

Boating clubs hoisting up the sails in increasing numbers - Affordability, unique focus cited for growing interest in sailing clubs

Janaya Fuller-Evans, Special to Vancouver Courier Published: Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Think sailing the waters around Vancouver is just for the rich and famous?

"It ain't necessarily so," according to Peter Derviller, head of the Jib Set Sailing Club. Sailing clubs have a long and rich history in Vancouver. Many, including Jib Set, were formed 50 or more years ago, and as the clubs prepare for summer courses and events, interest in sailing has mushroomed.



Peter Derviller is head of the Jib Set Sailing Club, one of the many sailing clubs in Vancouver that offer the opportunity to sail at affordable prices.

The idea behind the clubs, according to Derviller, is to give people who might not be able to afford their own boat the opportunity to sail.

"The sheer charm of being out there on a beautiful day is hard to describe in words," Derviller said. "A lot of people don't know it is the type of lifestyle you can have without owning a million dollar yacht."

Jib Set is one of the smaller clubs in Vancouver with only 60 members. It was defunct until one year ago, when Cooper Boating on Granville Island resurrected the club.

The Jib Set Sailing School was founded by Les Alfreds in 1968 but lost its clubhouse during the development of False Creek in the late 1980s. Jib Set is slightly different from other clubs in Vancouver, most of which have fleets of dinghies and high speed racers. Instead, Jib Set has a fleet of the larger, more stable keelboats.

But size and stability also come at a higher cost--Jib Set requires an initiation fee of \$499 and a \$149 monthly fee. Training is done through Cooper Boating and seasoned members are also available to mentor new sailors.

The reason Vancouver can sustain so many sailing clubs, according to Jason Wilsher, general manager for the Kitsilano Yacht Club, is because each club is unique in its focus.

"Each club has a different atmosphere," Wilsher said.

The Kitsilano club, located at 2401 Point Grey Rd., has 190 members. Staff is celebrating the club's 75th anniversary this September.

The club recently started a program specifically for women, with beginner dinghy classes. And starting this fall, Wilsher said Kitsilano could be part of a high school sailing program that started on the North Shore.

Members of the Kitsilano club who do not own or store their own boat pay \$325 per year and are required to get Canadian Yacht Association certification.

Other clubs in Vancouver are much larger, such as the UBC Sailing Club, which has more than 400 members and access to 65 vessels.

UBC, which focuses on giving students the opportunity to learn to sail, is one of the cheaper clubs in town and includes access to kayaks.

UBC students pay \$96 per year while the general public pays \$191.

Members also have to pay \$79 per year to the Jericho Sailing Association, which houses the club at 1300 Discovery St.

Unfortunately, April 18 was the last day for the public to register as members this summer, though UBC students are still welcome.

The facility manager for the Jericho Sailing Centre Association, Benjamin Rummen, said the clubs are "community builders." "It is just an incredibly easy and cost effective way to get out on the water," Rummen said.

Jericho is a non-profit organization that hosts nine individual boating clubs. All the clubs in Vancouver are non-profit, though Jericho has three commercial schools on contract through the association. According to Rummen, the clubs have more members than usual this summer.

"This is gearing up to be one of the busiest years we've ever seen," Rummen said.

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