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### Widespread Increase in Boating Activity and Access to Boating & Education Reported by Water Sports Foundation

# -Strong Surge Reported in Boat Sales, Shared Boating Platforms and Boating Education –

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**ORLANDO, Fla. – July 26, 2021** – When it comes to boating activity, 2020 proved an epic year with the pandemic delivering an upside surprise to the recreational boating industry. People took to the water in historic numbers as a safe escape from quarantine, while online boater education classes simultaneously spiked.

New and used boat sales including personal watercraft, kayaks and paddleboards hit record highs, with 415,000 first-time boat buyers flooding the market. Dealers scrambled to provide inventory in every market segment as manufacturers faced supply chain challenges and/or production delays due to COVID.

**With purchase options somewhat stymied, boating access providers including boat clubs, rentals and charter operators, among others, saw participation skyrocket among new and experienced boaters.** Boatsetter, for example, which offers peer-to-peer rentals nationwide, reported a 90% increase in bookings in 2020, while Freedom Boat Club saw a membership spike of 35%.

**Water access through boat sharing programs has enjoyed solid growth as they offer a taste of boating without the financial commitment associated with ownership.** Advocates point to the opportunity to experience different types of boat brands and models before making purchasing decisions, coupled with cost-saving benefits associated with annual insurance, storage, service and maintenance.

While there are many ways to access the water for those interested in the boating lifestyle, the Water Sports Foundation Executive Director Jim Emmons is quick to encourage boating education for both new boaters and seasoned salts alike, the latter of whom may benefit from a quick refresher course.

“As an industry, we all love seeing scores of new boaters joining our ranks and are thrilled about the diverse and younger audiences coming aboard,” said Emmons. “However, we all want to ensure that these new boaters and even those lapsed boaters who have returned, are educated and well equipped to operate safely on the nation’s waterways. There are a wealth of boating safety and educational opportunities available including both online and live classes; we encourage our boaters to invest time to become educated.”

Added BoatU.S. Foundation President Chris Edmonston, “The boating industry is the #1 outdoor economic driver in the country. We are working hard to make sure that there is access to the water and that people can be safe so they can continue to enjoy boating. We don’t want boaters to have a bad experience and not return; education is the key to achieving that.”

For many service providers, safety is paramount; many operators require certifications from recognized educators, sailing resumes or approved boater safety cards prior to renting or leasing a vessel. Some offer onsite education or hands-on training.

NauticEd, a leading global provider of charter vacations and the first to achieve American National Standards in the sailing education segment, offers both online and one-on-one instruction. This past year, it reported a 30% increase in online class enrollments, and since the vaccines have become available, has noted a robust increase in vacation yacht inquiries.

“As a travel and outdoor recreational activity, sailing is on fire right now and the interest and demand is the strongest we’ve seen in a decade,” said Grant Headifen, NauticEd founder and global director of education. “The increase in online enrollment tells us there’s a fresh surge of novice sailors who are pursuing the lifestyle, while increased vacation yacht inquiries indicate sailing veterans are enthusiastically returning to the water. It’s exciting to see NauticEd’s comprehensive e-learning platform and on-the-water instruction help increase access and training for newcomers.”

Suzanne Holmquist of Calypso Sailing in Key Largo, Florida, says her charter firm only allows boat access to customers who can prove knowledge of boat operation. They must show qualifications of prior sailing experience and perform a walkthrough with a licensed captain.

“We need to make sure they know how to move, anchor and dock a boat and are aware of how to handle weather conditions,” she said. “We also review their float plan with them—making sure they have one. We take charters seriously and take a lot of pride in our training to avoid any incidents.“

#### BOATING ACCESS & SAFETY PROVIDERS

The Water Sports Foundation has researched and provided a sampling of boating organizations providing information about boating access plus live, virtual and hybrid [boating safety educational programs](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/media/national-boating-safety-programs/) and providers.

Boaters should search for courses and training that align with the approved American National Standard (ANSI)—like the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), American Sailing Association (ASA) and Royal Yachting Association (RYA) for on-water skills.

[Rental Boat Safety](https://www.rentalboatsafety.com/) – Provided through a grant from the U.S. Coast Guard, this agency is a public service resource to educate rental boat users on safe boating practices, including personal watercraft, kayaks and canoes, while on the water to minimize boat-related accidents, injury and fatalities. It also provides a partial listing of rental “liveries” countrywide.

[Boatsetter](https://www.boatsetter.com/)– provides peer-to-peer rentals, where boat owners can offset boat expenses by renting their own boats. Unlike most rental agencies, Boatsetter ensures that all boat rentals are legal with its GEICO partnership that covers all boats during the rental period; afterwards, the boat insurance reverts back to the boat owner. Boatsetter also offers a network of captains who can relieve the renter of operational responsibility for a nominal fee. The company has also recently added fishing charters to its repertoire.

[Discover Boating](https://www.discoverboating.com/)**,** a multi-faceted boating resource funded by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA). Its [Get On the Water](https://www.discoverboating.com/go-boating-today) website provides a Boat Rental Guide and other ways of sharing as a key to various options for boat rental, ownership and operation

[NauticEd**,**](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/nauticed-national-boating-safety-programs/) has delivered 250,000 sailing courses since 2008, all of which meet stringent American National Standards. With more than 20 courses for beginners through advanced sailors, their curriculum offers a mix of online and one-on-one instructed courses. Two free courses are available to test the waters.

##### Boating Education Courses & Providers

**CLICK HERE FOR THE NATIONAL BOATING SAFETY MEDIA CENTER’s Boating Education Resources:** <https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/media/boating-safety-education/>

[BoatClass](https://marker24.theboatclass.com/) – Brunswick, as one of the nation’s leading boat and engine builders, recently purchased the Freedom Boat Club which has developed a comprehensive boater training program. Brunswick has taken that curriculum and adapted it into BoatClass, the industry’s latest addition to boating education, open to the public at various Freedom Boat Club marinas around the country. A basic course can be followed by an intermediate and advanced course.

[MarineMax](https://www.marinemax.com/events/classes) – Award winning dealership that won the #1 National Boating Safety Industry Award in the retail category presented by the North American Sober Skipper Advisory Council, is acclaimed for its boating education and safety programs. MarineMax has taken the helm to instruct its own buyers, as well as the public, through its Women on the Water, Kids on the Water and Intro to Boating courses. Instructed by MarineMax’ own captains, these classes offer an in-person and hands-on opportunity to learn the basics of boat handling and navigation. During the pandemic, MarineMax took its classes virtual and also offers a [Boating Tips](https://www.marinemax.com/connect/lifestyles/boating-tips/boating-tips-live) series on its website where people can get answers to many boating questions.

**Boat Clubs**

Enjoy access to boats at numerous destinations without incurring maintenance, storage. service or insurance costs. There are many local and regional clubs throughout the country, but below are the two largest and oldest clubs with multiple locations nationwide.

[Freedom Boat Club](https://www.freedomboatclub.com/)– In 1989 Freedom Boat Club pioneered the Boat Club concept and aimed to be “Boating Made Simple®” offering a fleet of boats to access while taking care of all maintenance, insurance and storage. It is the largest boat club in North America with 55,000 members operating from 261 locations. The club also offers reciprocal advantages for members to boat outside their local club at other FBC locations. The club reports a significant spike in both boat club membership up 35% in 2020, coupled with a 20% increase in new franchise operators over the same timeframe.

Boating education and safety is paramount to Freedom Boat Club and all members receive a one-on-one, three-hour new member course taught by licensed captains, which can be supplemented by other more advanced courses.

[Carefree Boat Club](https://carefreeboats.com/) -- With 95 locations in U.S. and Canada and 700 plus boats of various types available, Carefree Boat Club provides affordable and unlimited access to the water in an easy way, across the country and Canada. The Club also offers on-water education, with boat safety and handling training.

##### Fractional Ownership

Share expenses on the boat or yacht of your choice—you become a part-owner and choose your times and length of visits.

[SailTime](https://sailtime.com/about/) – Fractional sailboat ownership throughout coastal U.S., Italy, Spain and Australia, with 35 bases and 115 boats. If sailing is your passion, own a piece of one, and get trained also through SailTime’s 30 sailing schools, certifying students to the [American Sailing Association](http://www.asa.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (ASA), and the [Royal Yachting Association](http://www.rya.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (RYA) standards.

[Monocle Yachts](http://monocleyachts.com/) – A pioneer of fraction yacht ownership for over 20 years, based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the yachting capital of the world, but serves clients worldwide. Owning a piece of a yacht and sharing times with partners can be an alternative to owning, chartering or even a second home.

**About The Water Sports Foundation**

Headquartered in Orlando, Florida, the Water Sports Foundation is the non-profit educational arm of the Water Sports Industry Association ([WSIA.net](http://www.wsia.net#http://www.wsia.net/category/water-sports-foundation/)). Since 2011, the WSF has received U.S. Coast Guard boating and paddling safety outreach funding through their non-profit grant program. The Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund administered through Congressional action provides funding for the U.S. Coast Guard’s recreational boating safety initiatives. For more information contact the WSF at 407-719-8062 or visit [www.watersportsfoundation.com](http://www.watersportsfoundation.com)

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