

# The Sailing Course That Feels Like a Holiday

By Eric Vohr and Michaela Urban

I recently got my U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Master and Royal Yacht Association (RYA) Yachtmaster Offshore licenses so that I could sail commercially across the globe.

Those who have taken these exams know they are rigorous. In order to pass my USCG exam, I needed to take a six-month online course with Maritime Institute Training Resources to better understand and retain the large volume of theoretical material contained in the eight-hour proctored exam.

In addition to having a firm grasp on a large volume of theoretical knowledge, my RYA certificate also required a two-day on-water “practical” exam. To pass that, I enrolled in a five-day on-water training course with Sunsail. Both the course and exam were tasking, stressful, and highly intensive and (in the case of Sunsails’ UK base) were conducted in winter in the Solent with five-meter-plus tides, surging currents, and gale-force winds—fun!

Needless to say, when my partner decided to acquire some sailing certifications, she did not want to go through the

intense coursework of either of those programs. Given that she had no desire to work in the field, there was really no need.

So, we started looking for something a little more fun. While researching an upcoming charter we scheduled with Dream Yacht Charters in Grenada, we stumbled across a unique organization called LTD Sailing that combines cruising the Grenadines with a series of American Sailing Association (ASA) courses that take you from zero to hero in about 10 days.

Neither of us had taken any ASA course before, so we enrolled in a course that started with ASA’s Basic Keelboat 101 and took us through Basic Coastal Cruising ASA 103, Bareboat Chartering ASA 104 and Cruising Catamaran ASA 114. LTD bundles these courses in a 10-day intensive trip, but also offers a seven-day option if you are tight on time. Best of all, your classroom is one of the most breathtaking sailing grounds in the Caribbean: the Grenadines.

LTD’s program is not only a great way to polish up your sailing skills, but



Participants regularly trade crew positions. Photo by Michaela Urban



The view from Welcome Stone in Grenada. Photo by Michaela Urban

it's also great for those who want their partner, friend, son, or daughter to learn more about the sport they love. It's a much more effective and safe approach than trying to teach them yourself: a clear recipe for disaster.

What I loved about LTD's program is how they mix in their coursework with amazing adventures, such as exploring exotic islands and pristine white sand beaches, enjoying fantastic beach parties, swimming with turtles in the Tobago Cays, and feasting on lobster at beach barbeques with your toes dug in the sand.

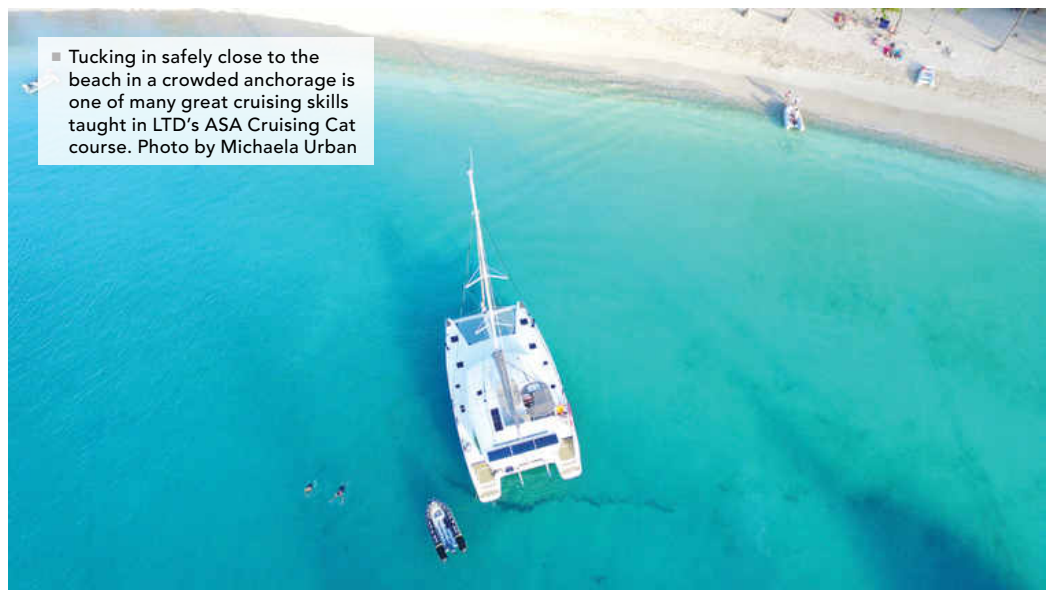
That being said, we maintained a pretty rigorous course schedule that packed a lot into the 10-day excursion. On my end, I not only got to review some key concepts, but I also learned some valuable new tricks.

For my partner, this was a gentle and fun way to further explore and expand her knowledge of and confidence with sailing. Now she could participate at a higher level on our many charters, and

she gained the necessary certificates and skills (combined with her many years experience) to charter safely on her own. The only potential downside is that she now feels compelled to cross-check some of my procedures (probably not a bad thing).

One tip for any sailing course you choose to take is pack along your iPad with a good navigational program such

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as Navionics. This was indispensable for my RYA exam and very helpful for the LTD classes.

In addition to enjoying all that sailing the Grenadines has to offer, we also factored in some days to explore all that this magical island has to offer (something I highly recommend). Grenada has some amazing, relatively uncrowded beaches to enjoy, as well as a mountainous interior covered with rainforest and waterfalls. There's a service called Hidden Treasures Hiking Tours that will help you explore the many hiking trails that crisscross the island.

Diving is also worth checking out here. We joined an outfit called Aquanauts that took us to see some amazing



■ The author practices his twin-prop technique in LTD's ASA Cruising Catamaran 114 course. Photo by Michaela Urban



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wrecks, such as the *Bianca C* a.k.a. “the Titanic of the Caribbean,” a luxury cruise ship that sank in 1961.

Aquanauts is conveniently located at True Blue Bay Boutique Resort, a popular hotel on the south coast that hosts a weekly Street Food Night, where you can taste many of Grenada’s famous local signature foods while dancing the night way to a local Soca band. Another resort we liked was 473 Grenada Boutique Resort, tucked away on a quite peninsula with a lovely beach on the south coast of Grenada. The resort is the collective vision of Mark Solomon and his wife Jennifer who are accomplished sailors, racers, and sailboat restorers.

I can’t stress enough the value of taking sailing course to make you a better and safer sailor. For those looking to mix work with pleasure, LTD offers a nice alternative to sweating out a brutal eight-hour USCG exam or facing the rigors of an RYA practical exam, and if you do it in Grenada it’s a win-win.

**LEARN MORE**

LTD Sailing: [ltdsailing.com](http://ltdsailing.com)

Sunsail RYA Yachtmaster training/exam: [sunsail.co.uk](http://sunsail.co.uk)  
(click on “advanced courses”)

Training Resources Maritime Institute: [trlmi.com](http://trlmi.com)

Grenada Sailing Week: [grenadasailingweek.com](http://grenadasailingweek.com)  
(takes place in January 2021)

Grenada Tourism Authority: [grenadagrenadines.com](http://grenadagrenadines.com)

73 Grenada Boutique Resort: [473grenada.com](http://473grenada.com)

Hidden Treasures Hiking Tours: [hiddentreasures2009@live.com](mailto:hiddentreasures2009@live.com)

Aquanauts: [aquanautsgrenada.com](http://aquanautsgrenada.com)