

Cruising Skipper Information: Organizing a Club Cruise

Date, Time, and Destination

For most cruises, you will want to pick either a date when the currents will be favorable for your chosen destination, or a destination for which currents will be favorable on your chosen date. For cruises into the south bay or north bay, you will usually prefer to leave Berkeley on a flood current, and return on an ebb current. For cruises into the west bay, you will prefer to leave Berkeley on an ebb current, and return on a flood current. For cruises to Angel Island or Tiburon, currents don't matter much, as it is easy enough to sail or motor along the shores of Raccoon Strait for a short distance when opposing currents are strong in the center of the strait. Other than currents, another factor you might take into consideration in choosing a destination is where cruises have gone recently—it is a good idea to go somewhere other than wherever has recently been gone to, in order to avail members of a greater variety of cruise experiences. It seems, though, that we can never do enough Angel Island cruises, as there is always a large number of members signing up for this destination.

Unless it is important to leave early on a cruise in order to take advantage of early morning wind or current conditions, it seems that a meeting time of no earlier than 10 a.m. always works well. At this later hour of the morning, people almost invariably show up no more than 5 minutes late, and it is possible to get under sail within 30 to 45 minutes after the scheduled meeting time, if the sponsoring skipper him/herself is fully and properly prepared.

Signing Up

Skipper Sign-up

On the cruising skipper sign-up sheet in the club house, you will write your name and destination in the appropriate date box. Your phone number might also be helpful, for members who want to make inquiries about the cruise. According to the CSC Operating Rules, you should sign up at least 10 days before the date of the cruise. The intention of this rule is to permit members the opportunity of informing themselves on the weekend before the cruise that a cruise is to occur on the following weekend—large numbers of members visit the club house on weekends, so this is likely to let more people become informed. It is also extremely helpful if you put up a poster outside the club house by the eve of the previous weekend, as the skipper sign-up sheet in the club house is not very prominently visible.

Answering Service Sign-up

Night Owl is the commercial answering service that we use for cruise sign-ups, as of October 1993. Communications about cruises should be called to 636-2517, or cruising

skippers may FAX cruise info to 636-0640. The reason for using an answering service for cruise sign-ups is to give everyone a fair gambling chance to get aboard if they call at exactly noon on the Wednesday before the cruise, in the case of cruises for which there is a high demand. Normally, everyone that really wants to get on a cruise gets to go, even if they are on the reserve list, because usually a couple of people who called in before them won't show up. However, this is not always the case. It can be pretty important that sponsoring skippers call the answering service before noon, because otherwise people who have called in immediately after noon may be told that no cruise is scheduled, then fail to get on the boat when they call later. On the other hand, it is a good idea not to call too far in advance, in order to reduce the likelihood of operators signing up people who call in before noon.

A copy of the sign-up form which CSC provides to the answering service is on the last page of this info sheet. Under "meeting time" you may want to specify that the meeting place is at the CSC clubhouse, as some people sometimes tend to show up and wait around at the "J" dock gate. Under "Special Instructions" you will usually advise participants to bring warm and waterproof clothing. On cold winter evenings, the importance of layered warm clothing should be emphasized. On dinner cruises, participants should be advised to bring money, and on picnic cruises, to bring lunch. Under the boat sections, you should advise the operator to "X" out the last spaces for any boats on which you wish to take less than a full load. If a second boat is not to be taken, the operator should be specifically advised of this, to reduce the likelihood of operators signing people up for a presumed second boat, even though no second boat skipper was specified. If a second boat is being taken, you should have the operator enter the skipper's name, and his guest, if any. After the operator has copied all your information, be sure to have it read it back to you, to check for error.

After 3 p.m. of the Friday before the cruise, you will call the answering service to have an operator read you the sign-up list.

Cruise Report Sign-up

Copies of this form are kept in the dock box and also in a folder in the top drawer of the club house file. As participants arrive, each should sign his/her name and a "phone number of persons to be notified in case of emergency." Before sailing, the form should be posted in the dock box. On returning from the cruise, the return time should be entered, and the form should be deposited in the Cruising Chair folder in the club house file.

Cruise Preparation

Batteries

A couple of days before the cruise, it is a good idea to check the condition of the lights and the battery of the boat you will be sailing. Batteries are normally kept in a charged condition by the 3rd Vice Commodore or an appointed person, but if the lights or radio were accidentally left on, the battery may be completely discharged. If the battery is low, look for a battery charger and a long extension cord in one of the dock boxes

(unlockable with a Senior key). Before connecting to shore power, plug the charger into the 12 volt receptacle inside the cabin. The plug pins and receptacle holes are built so that they will fully connect only in a correctly polarized orientation, so if they don't work one way, rotate the plug 180°. Run the extension cord from the dock box outlet to the boat, and plug it into the battery charger after plugging the charger to the 12 volts, or you may have some startling snapping and popping, especially if you touch the pins to the receptacle holes with polarity reversed. Be sure that the cord is secured so that no part of it can drop in the water. Switch the current on at the dock box. If the charger is operating properly, the ammeter will indicate a few amps if the battery is accepting charge, or if the battery is at or near full charge, a relay will shut on and off and the ammeter needle will bounce. If neither of these things is happening, check that the plug connections are not corroded, and that you have turned on the correct switch at the dock box.

Leave a note in the dock box indicating when the battery was placed on the charger, and requesting that anyone using the boat restore the charge set-up. It is o.k. to leave these chargers plugged in indefinitely, as they will trickle down their output as the battery reaches full charge.

Other Early Preparations

At the same time that you check the condition of the electrical system, you may want to check the general condition of the boat you will be taking to verify that no catastrophic breakdown has occurred, or is at the point of occurring, which will prevent it from being sailed on the day of your cruise. If a Commander becomes disabled, as you will not be able to take as many people on board as you will be forced to switch to an Ensign, and you may need to make a couple of calls to the last persons signed up. About this time, a note should be left in the sign-out dock box indicating that the boat is reserved for a club cruise, with date and time of the cruise. It is a good idea to leave a second note on the cabin door of the boat.

This is also a good time to check the gas/oil mix supply in the gas storage locker, and if the supply is low, buy gas for the cruise and put "reserved" tags on the gas tank or other containers you plan to use. See Cruising Skipper Information: Motors and Motoring, for information about buying and mixing gas. You might also check the condition of the motor that you plan to take.

You may also check your personal gear at this time—are your flashlight batteries and air horn canisters in good condition, and do your safety flares have currently valid expiration dates?

Final Preparations

The evening before the cruise, check the predicted weather for the cruise, and if adverse conditions are very likely, you may decide to cancel your cruise at this time. If conditions are uncertain, check the forecast again in the morning, before leaving. Our Operating Rules state: "The Skipper shall check weather conditions in advance of the cruise, and the cruise shall not depart if the winds have reached velocities in excess of 30 knots, or if the reports indicate adverse weather conditions might be encountered." NOAA weather forecasts can be heard on the marine radio in the club house.

Final preparations on the day of the cruise can take more time than you would expect, so allow yourself ample time to accomplish all you need to. In order to expedite an early departure, it is helpful if you install the outboard on the boat and verify that it will start and operate, before participants begin to arrive. If you don't have time to do this it is a good idea to get over to the boat early anyway, and check that all necessary equipment is on board and in good working condition. See our Operating Rules for the list of required equipment. Besides the required equipment, you should also check the general condition of the boat and all equipment—shrouds and stays, halyards, sails, dock lines, etc.

A little early time spent preparing thoroughly for your cruises will make the time on the water safer and more enjoyable for all participants.

Charles Clausen 3/3/93
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