

## SUMMER SAILS

Suzanne Bourke, a qualified Yachting New Zealand instructor and sailing master, never tires of seeing someone discover the thrill of helming a keelboat. Teaching in a modern 32-footer called *French Connection*, she also never tires of watching the look on overseas visitors' faces when they glide out of Auckland's Westhaven Marina – the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere – to discover one of the world's most beautiful harbours, studded with green volcanic cones and secret, sparkling bays.

"They find it special that we can anchor in any of these gorgeous, sheltered bays – a different one every night, if we like, whereas overseas you might have to tie up to a sea wall. And, you don't have to go far from the city to find them. The far end of Waiheke Island is stunning – it's like the Bay of Islands down there."

Bourke's Sailing Away school offers courses for beginners to advanced beginners, intermediate and advanced sailing, covering everything from navigation to seamanship. At the conclusion of each course you gain an internationally recognised Royal Yachting Association or Yachting New Zealand keelboat sailing qualification, learning on a new Beneteau Oceanis yacht.

"It's very easy to work," explains Bourke. "All the ropes feed back down into the cockpit and with the winches there's no great need for strength."

Her clientele ranges from 20-somethings keen to crew on a friend's boat, to older folk "familiar with launches or speedboats who, on reaching retirement, realise they've got the time to do some more leisurely sailing." Lessons are conducted in the safety of the harbour, sailing out under the Harbour Bridge and as far as Bean Rock Lighthouse as confidence progresses.

Auckland, of course, is known internationally as the "City of Sails" and it's the perfect place to learn the ropes. Says Bourke, "Very often overseas clients tell me they chose to come here to learn to sail because they saw the Hauraki Gulf when the America's Cup was on TV [in 2000 and 2003]. You'd think it would be fading off now, but no. It was that sweeping, sparkling view from a helicopter at the beginning of each race that made the impact. It's proved a lasting impression."

**Who can do it?:** Confident swimmers with basic fitness.

**What you need:** Non-slip shoes, sunscreen, a cap.

**Biggest buzz:** When you turn off the motor, hoist sail and feel that silent power as you glide through the sparkling water.

**Watch out for:** Other boats.

**Cooldest places to sail:** Discover the secluded bays of the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Islands – anchor at a different one each night.

**Start-up cost:** A beginner's two-day, on-the-water course (five hours per day)

**Getting serious:** Join a yacht club or do a day skipper's course so you can sail your own boat with confidence.

**Information and lessons:**

Visit [www.sailingaway.co.nz](http://www.sailingaway.co.nz) (Auckland) or [www.yachtingnz.org.nz](http://www.yachtingnz.org.nz) for further accredited sailing schools nationwide.

Suzanne Bourke's Sailing Away school offers courses ranging from beginners to the more experienced on her 32-foot keelboat *French Connection*.

