

Top 10 Sailing holidays

Experienced sailor YVONNE GORDON picks 10 of the best sailing breaks on the planet — no matter what your ability



Island hopping. Set sail across the azure sea on a Greek adventure of a lifetime



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Has it always been your dream to sail around remote islands, swim in warm, turquoise waters and anchor in peaceful coves at night? Or do you fancy stepping aboard an old-time tall ship to navigate fjords and see the Northern Lights? Perhaps you want to learn to sail on a lake and stay on shore at night — or for the ultimate adventure, sail across the Drake Passage to Antarctica? The good news is that you don't have to win the lottery to get out on the water. Here's my pick of

the world's best sailing holidays — all using wind-power (rather than engines) to navigate around coasts, islands, lakes and fjords, and all guaranteed to give you a memorable adventure.

1 SAIL THE SPICE ISLANDS IN ZANZIBAR

Sail around this Tanzanian archipelago of more than 40 beautiful islands, which were an important Indian Ocean trading post for centuries, and you'll experience pristine nature and a mix of cultures and cuisines. You will get to

swim and snorkel on coral reefs where you might spot turtles and tropical fish, hike in jungles and rainforests and explore colourful villages, all while soaking up the island atmosphere at a gentle pace and enjoying sunsets at sea.

DO IT: Prices from €1,025pp including accommodation and selected meals. See intrepidtravel.com.

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: A week exploring reefs and unspoilt beaches in the Spanish Virgin Islands, from €2,646pp including all meals (moorings.co.uk), or sail the islands of the Philippines on

a traditional paraw sailboat. Five days cost from €480pp, (thecoraltriangle.com/travel/tao-philippines).

2 EXPLORE THE GALAPAGOS BY BOAT

Step on board the *Mary Anne*, a three-masted sailing ship, to explore the Galapagos Islands in a unique way. The boat takes just 16 passengers, and you'll enjoy visits to the islands, plus kayaking, snorkelling and other activities, getting the chance to see turtles, penguins, flamingoes, sea lions, iguanas and giant tortoises. On board, there are lessons in navigation and astronomy, opportunities to help raise and lower sails, and informal talks from resident experts on the islands' wildlife, geology and evolution.

DO IT: Seven nights from €4,920pps, including all meals and activities (return flights to Quito cost approximately €1,321pp); wildfoottravel.com.

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: Explore the Haida Gwaii archipelago off Canada's west coast on the classic, 92-foot schooner *Maple Leaf*, from €4,264 for eight nights including all sailing, accommodation, food and guiding (mapleleafadventures.com).

3 A GREEK ODYSSEY IN THE CYCLADES

Take off for a sailing and hiking adventure in the Greek Islands of the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea (left). You'll see steep cliffs, secluded bays and pristine beaches, and take guided walks on hidden trails on the beautiful quiet Greek Islands of Kea, Kythnos, Syros and Serifos, with the chance to swim and snorkel in the Aegean Sea and dine in traditional Greek tavernas. There'll also be an introduction to sailing with instruction from expert skippers.

DO IT: €1,227pp including return flights from London to Athens, half-board. See theadventure.com.

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: Seven days of sailing and hiking in the Dodecanese Islands, from €1,950pp (trekking.gr) or sail and walk along the Portuguese Camino de Santiago for €1,185pp (spainyourway.com).

4 SAIL TO ANTARCTICA ON A YACHT

You won't find a more exhilarating way to experience Antarctica than sailing across the Drake Passage to the icy white continent on a 75-foot yacht. The boat takes just seven guests (and four crew) so you'll have the world's largest and most pristine wilderness to yourselves, plus intimate encounters with penguins, seals, whales and icebergs. You'll get to spend 10



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DO IT: Sailing lessons from €28pp per hour (depending on group number) with asconautica.ch/school; double rooms from €350 per night (edenroc.ch).

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: A week of sailing lessons at the Lakitira beach Resort in Kos, with Mark Warner (sunway.ie/markwarner) costs from €1,079pp including flights from Gatwick.

6 ADVENTURES IN MONTENEGRO

See dramatic scenery and impressive Balkan landscapes as you sail south along the Dalmatian coast from Dubrovnik, in the Adriatic Sea. You'll spend time exploring Montenegro's most beautiful beaches for swimming, snorkelling and sunbathing, visiting the ancient fishing village of Bigovo, seeing a World Heritage site at Kotor and dancing in the regional capital of nightlife at Budva.

DO IT: An eight-day trip, starting and ending in Dubrovnik, costs from €1,099pp with G Adventures (gadventures.co.uk).

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: An eight-day, 18-39-year-olds sailing trip in Croatia, half-board, from €699pp with topdeck.travel.

7 CRUISE IN COMPANY IN MALLORCA, SPAIN

If you have sailing experience and want to charter your own yacht but with

WHAT TO PACK

Bring closed, non-slip shoes to wear onboard and, as space is at a premium on sailing boats, make sure luggage is a soft bag or backpack rather than a hard suitcase, for easy stowage. Reflections from water can be strong so bring a good sunscreen, plus sunglasses, a hat, a windproof jacket and don't forget your swimsuit and snorkelling gear.

days exploring the peninsula via zodiac, on foot and in kayaks, and the boat even has special permits that allow camping on land.

DO IT: The 17-day polar expedition on the 75-foot *S/V Australis* starts from €21,000pp (nathab.com).

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: A six-day sailing and kayaking adventure in Glacier Bay, Alaska, costs from €2,400pp. See adventureflow.us.

5 GO TO SAILING SCHOOL ON LAKE MAGGIORE

Beginners can learn sailing or experienced sailors can hone their racing skills on this lake, which benefits from afternoon thermal winds. Sailing school Asconautica at Hotel Eden Roc in Ascona, Switzerland, provides sailing courses from reefing and rigging for beginners to spinnaker and regatta coaching for professionals. Kids can learn to sail too.



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a pre-planned route and a great social atmosphere, try a flotilla. During the day, you sail on your own and at night, you meet up with the other boats for social events. Sunsail has flotillas in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, including special interest rum, food or adults-only weeks.

DO IT: Yacht charter for a seven-day flotilla in Mallorca costs from €850pp based on eight sharing, including return flights from Dublin (sunway.ie/sunsail).

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: Charter a Sunsail 36-foot yacht for seven nights in Mallorca, based on eight sharing, from €599pp, including flights from Dublin, (sunway.ie/sunsail) or a yacht for a seven-night flotilla in Greece from €989pp (sunway.ie/neilson-activity-holidays).

8 SAIL THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY IN WEST CORK

Set out along the Wild Atlantic Way on board the yacht *Merlin*, starting from Ahakista on the Sheep's Head Peninsula and enjoying the stunning Atlantic seascapes and coastal scenery. You will sail close around the landmark Fastnet Rock, and pass West Cork's seven inhabited islands, experiencing the stunning natural habitats on Sherkin and Bere islands as well as the islands of Roaringwater and Bantry Bays, during your leisurely voyage.

DO IT: Two-day cruises from €390pp (trips resume in 2018) and there's also courses and half-day sailing trips. See



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carberysailing.com.

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: Learn to sail from €350 for a two-night weekend, (sailcork.com) or, if you're an experienced sailor, charter a yacht and set sail from Kinsale from €2,299 per week (sleeps 6/8). See sovereignsailing.com.

9 SEE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS FROM A TALL SHIP

Set sail on the beautiful tall ship *S/V Noor-delicht* in northern Norway and follow the path of orcas and humpback whales through the fjords of Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle, on a whale safari. The long Norway nights also offer passengers the chance to take in the Northern Lights. Trips include all excursions, meals and on-board lectures by naturalists.

DO IT: Seven-night trips start from €1,760pp (oceanwide-expeditions.com).

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: A two-hour trip on a traditional Galway Hooker from Connemara, in Co Galway, costs €60pp with wildatlanticadventures.com. Or try a taster trip on a tall ship in England. Day-trips from €110pp with classic-sailing.co.uk.

10 EXPLORE THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS ON A TRADITIONAL CUTTER

Explore Knoydart, Skye and the Small Isles, some of the most beautiful Scottish Isles, aboard the traditional 70-foot gaff cutter yacht *Eda Frandsen* where you might spot whales, dolphins and birdlife. You'll sail from the remote peninsula of Knoydart to the rocky ridges of the Isles of Skye and Rum, and enjoy walking rarely trodden routes from the yacht, hiking from white sandy beaches to hidden vantage points on the islands.

DO IT: Six nights, including all meals, skipper and walking guide (friendshiptravel.com) from €1,560pp. See also wildernessscotland.com.

IF YOU LIKE THAT, TRY THIS: A week on a traditional gulet in the Greek Islands for solo travellers (single cabins) from €1,999pp including all meals and flights from Dublin (friendshiptravel.com).

NB: Prices subject to availability.