

## **Sailing Voyage with the Ocean Youth Trust South**

By Jess (age 16)

Having never sailed before on a yacht or tall ship, last summer I went on my first sailing voyage with The Ocean Youth Trust South, on board their 26m long, twin masted sailing boat.

Why did I do this? Initially it was parent pressure for me to do something useful in the long summer break that I had after GCSE exams. I applied for some part-time jobs, but didn't get them. I applied for a work experience week, but didn't get it. I then decided I'd do some volunteering for local charities, but found that they were all oversubscribed with people wanting to do volunteering, and didn't get anything. I saw something on the local news about a sail training charity offering short voyages for young people, so I applied, but I couldn't get a place with them. I Googled some other sail training organisations, and found the Ocean Youth Trust South, who were advertising that they still had a few berths available during the summer. The voyage that had the spaces was for a week and started in Germany. I hadn't imagined going for that long in case I didn't like it, but the idea of going to Germany, to a foreign country where I'd never been before, was really exciting and I wanted to do that, so I didn't think too much about the sailing and got signed up for it.

### **The Start - the journey travelling to Germany**

The OYTS had given my mum lots of information about transport, and arranged for me to travel with some others who were going on the same voyage as me. They were OYTS volunteers and sailing staff and another trainee like me. We were meeting at Heathrow Airport and flying to Hamburg in Germany. As we got near Heathrow I was really nervous about meeting people who I didn't know, but they were so friendly that straight away everything was fine. We flew to Hamburg and then got a train to Cuxhaven and walked to the marina where the OYTS boat, Prolific, was. Prolific was much larger than I'd imagined, there was lots of space inside ('down below') and decent sized bunks ('berths') to sleep in and keep all your things in.

On the first day the staff were busy with shopping for food for everyone and making sure the boat was ready, while waiting for all the other crew to arrive. When everyone was there we all introduced ourselves and had a briefing about safety, how the toilets work and got allocated waterproofs and life jackets.

### **The First Sail**

The next morning, after breakfast, we all got ready, went out on deck, and set off for our first sail. We'd been put into small groups with an experienced watch leader, and each group had different tasks to do, my watch leader explained to me what I needed to do. I got a chance to steer the boat which I really liked. We sailed for over 24 hours, going past the Frisian Islands in the North Sea. Overnight each watch took turns 'on watch' sailing the boat and sleeping. The boat didn't tip as much as I'd expected, but on the first day I did feel a bit motion sick when I was down below, but that went away when I went out on deck. There were giant outdoor beanbags on deck where you could relax when not on watch. We sailed into Harlingen in the Netherlands. It was quite cool sailing from one country to another without buying a ticket or going through passport control.

We went ashore, got showers and went to some shops. I think I'd got used to the boat moving, so, at first, on land it felt like the ground was swaying!



### **Harlingen to Lelystad**

The next morning we set off very early and headed down the coast towards a lock, which we had to go through to get into the IJsselmeer, which is a part of the sea that's enclosed by locks to keep the water the right depth. The water was really calm there.

### **Lelystad to Amsterdam**

Going from Lelystad to Amsterdam was interesting because we had to get swinging and raising bridges opened for Prolific to be able to get through. We arrived in Amsterdam and got a chance to go ashore and have a look around the town. I took some photos of the giant letters 'I amsterdam'. We took a tram and went to the roof cafe on the Nemo Science Centre. It was really fun exploring a famous city that I'd heard of but never been to.



### **Amsterdam to Ipswich**

We went through several locks, through what seemed like a giant canal to get from Amsterdam back out to sea. I helmed Prolific through a lot of this, which I feel quite proud to have done. At one stage I had to climb out along the bowsprit, while the boat was underway, to tie down the staysail, which was quite exciting. Once back out into the North Sea we had to cross the channel to England. This was a really long crossing which must have taken over

24 hours. When we reached England, we anchored in the River Stour, and each watch plotted a section of the course that we would need to follow up the river to get to Ipswich. Late that night we set off up the river to our final destination, the marina in Ipswich.



### **End of Voyage in Ipswich**

I didn't want it to end, I would have liked to have stayed a bit longer.

The best bits were:

Friendly staff, made good friends with the rest of the crew, food was good and enjoyed cooking in our teams of watches, helming the boat, learning about the sails and how the boat works, sailing with just the power of the wind was magical/breath-taking

The worst bits were:

Not much sleep on night sailing, lack of showers,

### **What I've learnt...**

I LOVE sailing.

You don't hang out over the side of the boat and get soaking wet, like you see on some yachts and dinghies, because Prolific is quite big and stable. You don't need to bring a big bag full of lots of changes of clothing and wash stuff, because you probably won't get that much chance to use them! (That would have put me off a bit if someone had told me that before, but it was fine because I was too busy enjoying getting on with doing things to think about it.)

I am definitely going to go again. I also want to learn more about how to sail. I've done the online Essential Navigation and Seamanship course, which I found quite interesting, and it helps a lot to understand what's going on, on the boat. I'm planning to work my way through the RYA practical and theory courses whenever I get the chance.

So, would I recommend it? Definitely.

