and peace that is excellent for wellbeing. It also

means that the daily routine is very much dictated by the wind and tide and the plan for the day can change with very short notice. Some flexibility is essential, especially regarding such things as meal-times and wake-up times.



Electricity:

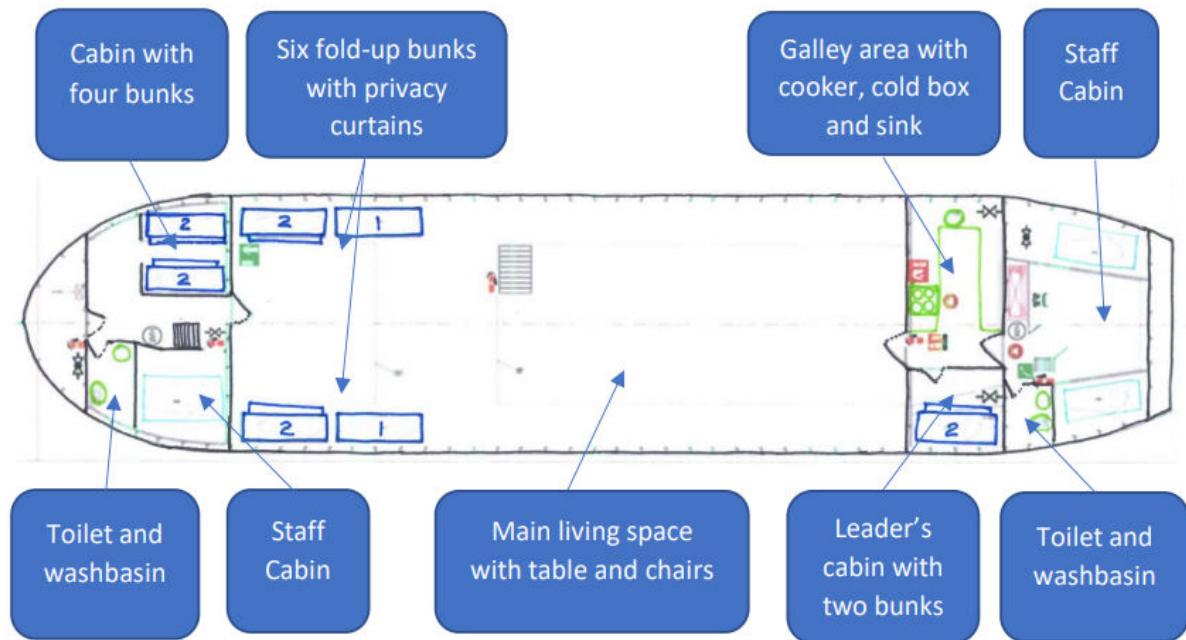
Blue Mermaid has a 12volt electric system topped up by solar panels. These power electrical lights below decks and navigational equipment. There are some USB charging points and these can be used for charging mobile phones but cannot be used for charging high power items. You will see some conventional 3 pin 240volt sockets onboard. These will only work when we are moored to a quayside and a shore power lead is available, or if we are running our generator. In summer we rarely run the generator as the solar panels provide enough power for Blue Mermaid's needs, and we are unlikely to moor the barge alongside a quay during your voyage. There is no Wi-Fi onboard and phone signal is poor inside the accommodation.

Sleeping Accommodation:

Blue Mermaid is fitted out down below to accommodate up to 15 people including our three sea-staff who have cabins separate from the voyage crew. Accommodation is basic as the hold space has been retained to enable us to sometimes carry cargo under sail. The 12 bunks for the groups and their leaders are organised in a configuration of 4 permanent bunks in a cabin in the fo'c'sle, 6 demountable bunks with privacy curtains in the hold, and two bunks in a cabin beside the galley. Group

leaders usually sleep in the galley cabin, though some choose to be in the hold with the group. -

INTERIOR LAYOUT OF BLUE MERMAID SHOWING SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION



Toilets and Amenities:

There are two toilets on board, each in a cubicle with a handbasin. There is a small manual-pump shower in one cubicle. This is normally reserved for the use of staff if they are resident onboard for a longer period of time. Blue Mermaid has to carry fresh water in tanks, and with no mains electricity hot water is very limited. It is sometimes possible for crew on short trips to shower if necessary, if other facilities ashore are not available.

Catering:

Cooking and eating is, where possible, done communally with everyone eating meals around a table in the cargo hold.

Victualling and catering is usually the responsibility of the group, who also need to cater for the sea-staff.

Blue Mermaid has a four-burner domestic gas oven with one oven shelf and a grill. Meals should be planned to take account of limited oven space when catering for a whole crew.

Hot water in the galley is boiled on the stovetop in kettles. Fresh water has to be pumped from the on-board water tanks using foot pumps.

Blue Mermaid has a full complement of knives and chopping boards and so cooking fresh meals from scratch is a highly beneficial group activity. Organising mass vegetable chopping sessions can be good for teamwork!

There is no electric fridge or freezer, just a highly efficient cool box beneath the floor. Therefore, freezer blocks are recommended. The cool-box has managed to keep ice cubes from melting for four days in summer and is safe for storing of meat for similar short periods however meal plans should take into account the lack of refrigeration, perhaps with vegetarian meals towards the end of voyages.

3. Programme Contents



During the voyage everyone participates in sailing the barge from place to place. 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. The crew will work a watch system whilst the barge is sailing. The watch system ensures that each person gets a chance to cover every job, and nobody ends up doing either only popular or unpopular work. It also ensures that all times there are enough people available for the safe sailing of the ship. In addition to the sailing related tasks, everyone takes a turn at helping to prepare meals, wash-up, and to help clean and maintain the barge.

On arrival, crew members will be allocated a bunk and will stow their gear for the trip and then there will be an initial safety brief while the barge is still moored up, and a longer safety brief for sailing, and familiarisation with work on deck and with the facilities below.

The whole crew are fully involved in the sailing of the barge so that after the first few days they will play active and responsible roles. Usually there will be a de-brief and reinforcement of learning after the evening meal.

Night times are usually spent at anchor somewhere sheltered. Sometimes we sail into the night. It is unlikely that the barge will be tied alongside a quay during your voyage, and so the opportunities for shore-leave are limited. If possible, there will be at least one opportunity for a shore visit with the emphasis on experiencing the natural environment by taking the barge-boat to a riverside beach and there may be a chance for a game of rounders or football whilst ashore if the location is suitable.

The sailing area around the Thames Estuary and coasts and rivers of Suffolk, Kent and Essex are ideal for exploration, gaining an understanding of the environment and the historical context of the barge.

4. Accreditation

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

We offer the Royal Yachting Association Competent Crew certificate to those who would like to work towards this. It requires 5 days onboard and cannot be completed in a shorter voyage.



5. What we supply and what you should bring

We supply:

The barge, qualified staff, and safety equipment including lifejackets, waterproofs and harnesses.

The group supply:

Food and cleaning materials for the duration of the voyage.

We can offer advice on a suitable menu for the voyage.

Young people should bring the following kit in a soft bag if possible:

Essential	Desirable
Sleeping bag	
Pillow	Personal reading material
Warm sleeping clothes	Musical instruments
A complete change of clothes	Communal Music Player
Warm clothes	A little spending money
Suntan lotion	Wellington boots
Old trainers	Shorts/swimming gear
Wash kit	
Towel	
Sun hat	
Warm hat and gloves	

We cannot emphasise enough that the temperature afloat is always cooler than people are expecting, and warm clothes really are essential. There is no heating on board the barge and for voyages in spring and autumn we suggest adding a blanket to the kit list in case the nights are chilly.

Mobile phones may not be used when people are engaged in an activity, or at the meal table. They can be used during free time. For safety reasons phones and personal stereos must not be used on deck when the vessel is moving.

Illegal substances/recreational drugs or any form of weapon are not allowed. Jewellery must not be worn when sailing.

6. Safety and other policies

Safety is of paramount importance. The vessel is operated according to, and exceeds, 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 exists, 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 required to wear a lifejacket on deck at all times. It may be appropriate for everyone to wear a lifejacket on deck at the discretion of staff.

The law concerning alcohol 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 voyage.

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

7. Applicant Details

We provide a consent form for you to give to each individual. These forms must be completed, signed, and returned to us in advance of your group joining the barge.

We expect the group leader to have obtained informed parent/guardian consent for the sailing trip, and swimming if intended. Swimming will only take place when a safety boat is present and at the discretion of the skipper.

We also require details of any medical conditions and prescribed medication for all those on board, together with details of an emergency contact ashore that will be available for the duration of the voyage.

Finally, we ask permission to use photographs which may include students for publicity and fundraising purposes.

8. Things you may be asked to check:

On our website www.seachangesailingtrust.org.uk you will find copies of all our policies:

- Safeguarding
- Vulnerable Adult
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- GDPR
- Data Privacy
- Health and Safety.

You will also find:

- A copy of our insurance certificate
- Our terms and conditions of charter



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If you have any questions about the booking process, or bringing a group with us, please call our office. We will be pleased to help you.