Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club

Offshore Championship Competitor's Guide

Contents

1 About this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide broad information about racing to help skippers plan their campaign for the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club (RPNYC) annual offshore championship. RPNYC is very experienced at running offshore and coastal races. The information in this guide comes from previous competitors and experienced sailors.

Potential first-time competitors seek information about how to prepare and what to expect, but may not know who to talk to or where to go to gain further information or mentoring. The Sailing Committee or Offshore Sub-committee members can be approached for information. Also reach out to anyone in the club who has done offshore sailing whether you know them or not. RPNYC has a group of enthusiastic offshore sailors who will provide opportunities and events for sailors who would like to learn more about offshore racing, and most members will be delighted to share information and answer any questions you have.

More experience sailors have a good handle on the challenge that this racing provides, but may query some of the requirements of the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions that they must comply with. It is important to note that for offshore races, RPNYC needs to fulfil numerous and rigorous requirements, whether Yachting New Zealand (YNZ) regulations or relating to the sailing rules. this means the level of compliance for RPNYC and its competitors has risen. Therefore, we all need to work together to ensure events are run in compliance with standards.

It important that all skippers and crews understand that each race is governed by its own Notice of Race (NOR) and Sailing Instructions (SI), as well as the rules and regulations specifically referenced in the NOR and SI. **If there is any conflict between this guide and the NOR or SI for a race, the NOR and SI take precedence.**

2 The RPNYC Offshore Championship

The RPNYC Offshore Championship series has roots dating back 100 years. We are the only New Zealand yacht club that has been running an offshore series every year since the 1920s. Other clubs in New Zealand have had long gaps where they have not run such series. Even now, the Gold Cup series in Auckland is the closest to what RPNYC runs.

There are reports of races to Port Underwood and around the Brothers Islands dating back to the 1920s. We know that the 1920-1930 season was the first Offshore Series to be reported on radio. A wireless set was installed in Marangi by the Wellington Amateur Wireless Club and race progress reports were relayed through the radio station 2YA.

From the 1960s through to today the Offshore Series has held a premier status within the New Zealand yachting fraternity. Sailors that are experienced in this series are usually considered to have good seamanship and knowledge of how to deal with any conditions as sailing is predominately in the Cook Strait, regarded as a stretch of water providing as tough coastal conditions as can be found anywhere.

Over many decades the fleet numbers have fluctuated, and they do to this day. The aim of RPNYC is to boost the fleet numbers by inspiring more people to do these races. The series is great way to get experience if you are looking to go cruising in the Pacific or anywhere else in the world. Given that weather is unpredictable, any passage could throw various challenges at you. Experience in this series certainly helps with dealing with those challenges whether participating in competitive sailing or making passage as a cruising vessel.

The RPNYC Offshore sub-committee encourages sailors to take up this challenge and provides information and advice to skippers to be able to prepare their yachts, themselves and their crew. The Sub-committee is also responsible for ensuring paperwork is completed and the regulatory functions required to run these races are in place.

The Offshore Championship comprises a number of races; the points won for each race are combined to provide a final series result - effectively a point score competition. Therefore the more races you compete in the better chance you have of winning the Championship.

RPNYC Sailing Committee and Offshore Sub-committee choose which races make up the Offshore Championship in a given season. This provides variety from season to season in the races available for competition.

RPNYC will from time to time run special offshore events such as specific two-handed race or the Central Triangle (Wellington-Akaroa-Napier). These will not usually form part of the point score for the Offshore Championship but are events or major events in their own right. The annual Offshore Championship is good training and experience for competitors to be able to move on to larger club, national and international offshore yachting events.

We want RPNYC's reputation as a deep-water yacht club carry on into the future by providing offshore yacht races that people want to compete in, and inspiring skippers and crews to go further to either cruise or race in national and international events around the world.

Camaraderie is created during offshore racing through facing challenges and possible adversity, and succeeding. This is where Offshore sailing and cruising provide something no other sport does. Are you ready to step and be part of this unique sporting fraternity in Wellington?

Get your offshore gear and lifejacket on, clip on and let's go!

3 Common RPNYC Offshore Courses

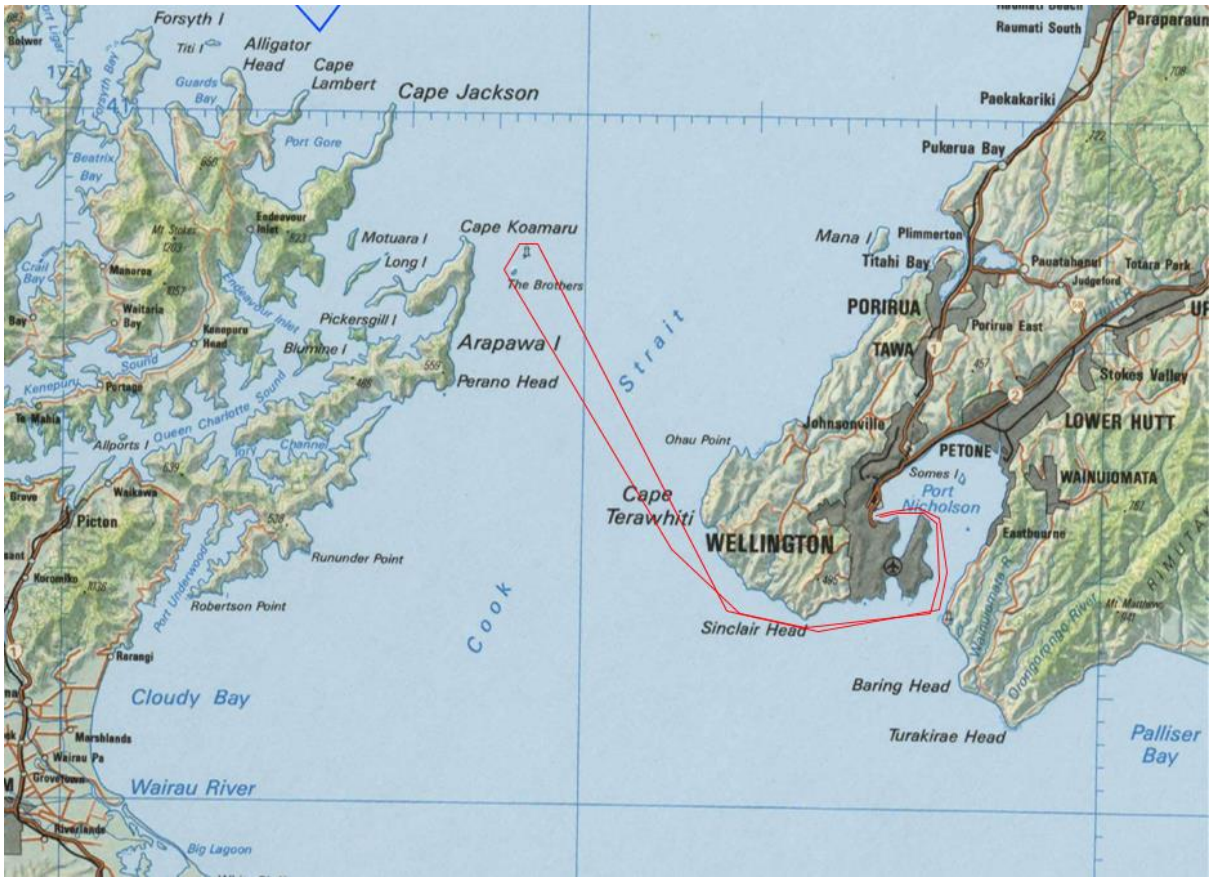
There are numerous options for courses that RPNYC can run for the Offshore Championship. This guide doesn't cover all these courses, only the commonly-run courses.

Most courses sail in the Cook Strait, where the winds that can be encountered and the strong tides can make for very rough sea states and conditions. The start time of each race is set to encounter favourable tides in the Strait.

If you're inexperienced in sailing in these waters, it is important to familiarise yourself with the information in the Cook Strait section of this document so you're aware of the rips, rocks and other navigational hazards.

3.1 Brother Island Race

Distance: 64 Nautical Miles



The Brothers Island Race is one of RPNYC's traditional and popular races. It is one of the few that starts and finishes at the Club (due to the Cook Strait tides, most races finish at another destination rather than returning through the rips in the wrong conditions). This race can be one of the most challenging day races that you will ever do. As you get more experienced, tactics will be important to gain the fastest time for the conditions that you have to sail in.

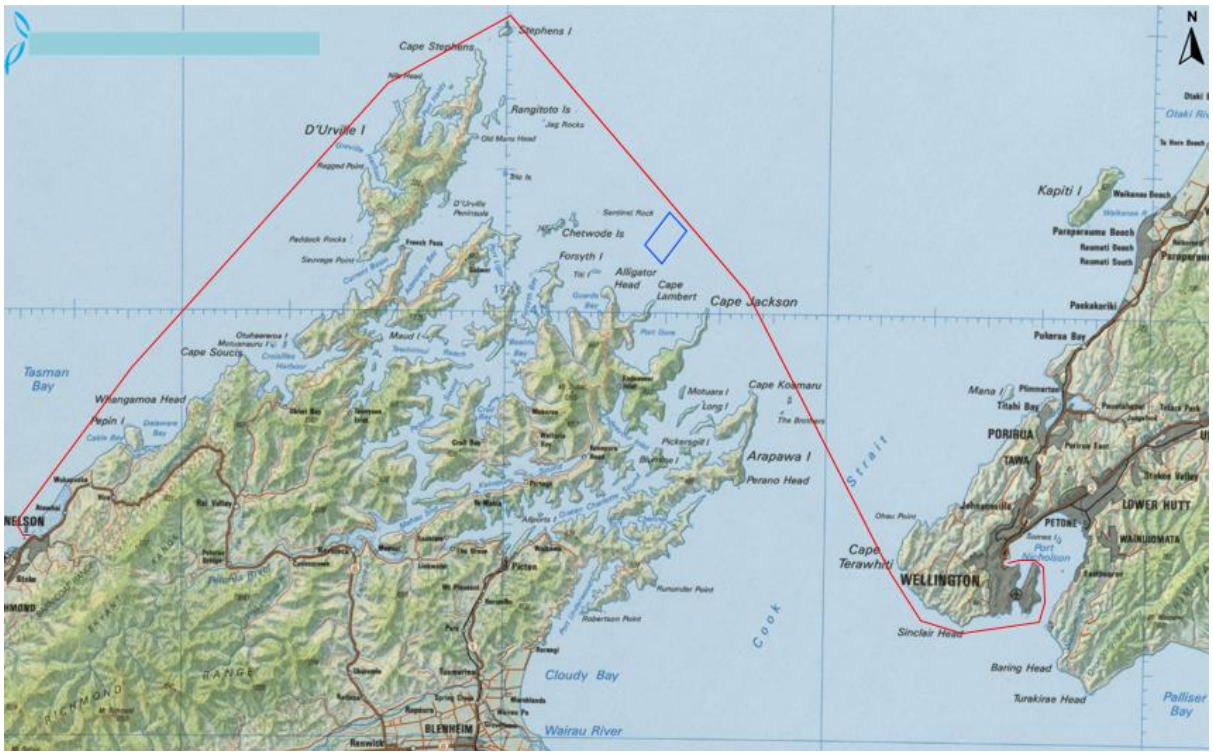
The race starts at the RPNYC start line and the course is out of the harbour, turning to starboard at Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy. Then across the south coast and working your way through the rips at Sinclair Head, avoiding Thom's Rock, the rip off Karori Rock, and then the rips at Cape Terawhiti. Work your way across the narrow part of Cook Strait toward the Brothers Islands at the northern end of Arapawa Island.

Avoid Awash Rock at the southern end of the Brothers Islands, as it could wreck you yacht and your day. Then work your way up between Arapawa Island and the Brother Islands, to round the island to starboard. Be aware of the rips off the northern end of the Brothers.

Then back across Cook Strait, and back through the rips on the south coast. Once again avoiding Thoms Rock. Then to Moaning Minnie, and back up the harbour to the RPNYC finish line.

3.2 Nelson Race

Distance: 117 Nautical Miles



This race is a premier event, the central region's equivalent of Auckland's Coastal Classic. It is approximately the same distance as the Coastal Classic, but a much more challenging race due to the weather and waters it is sailed in. It is typically RPNYC's longest race in the sailing calendar.

The race is usually held over Wellington Anniversary weekend due to its length (average duration is around 18-20 hours, although it can take over 30 hours). The long weekend allows sufficient time to return to Wellington with a break in the Marlborough Sounds if desired. Alternatively, the timing coincides with the start of the Nelson Regatta so boats may stay to enjoy this regatta.

The race typically starts on Friday afternoon or evening so boats and crews need to be prepared for night sailing.

The race starts on the RPNYC start line and the course heads out of the harbour, rounding Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy to starboard, then along the south coast. Be mindful of the hazards discussed in the Cook Strait section of this guide.

Cross the Cook Strait and sail across the top of the Marlborough Sounds, heading to Stephens Island. Round Stephens to port then head down past D'Urville Island into Tasman Bay. Pass the Boulder Bank and enter the boat harbour to finish across a line out from the Tasman Bay Cruising Club.

Tactics and good navigation are important in this race. Across the Strait and top of the Sounds, knowing what the tide is doing comes into play: do you want to pick up the tide between Arapawa Island and the Brother Islands? Can you get through the rip at Cape Jackson before the tide turns against you? Do you want to be in close or out towards the middle? Where is the wind? Read your

chart and be aware of rocks – Cook Rock is one of these. Think about what the tide will be doing when you arrive at Stephens Island. It always seems to take so long to get there! The navigator usually sticks their head up once you have rounded Steven's Island to tell you that you are halfway there.

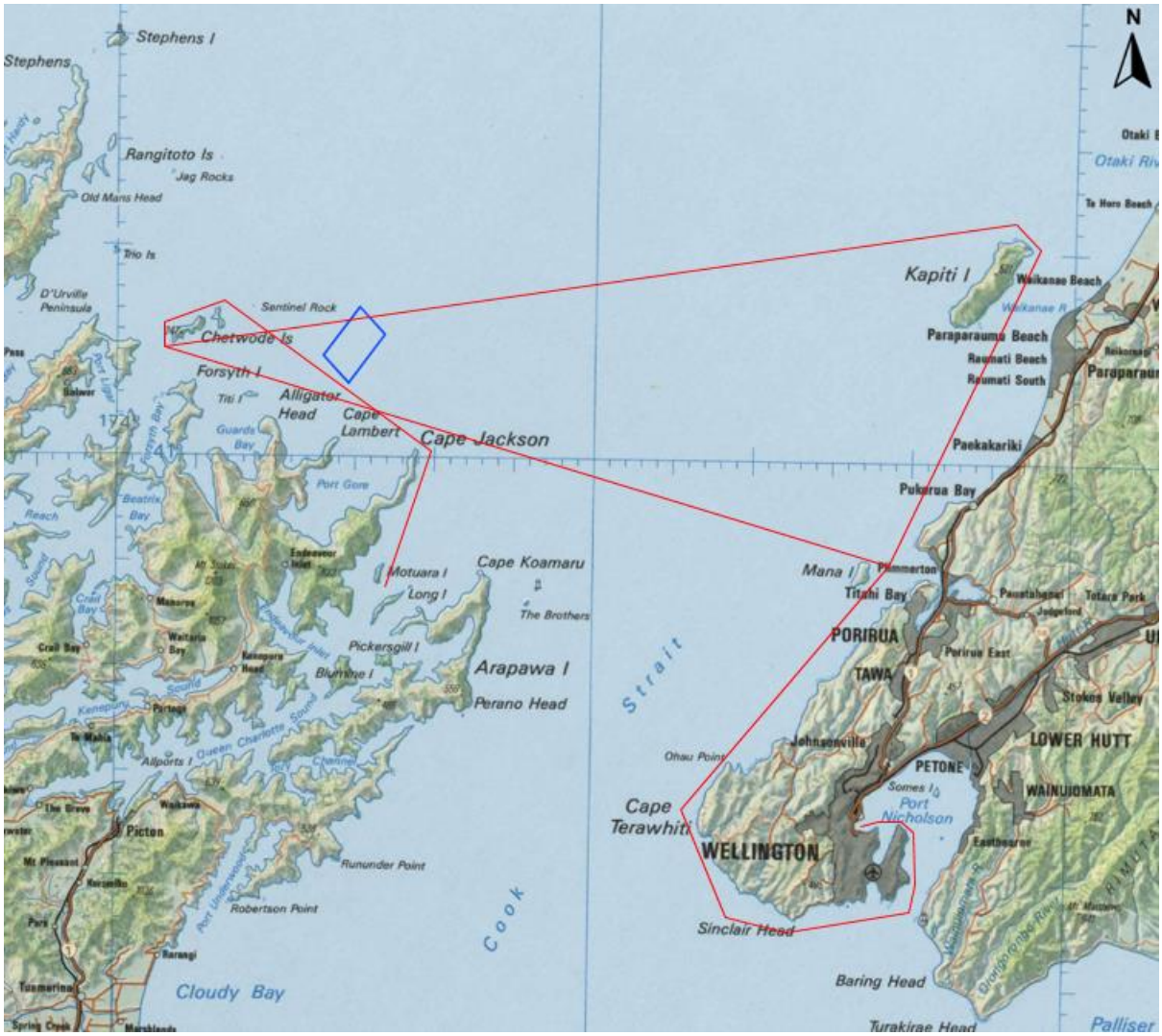
In the early morning the wind can drop out and the light airs sailing begins. A park up is normal, and the race will start again when the sea breeze comes in late morning. This can be one of the more frustrating components of this race and it is often won or lost in the light airs. If the wind spills in, this can give some good down wind sailing into the finish and a good time at the Tasman Bay Cruising Club.

In a southerly the run through Cook Strait can give you an epic downwind ride on the knife edge of control that you will remember for many years to come. This is the race that you will remember.

Most choose to return home via French Pass which cuts off a lot of time for the delivery home. This is another unique piece of water in the world due to the strong rips, and needs to be traversed within an hour each side of the tide.

3.3 Kapiti or Mana Islands, Chetwode Islands, Ship Cove

Distance: 90 - 110 Nautical Miles



This is another really fun overnight race to do. At the right time of year it can be an amazing destination race but with corners to keep things interesting.

The race typically starts on a Friday evening from the RPNYC start line. The course heads out of the harbour to make a starboard turn at Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy and along the south coast. Turn at Cape Terawhiti to work your way up the west coast of Wellington to either Mana Island or Kapiti Island. Inside Mana Island there are kelp beds to avoid. Be aware of the boulder bank and rocks off the top of Kapiti Island, it goes further out than you think.

Around Kapiti or Mana, cross the open water to the Chetwode Islands. The course then loops to starboard around the Chetwode Islands to form a figure 8. This direction means boats can safely approach by aiming for the navigational light on Nine Pin Island, on the south western side of the Chetwode Islands. There can be a lot of tide off this little island.

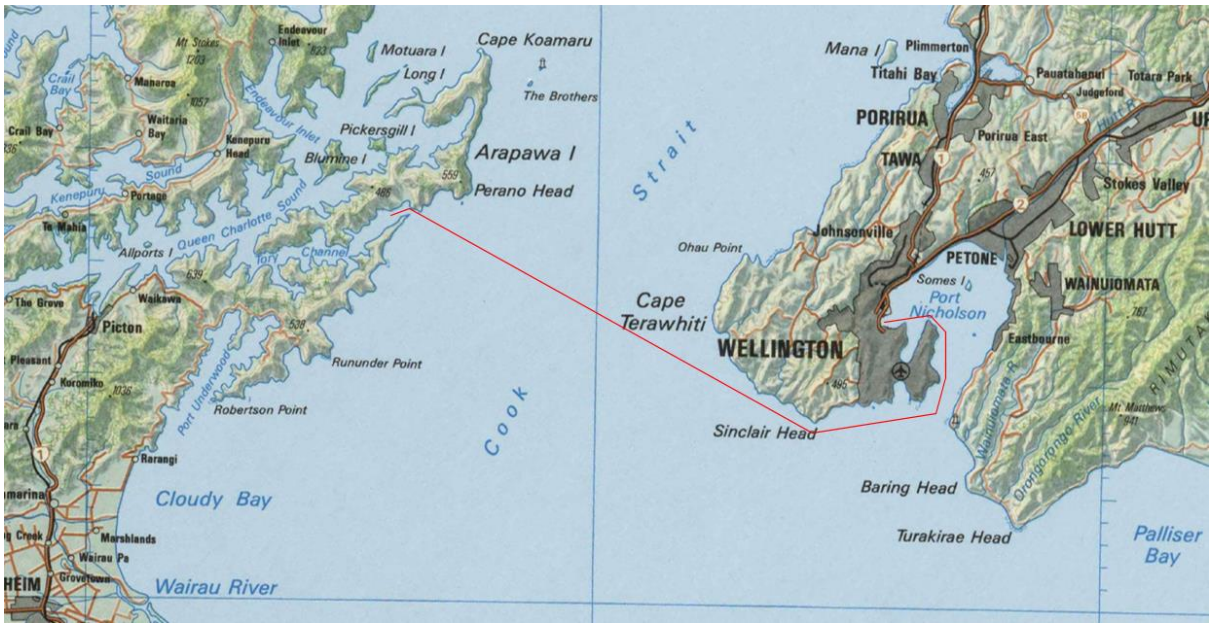
Once past Nine Pin, be aware of Hinemoa Rock, just offshore from the Chetwode Islands but just about on your course. Yes, racing yachts have hit this!

Once clear of the Chetwode Islands head south east for Cape Jackson. Think about what the tide is doing at Cape Jackson to decide whether to go through the gap or outside Walker Rock. Once around Cape Jackson, the finish is a line between Ship Cove and the bottom end of Motuara Island.

The race is usually followed by a raft up in a nearby bay for social time with competitors. Boats then return to Wellington later that day or the following morning, depending on Cook Strait tides.

3.4 Cook Strait Classic

Distance: 36 Nautical Miles



This is the shortest race in the Championship that is run annually, and is a great way to become familiar with the Cook Strait and offshore racing. Historically, it was one of the largest in New Zealand, with 90-100 yachts starting the race.

The race is run just before Christmas as it was used to deliver yachts across Cook Strait for summer cruising in the safety of a fleet. There is usually a division with a lower safety category rating of Cat 4 to encourage boats doing the delivery to join the race.

The course starts on the RPNYC start line heading out of the harbour to make a starboard turn at Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy. Then along the south coast going through the rip at Sinclair Head, avoiding Thom's Rock, then the rips at Karori Rock, and Cape Terawhiti. Cape Terawhiti should

not be as big an issue for this race as the angle towards Tory Channel entrance means you are not going as close to the cape.

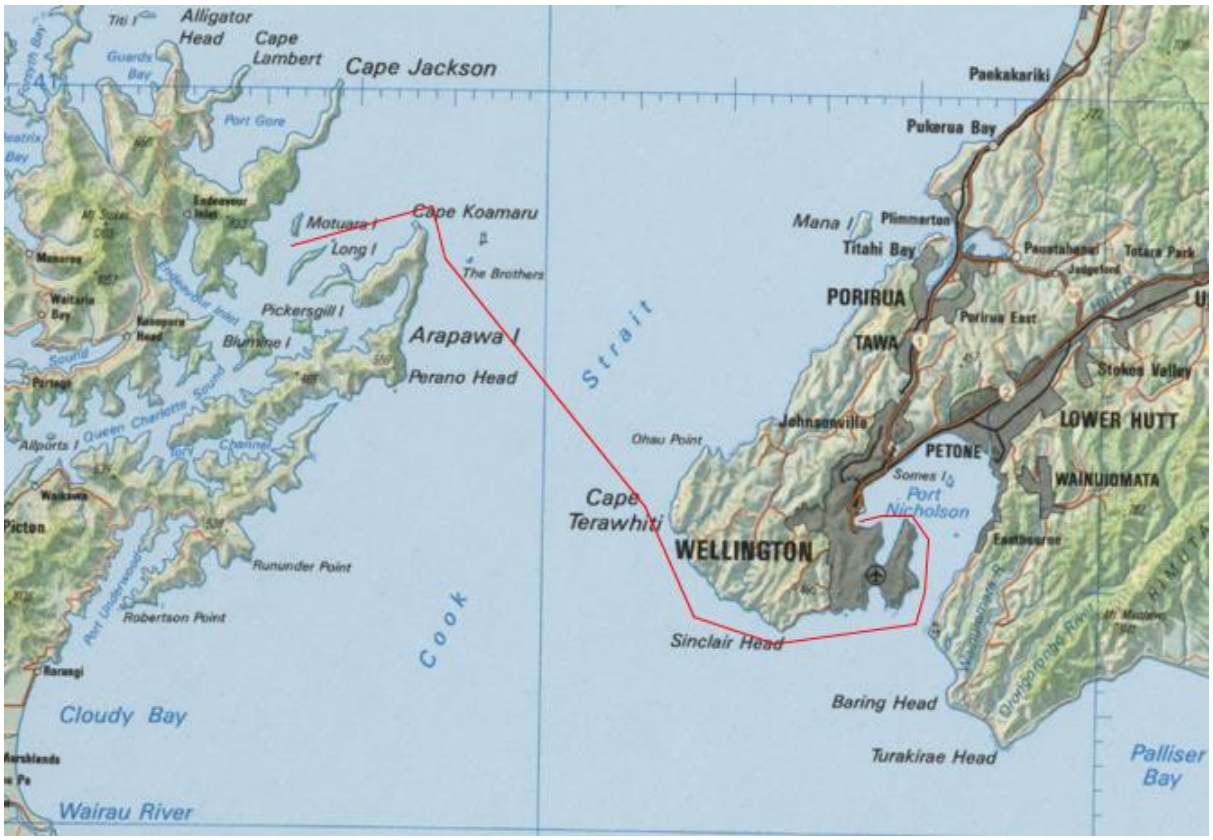
Have you calculated what the tide is doing? The fastest course to Tory Channel is usually just a reach across Cook Strait but may be affected by tide.

Once you get close to Tory Channel, the tricky bit starts. When you've crossed Baldie's transit (when Perano Head and the Brothers Islands are in transit), you need to be on the watch for ferries and other traffic at Tory Channel entrance. A compulsory radio call to all ships is required 10 minutes before transit of Tory Channel on VHF Channel 19 (Port Operations Channel). You must keep monitoring the radio. The inter-island ferries and other ships have right of way – you have to keep clear even if this means delaying your transit until the vessel has passed through.

When through the channel entrance, the finish is off the old whaling station. In a northerly can you get a kite up for the finish? Be careful though as the winds are rather fluky in the Sounds! After finishing, head to the bay for a raft up and social time.

3.5 Ship Cove Direct

Distance 46 Nautical Miles



This is another short offshore course, and can be more tactical than it looks on paper. It is sometimes run in conjunction with a Mana/Kapiti-Chetwodes-Ship Cove race which gives an option for a short, direct race.

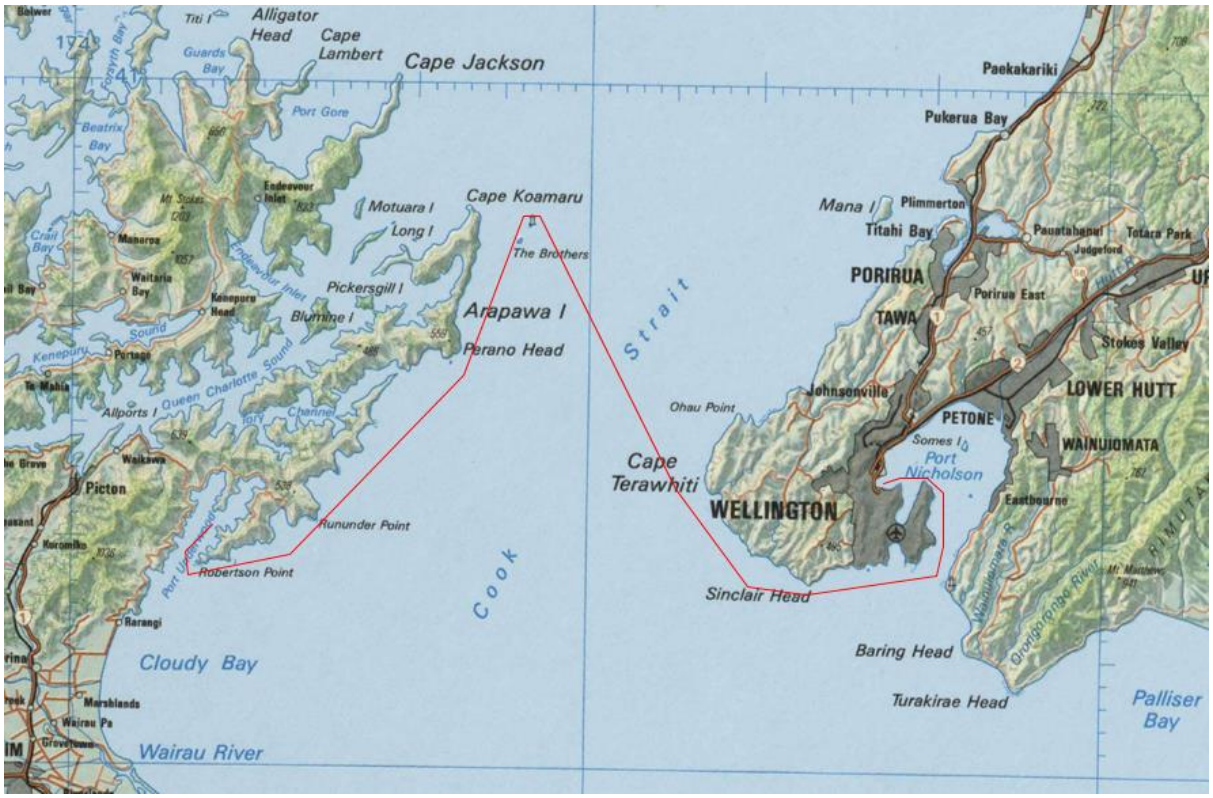
The race is out of the harbour, turning to starboard at Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy. Then across the south coast and working your way through the rips at Sinclair Head, avoiding Thom's Rock, the rip off Karori Rock, and then the rips at Cape Terawhiti. Work your way across the narrow part of Cook Strait toward the Brothers Islands at the northern end of Arapawa Island.

Depending on the tidal flow can you go between the Brothers Islands and Cape Koamaru? If you can then be careful of Awash Rock. If not, you will have to go around the outside. Once you get to Cape Koamaru, be aware of Stella Rock.

Pass the top of Long Island. The race finishes across a transit between Motuara Island and Long Island.

3.6 Brothers Port Underwood

Distance 58 Nautical Miles



This is a day race that can have a bit of everything and a social raft up afterwards.

The race is out of the harbour, turning to starboard at Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy. Then across the south coast and working your way through the rips at Sinclair Head, avoiding Thom's Rock, the rip off Karori Rock, and then the rips at Cape Terawhiti. Cross the narrow part of Cook Strait toward the Brothers Islands to round the northern island to port.

Then make your way down the coast of Arapawa Island past Tory Channel, Jordie Rocks and Fighting Bay. At Robertson Point, turn to starboard into Port Underwood. The finish is inside Port Underwood.

The delivery home can be easier if you stand further off the south coast to miss the rips.

3.7 Wellington to Akaroa

Distance: 196 Nautical Miles

This is a classic long offshore race. In recent times it has been done as a leg of the Central Triangle Race rather than as a separate race.

This is usually a Cat 2 race as there is nowhere to seek shelter off the east coast of the South Island so your yacht must have a level of self-sufficiency to survive bad weather.

On leaving Wellington Harbour, passing Barrett's Reef and Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy, keep heading in a southerly direction. Stay west or east of the rhumb line depending on the wind direction.

The aim is to get south to Steep Head as fast as possible. There can be a tidal influence in the wave pattern off Steep Head. In a northerly there can be a park up if you are in too close off Pompey's Pillar.

Once you get to Akaroa Heads, turn to starboard and head up the harbour. Don't cut the corner at Green Head as you turn to head to the finish line off Akaroa Sailing Club.

The warm welcome you will receive from Akaroa Sailing Club will be remembered for many years.

3.8 Wellington to Napier

Distance: 200 Nautical Miles

This is one of the most challenging races in the central region. The classic race was the Wellington to Gisborne race but this has not be run since the 1999/2000 season due to the logistical issues and costs involved in trying to berth yachts in Gisborne.

This is a Cat 2 race as there is nowhere to seek safe shelter off the Wairarapa Coast so your yacht must have a level of self-sufficiency to survive bad weather.

On leaving Wellington Harbour, passing Barrett's Reef and Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy, veer to port and head towards Bearing Head. Work your way across Palliser Bay towards Cape Palliser – in a good northerly wind this can be a fast, exhilarating ride.

Getting round Cape Pallier can be frustrating as there are big wind shadows in a northerly, and a washing machine wave pattern in the tidal waters. Once through this, it settles down as you head towards Honeycombs Point. Be careful of various rocky bits, including Honeycomb rocks.

You need to decide how far off the Wairarapa Coast you want to be, depending on the wind direction. If light and you opt to go inshore to hug the coast, be aware that large sections are still uncharted.

After rounding Cape Kidnappers there is the fourteen-mile run to the finish off the Port of Napier.. RPNYC work closely with the Napier Sailing Club to be able to berth the yachts as the marina is restricted in the draft for some yachts.

3.9 Wellington to Lyttelton

Distance: 170 Nautical Miles

This is a classic race with history. The 1951 race ran to into a weather system that turned the race into a tragedy. You can read about the race and some of the RPNYC yachts that were competing in the race.

This is usually a Cat 2 race as there is nowhere to seek shelter off the east coast of the South Island so your yacht must have a level of self-sufficiency to survive bad weather. The race has been run at Cat 3 modified but the increased modifications basically made it Cat 2.

On leaving Wellington Harbour, passing Barrett's Reef and Moaning Minnie/Barrett's Reef Buoy, keep heading in a southerly direction. Stay west or east of the rhumb line depending on the wind direction.

At Godley Head turn starboard into the entrance to Lyttelton Harbour. Sail up Lyttelton Harbour to the finish off the Naval Point Yacht Club.

4 Cook Strait

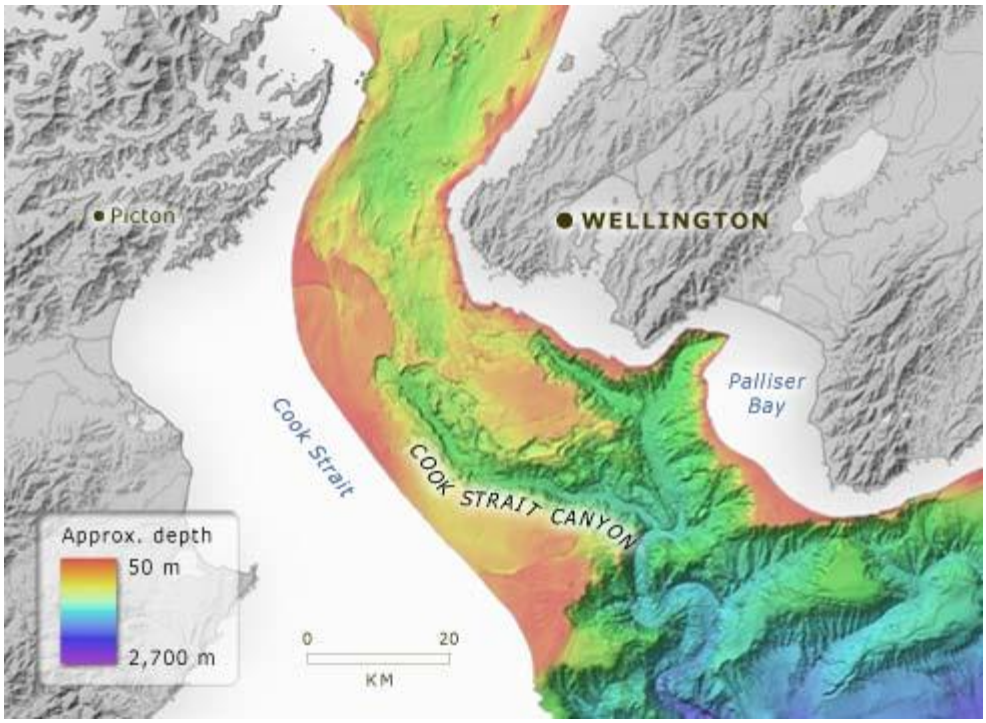
4.1 Overview

Most races of the RPNYC Offshore Championship sail through the Cook Strait, a unique and challenging stretch of water. This can be a wonderful place to race especially once past the South Coast and the narrow part of the funnel. However, it is also one of the most challenging places in the world to sail. The winds that can be encountered as well as the strong tides can make for very rough sea states and conditions.

It has been said that if you can sail well in Cook Strait you can sail anywhere in the world, as sailors who have gone to cruised or raced in the Pacific and other areas of the world have found.

Cook Strait should never be taken lightly. Yes, weather and tide forecasting if better today, but sometimes forecasting can be wrong, or a weather system slows down or speeds up. Sailors should be aware of this.

Things can change in Cook Strait very quickly – be alert and watch for any changes. Keeping an eye on clouds and sea state can inform you of immediate changes.



4.2 Cook Strait Topography

Cook Strait has been created by the overlap of the North and South Islands. The gap between them was named after Captain Cook.

At the narrowest point of Cooks Strait between Cape Terawhiti and Awapawa Island is only approximately twelve nautical miles, so not particularly wide.

Sailors need to study the weather and the tides in the Cook Strait region if they want to be capable of winning races in the Offshore Championship.

The land formations of the top part of the South Island, including the Marlborough Sounds, and the lower part of the North Island (all the way up to Taranaki) cause a natural funnel for wind. This funnel affects winds from all directions, with so much air being forced through such a narrow gap.

This funnel also influences the tidal flow of water through Cook Strait. It is basically an underwater canyon that gets deeper on the southern side of the narrowest part of Cook Strait. The underwater cliffs can have influence the tidal currents in certain areas as deeper water slams against them and forces additional water to the surface changing the wave pattern.

4.3 Cook Strait Winds

The two predominant winds in the Cook Strait region are the north westerly and the south easterly, although winds can come from other angles.

Winds will accelerate through the natural wind funnel of Cook Strait. The South Coast of Wellington towards both Cape Terawhiti and Cape Palliser can experience localised gust cells that are significantly stronger than the mean wind speed or gust in other parts of the Cook Strait region.

The wind gets compressed in the valleys of the steep hills of the land along the coast causing a localised but significant wind speed acceleration. The gusts can be longer and more sustained in these areas.

The area this most notably occurs is around Karori Rock on the South Coast. Most refer to this area as "the wind factory". If the forecast for Cook Strait is northerly 25-30 knots, you will hear experienced sailors saying there will be 35–45 knots of wind in this area. This is based on winds they have commonly experienced.

There are numerous other areas in the Cook Strait region where there are katabatic winds and localised acceleration. This can catch people out, sailing along in 15 knots of breeze and then get 25 to 30 knot gusts. Sail trimmers and the whole crew need to be in tune with what the wind is doing around them.

The northern entrance to of Queen Charlotte Sound is another example of an area where wind speed and direction can change significantly. The section between Cape Jackson and Ship Cove has caught out quite a few yacht crews – yachts have lost a good lead over their rivals due to the effect of an unexpected wind change on their course, sail trim, and sail choice. In a reasonable Northerly williwaws are not uncommon through this area.

4.4 Cook Strait Tides

Cook Strait is a unique area for tides and tidal flows – it is one of the most unpredictable areas for tides in the world.

The weather systems in the central region of New Zealand can also play a large part in the strength and time periods of the tidal streams. This needs to be factored in with the usual tide pattern of spring and neap tides that affect the strength of a tidal flow. This means the tide tables are not as accurate as most people would think. Even with modern technology, the tides don't adhere to what a computer may forecast.

The common tidal flows in Cook Strait are:

- Towards the north or north west for five hours after high tide Wellington;
- Towards the south or the south east for seven hours, turning before low tide Wellington.

Cook Strait behaves more like a river of sea water than most coastal waters. The tidal flow with the topography means that when it is high tide in Wellington it is approximately low tide in Nelson, and vice versa. This creates a river as billions of litres of water flow through the Strait on every tide. As such, the tidal rise and fall in the middle of Cook Strait is actual very small, in the region of 300mm to 500mm. It is the volume of water that is being moved.

There are numerous areas of tidal rips in the Cook Strait region due to water flow. The common areas you will hear sailors talk about are as follows:

- **Karori Rock** area from **Sinclair Head** to **Cape Terawhiti**: The strongest tidal rips are usually experienced here. The tidal flow rate can be as high as 7.5 knots during spring tides and speeds of three to six knots are not unusual.

  There is natural current that comes up from the deep south along the seabed, especially felt in a southerly. This current slams into the cliffs of the underwater canyon and gets forced to the surface causing unusual triangular wave patterns. This is the boat-breaking conditions experienced sailors talk about, when the yacht slams off waves with no front or back, just a steep triangle of moving water that launches the yacht into mid-air to come crashing down. You may need to do more aggressive trailing to control the speed, but also give the helmsman a good groove to sail the yacht in.

- **Tory Channel**: This has its own section in the tide tables. There is a rip just outside the entrance that you need to work your way through. This can be especially bad when leaving Tory Channel heading for Wellington with the tide flowing out of Tory Channel to the east, and South or South Easterly wind pushing up against it.

- **Cape Koamaru** and the **Brothers Islands**: The area here can be an accelerated tidal stream, caused by the Brothers Islands being close to Awapawa Island. There can be quite a flow around Cape Koamaru in both a flood and an ebb tide.

  At the top of the Brothers Islands there can be a considerable rip with steep sharp waves.

- **Cape Jackson**: the sea state here is mainly caused by the volume of water being pushed through a narrow rocky outcrop that is shallower than the rest of the area around it.

  When crossing the top of the Marlborough Sounds you can notice areas of significant tidal flow. This is because the Queen Charlotte Sound and the Pelorus Sound move a huge amount of water during each tidal cycle.

- **Stevens Island**

With modern navigation it is easy to find out if you have tide with you or against you. Compare the speed through the water against the speed over ground on the GPS chart plotter. You need to have your instruments calibrated to be able to accurately assess this.

5 Documentation and Entry Process

5.1 Notice of Race

There are two documents that govern how RPNYC will run the Offshore Championship. The first document is the Notice of Race. This document defines what the Offshore Championship will be, and the various races that will make up the Offshore Championship.

Also, of primary importance to a skipper/owner looking to enter the series is the rules that the championship will be run under, the required Yachting New Zealand safety category plus any amendments. The Notice of race also covers any rate or handicap systems and certificates to be use.

Entry and eligibility of the championship. What you must do to enter the championship and any additional crew requirements. These may include Advanced Sea Survival Certificates, First Aid certificates or any other information RPNYC requires.

The Notice of Race sets out the proposed dates for thee various races that will make up the championship, and the proposed course or destination for the races. The scoring system for the championship will be detailed.

Trophies and prizes that will be awarded for the championship.

It will also have requirements for third party insurance cover, and any limits of liability on the organising authority, being the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

You need to prepare your yacht to meet the requirements of the Notice of Race. The race committee do spot safety checks during the championship. If your yacht does not meet the requirements of the Notice of Race, and especially in the area of safety and crew preparedness, then you are liable to be protested by the committee, and/or refused to be allowed to start in the race until all deficiencies have been rectified.

This may seem over the top, but there are two issues at play here. Firstly, all yachts need to meet or exceed the safety requirements as stated in the Notice of Race. This is for the safety of the yacht and the crew. But also, the safety of others that may need to come to your aid. Secondly, is that if all yachts carry the same level of minimum safety equipment, then everyone is carrying a similar weight penalty. So, this evens out across the fleet.

5.2 Entry

Once you have read the Notice of Race and possibly this document and talked to other sailors that are experienced with Offshore and Coastal racing you have decided to enter. Well Done!

You need to fill out the entry form, whether it is online or on paper. Most are online these days. Read the conditions of entry carefully and understand what you are signing up to. This is where you are agreeing to the conditions of the Notice of Race, and the other conditions stated on the entry form.

These will include the certain statements regarding the insurance, the responsibility you will carry for the yacht and the crew. Also, your compliance with the Racing Rules of Sailing, Yachting New Zealand Safety regulations. There are also some quite serious statements about risks and your decision to start in any race in the series or continue in the race is solely up to the skipper.

The use of images and photos for the promotion of sailing and the club is also covered.

It is important that you understand all of these items. The critical ones are regarding skipper/owner responsibility, and the requirement for each skipper to make their own decision on whether to race or not, regardless of the decisions the club as the organising authority to run the championship or any race within the championship.

The club may decide to run a race in the Championship that you feel you crew experience and or yacht setup is not fit for the conditions. This is now up to the individual skippers to make that decision.

5.3 Sailing Instructions

Once you have read the Notice of Race and entered the next document you will come across is the sailing instructions. The sailing instructions detail how the Championship will be run on the water.

The sailing instructions will detail items such as the race programme, position reporting via VHF radio scheds, any other radio calls for entering a harbour, or closing in on a finish line. There will be other safety items such as exclusion zones and/or fairway marks.

Once again read the sailing instructions carefully and make sure you understand understand how the race will be run, and what your and your crew need to do to comply with the racing rules and sailing instructions. If you break any of these you are liable for protest, and therefore a penalty if you are found to have broken any of the rules or sailing instructions.

For each individual race there will be an appendix to the sailing instructions produced. This will specify the additional detail that is specific to the particular race that the appendix is for. This will include start line, finish line locations.

Various course options depending on possible weather conditions. Longer courses for good weather conditions, shorter course for heavy conditions or light winds.

Also, any other information regarding running that particular race in the Offshore Championship series.

5.4 Pre-Race Documentation

Before a race there is some pre-race documentation that needs to be done. This will be specified in the Notice of Race. You must complete and produce the required documentation within the time limits set out in the Notice of Race.

The primary race document you will be asked to provide is a Coastal Voyage form or similar. These days some of this documentation is done online. This document provides all the details of the vessel including the colour of hull and decks. This is in case something happens another vessel or helicopter is sent to assist you. The Rescue Co-Ordination Centre can provide the details of your yacht that they are searching for.

The other critical information to be detailed on the form is:

- The name of each crew member on board for the race
- A next of kin (NOK) or emergency contact name and mobile phone number or landline number
- Sometime an e-mail address for both the crew member and their NOK maybe requested

All this information is provided to Maritime Radio and the Rescue Co-Ordination Centre so they can contact all relevant parties if there was to be an emergency on your yacht during the race.

This is usually one of the last documents you provide. It has to be submitted at or before the race briefing, or other date and time detailed in the Notice of Race. This is critical to the race management team, as they have to collate it and send it to Maritime Radio for the creation of the positions reporting safety scheds for the races, and well as the loading of the database of yacht details they share with the Rescue Co-Ordination Centre.

If after it is submitted there are changes to any details on this form, the race officer needs to be advised so the form can be amended.

For some offshore races the Notice of Race may detail other documents that you need to provide and the timeframes for when they need to be submitted by. These may include:

- Life raft servicing certificate
- EPIRB registration certificate
- Safety Certificate to the required category
- Photograph of the yacht sailing

- Advanced sea survival certificate
- First Aid certificate

The critical things is that you read the Notice of Race, understand what documents need to be submitted and the date and time they need to be submitted by. There can be penalties, or the organising authority can reject your entry if you don't meet these requirements.

The suggestion is that you get the documentation sorted as early as possible.

6 Yachting New Zealand Safety Regulations of Sailing

6.1 Overview

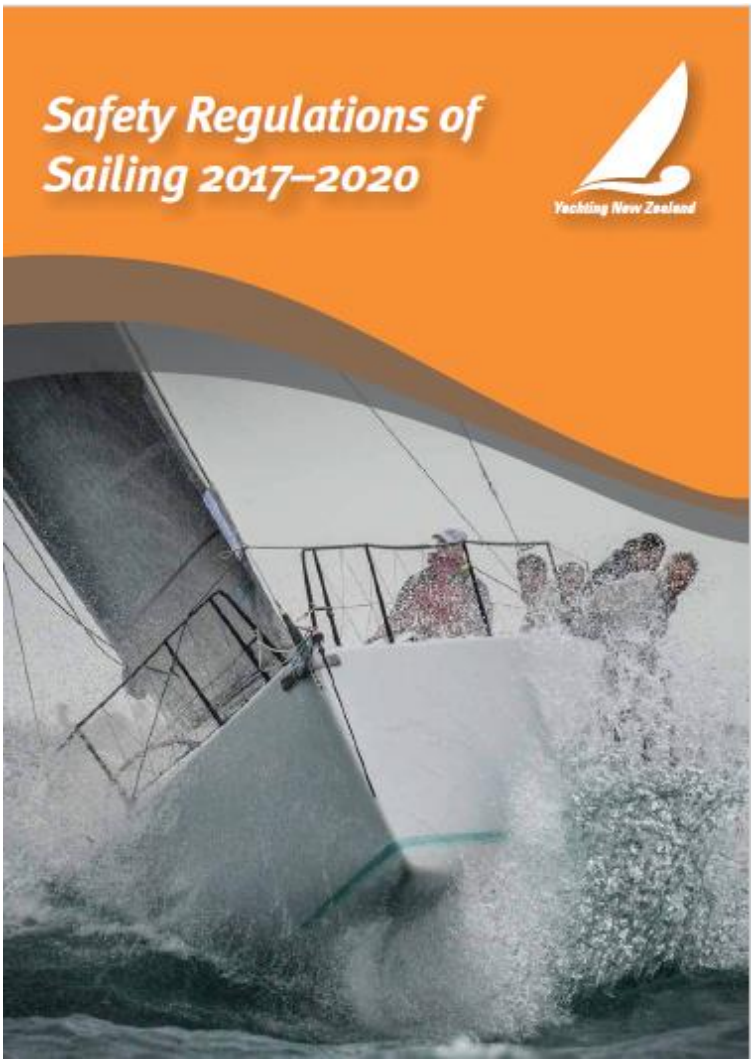
This section aims to help you to understand the critical importance of the safety category requirements. These are specified in Yachting New Zealand's (YNZ) Safety Regulations of Sailing (referred to here as the Safety Regulations).

These requirements stated in the Notice of Race are often daunting for a new skipper/owner looking to compete in the Offshore Championship for the first time. The cost of getting the required equipment and the amount of work it takes to prepare a yacht for the championship and the safety inspection is not insignificant.

6.2 YNZ Safety Regulations of Sailing

It is strongly recommended that all Championship competitors have a copy of the current version of the Safety Regulations so they are aware of the requirements. This should be kept onboard to be refered to while preparing a yacht and every time you have to re-certify or upgrade you safety category rating.

These are available online from Yachting New Zealand: https://www.yachtingnz.org.nz/racing/safety-regulations, or hard copy can be purchased in from the Yachting New Zealand website or a chandlery or boat shop.



The Safety Regulations have a major update every four years in the same cycle as the Racing Rules of Sailing updates, after the Olympic Games. The can be minor updates or amendments during the four year cycles. It pays to check the Yachting New Zealand website for the latest update.

Now you have a copy of the Safety Regulations, **the next job is to read it** and read it carefully so you understand what is required. We've included discussion of each section of the requirements below, but this does not override then need to read the Safety Regulations in full.

Seek out an experienced skipper to talk through the requirements and tips and trcks for meeting them. If there are specific items you need advice on then contact a YNZ Safety Inspector.

6.3 RPNYC Safety Categories for Offshore Championship

RPNYC, as the organising authority, run the majority of the Offshore Championship at category 3 part II of the Safety Regulations, modified with some higher category 2 requirements or additional requirements that RPNYC see as necessary. The Notice of Race will detail the additional requirements above the standard category 3 requirements.

Longer race scheduled to destinations such as Lyttelton, Akaroa, and Napier are upgraded to category 2 races due to the length of time yachts are on the east coast of either the North or South Islands where there is no shelter available. Category 2 provides the yacht more self-sufficiency to deal with heavy weather and emergency situations.

A skipper/owner may wish to comply with a higher category rating than the Notice of Race requires. This decision could be based on the yacht type and size, or any future plans to do longer races requiring cat 1 or cat 2 safety certificates, such as the Two Handed Round North Island Race, Two Handed Round New Zealand Race, Auckland to Fiji, or Auckland to Noumea.

As RPNYC specify category 3 modified level, there are only approximately six extra items required for category 2. With the modifications including items such as a life raft, you will still need to purchase most of the really expensive equipment to meet the cat 3 modified requirements. At that point the step to cat 2 is relatively minor.

You may aim to get category 2 for future events, but start with category 3 modified and work your way up.

In deciding, be aware that a cat 3 or cat 2 certificate is only valid for two years, then the yacht has to be re-inspected. It also has to be re-inspected after a change of ownership, or if the yacht suffers structural damage.

Note that if a yacht does a blue water trip requiring a category 1 certificate, then once the yacht has returned to New Zealand water, the category 1 certificate reverts to being a category 2 certificate.

6.4 Preparing for a Safety Inspection for Cat 2 or Cat 3

Now you have decided which safety category you are going to attain, you need to start preparing the yacht and crew ready for inspection. There is a lot of work involved in preparing the yacht for safety inspection. It isn't just a matter of getting the safety equipment to together for an inspector to tick off a list. The inspector needs to see all the required equipment on board and in position as if the yacht were about to sail, for example:

- Life rings in position, with the required lights, whistles and drogues tied on so they can be deployed off the back of the boat. Inspectors will usually throw a light in the water to check it is secured: if it floats away then that part of the inspection fails.
- Jackstays need to be run and taut. You should always pack away your jackstays when back in your home port as they are susceptible to UV damage.
- Lifelines must be in good condition and taut, as required by the Safety Regulations.
- The rig will be checked

- The cockpit drains will be checked.
- Softwood plugs must be available for all through-hulls, with double hose clips on these.

The yacht also needs to be ready to go sailing underneath. For some certificates, especially cat 1 and cat 2, the yacht has to been lifted out of the water for the hull to be inspected. This will include, but not be limited to: the keel to hull join; the rudder bears or bushes; propeller shaft bearings and bushes; the state and operation of seacocks on through-hulls.

Required supporting documentation must also be presented to be compliant. It pays to set up a folder with all this information that can be carried on board the boat.

6.5 Life Saving Equipment

As the failure of life saving equipment means death, there are specific requirements to ensure it is in proper working order. This equipment includes lifejackets, life rafts, EPIRBs and personal locator beacons (PLBs), and danbouys. This equipment should be thought about carefully as it can directly save crew's lives.

An inspector will need to see servicing certificates or history for lifejackets, life rafts and inflatable danbuoys or that part of the safety certification will be failed. It is a good idea to have an equipment logbook and record all the details of the equipment and the dates of servicing.

Lifejackets and tethers

Lifejackets are a primary piece of safety equipment. It is important that all crew know how the lifejacket and tether work and that the lifejacket owner ensures it is maintained.

By law every skipper and/or owner is responsible for ensuring there is a lifejacket on board the yacht for each crew member. The easiest way for a skipper to deal with this is for all crew to supply their own. But if a crew member doesn't bring one, the skipper still has the responsibility to comply with the law. So, will you should strongly encourage your crew to have their own gear that fits them, having spares is a good idea.

Life jackets, especially the inflatable versions, require servicing annually. Documentation as proof of servicing will need to be produced for a safety inspection or compliance checks both for gaining certification and pre-race. This included documentation for crew-owned lifejackets. For new lifejackets (less than one year), a copy of the receipt is required.

Inflatable lifejackets are now very common and affordable. They are very easy to wear and have inbuilt harnesses for tethering. The skipper must ensure that all crew-provided lifejackets meet the requirements of the Safety Regulations, including:

- Minimum 150 newtons buoyancy
- Built in harness and rings for attaching a harness tether
- Crotch strap
- Light

EPIRBs and PLBs

EPIRB for the yacht and any PLBs that you or your crew carry need to be registered with Maritime NZ, and the proof of registration must be presented for any safety inspection.

Registration of this equipment can be completed or updated online at https://beacons.org.nz/Registration.aspx.

Life Rafts

A life raft is a requirement for the offshore championship. This is probably the single most expensive item in preparing a yacht for racing in the offshore championship, however the price has come down quite considerably over the years. Careful thought needs to go into the purchase of a life raft.

The common sizes are four, six or eight person. Your choice of size is determined by the number of crew you will race offshore with: you can't put a crew of eight on a four-person life raft.

The life raft has to be professionally serviced regularly, and you are required to keep onboard and produce the servicing certificate for the safety inspection for category 2 or 3. The Club can also ask to see this certificate and check it against the life raft in a pre-race or post-race safety check by the sailing committee.

A life raft for private use only needs to be serviced once every three years for the first ten years of its life, then every year after that. If buying a second-hand life raft, it needs to be serviced annually. (Commercial vessel and commercially hired life rafts need to be serviced annually.)

A life raft is supplied with a pack when purchased or serviced. Think about what sailing you intend to do to decide which pack you need.

- A Coastal pack contains rations and water for less than 24 hours. The second pack is an
- An Offshore pack has extra items include parachute flares and extra food and water for longer distance sailing. This pack is more expensive.

The life raft must be securely stored on the yacht. The Safety Regulations stipulate a maximum time of 15 seconds to get the cannister in the water from wherever it is located. Fibreglass cannister life rafts are stowed in the cockpit or on the cabin top. A life raft in a valise (sports bag looking case) can be stowed down below next to the companionway ladder. There is a maximum weight for a valise life raft to be stowed down below.

It needs to be lashed it in place as it is a heavy item so you do not want it getting loose to cause damage to other items or be lost overboard. The lashing system need to be quick-release in an emergency – this could be a knife secured with it to cut the lashings.

There also needs to be a strong point on the boat to tie the tether to so the raft it will not float away when deployed, but also activate the life raft.

As this is an expensive item you may consider hiring a life raft, however at present nowhere in Wellington hires them. This service stopped due to the lack of demand (not enough yachts hiring and commercial vessels that have invested in their own life raft) and cost (yacht owners considered hire fees too expensive, around $100 per day for a hire under two weeks; revenue was insufficient ofr hire companies to cover annual service costs).

Clothing

Clothing may not be obvious safety equipment, but good offshore clothing is paramount to prevent hypothermia, sunstroke, etc. Ensure that your crew bring enough clothing to keep warm, including spare clothing kept dry in their sailing bags. Even in summer, the Cook Strait can be cold especially at night.

6.6 Stability

The Safety Regulations Part II states the angle of vanishing stability that a yacht must comply with for each safety category. The higher the stability angle of a yacht, the better, especially if you plan to go further offshore in the future.

Offshore Race Category	Minimum Limit of Positive Stability
0	120
1	115
2	110
3	105

A safety inspector will require documentation proving the stability angle of the yacht, either:

- The designer's GZ curve and declaration
- The designer's incline test
- A calculation from a like design that is similarly equipped and rigged
- An ORC Club rating certificate
- A STIX index certificate

Note that while the safety regulations specify that 110 degrees is the minimum requirement, the Short-handed Sailing Association of New Zealand (SSANZ) recommends that yacht owners should aim to have Category 1 or 0 level stability.

6.7 Fuel Requirement for the Races in the Championship

All yachts must carry at least the minimum amount of fuel required by the safety category specified in the Notice of Race, or any additional fuel requirement stated in the Notice of Race. The formula to calculate the amount of fuel is in the Safety Regulations Part II 20.8.

Sometimes for longer races, the fuel requirement will be stated as enough fuel to motor a certain distance, e.g.: enough fuel to motor a minimum of 150 nautical miles in flat water. This requirement also needs to be calculated should the race committee do a safety inspection for the race that this is required for.

The easiest way to work this out is to:

- Consult the engine manual to find out how many litres of fuel your engine burns per hour at three quarters revs or higher (be conservative!)
- Determine the speed you yacht motors at.
- Divide the number of nautical miles stipulated by this speed, and multiply by the number of litres per hour, then round it up.

As an example:

Fuel burn rate – 10 litres Motoring speed – 6 knots Nautical miles - 150	(150 ÷ 6) x 10 = 250 You will need a minimum of 250 litres of fuel

To be safe add some extra fuel for motoring to and from start and finish lines and battery charging during the race. Once again be conservative and carry a few more litres than you think necessary.

6.8 Additional Cat 2 Requirements

All yachts will be required to carry additional items, in accordance with the Safety Regulations for category 1 or 2. This is due to the weather conditions that can be encountered in the Cook Strait, and especially on the east coast of the South Island, and the Wairarapa coast of the North Island.

This may include carrying a tri-sail even if you meet the reefing requirements of the Safety Regulations for reefing a mainsail. If the mainsail is blown out on a lee shore, having a backup is a useful option.

6.9 Tools and Spares

You need to carry of repair kits of tools and spares that suit your yacht and the racing you will be doing. These can be built up over time. The various tools and spares kits you may require include:

- General tool kit: e.g. spanners, screwdrivers, pilers, vice grips etc
- Electrical kit: e.g. crimping tool and crimps. Multimeter, spare wire, bulbs, fuses. Insulation tapes
- Rigging spares and tools: e.g. shackles, blocks, various lashing lines, splicing tools, spare ropes, ball bearings for blocks and cars. Tools to deal with a dismasting (see next section).
- Engine Spares: e.g. Primary and secondary fuel filters, oil filter, water pump impellor, alternator belts.
- Sail repair kit: e.g. sticky back sail repair material, needles, palm, thread, other patching material, spare telltales.

You may wish to get advice from professionals in the associated trades on what tools and spares you should be carrying. These people can also demonstrate how to use the tools and/or fit spare parts.

You should know how to do jobs such as:

- Bleed the fuel through the engine's fuel system to get it to run again in case the fuel is contaminated by salt water or a diesel bug and you need to replace the fuel filters
- Change and tension a belt; change a water pump impellor.

6.10 Tools for a Rig Down

A dismasting is situation you will hopefully never encounter, but must be prepared to recover from.

The Safety Regulations for cat 3 or higher require a hammer and drift to punch out clevis pins, or a set of bolt cutters, and a hacksaw with 12 blades

If you have to cut the rigging to get rid of the mast (for safety reasons), then a set of bolt cutters is not necessarily the best tool to use – talk to a rigger about the best options for your yacht's rigging. There are a few options for tools: bolt cutters; heavy duty wire cutters or an angle grinder

If you have wire rigging then it would be best to pay extra and purchase a proper set of heavy-duty wire cutters. These have hooked jaws specifically for cutting wire and some types of stainless rod (although cutting rod with these can be difficult).

Normal bolt cutters can be used on stainless steel rod, but it is surprising hold hard it is to cut using this tool.

A lot of offshore sailors are now using a battery powered angle grinder with steel cut off disks. These cut through the wire or rod very quickly and easily. The wire or rod can also be cut when under significant load if the rig is in the water under the yacht.

It pays to have the following items for your angle grinder, stored in a waterproof container stowed in a dry place on the yacht.

- At least two batteries. Ensure they are fully charged before the race.
- Spare cut off blades, and a spanner for changing blades,
- Safety glasses and leather gloves.

6.11 Essential Knowledge for Safety Equipment

The following points are important to ensure when preparing a yacht for a safety category, or for any offshore race.

- You have the correct gear for your yacht and crew capability
- It has been serviced recently and is ready for use
- It is secured properly, and the crew know the location of all equipment. Use equipment location diagrams on bulkheads and labels on cupboards and locker lids to identify where equipment is stored.

- The skipper and crew know how to use all the gear and equipment on board. (It is worthless to you if you don't know how to use it.)
- Have a crew briefing before each race to run through where everything is located, emergency procedures, and operation of the yacht during the race.

7 Boat Suitability

7.1 Overview

RPNYC would like to encourage all yachts that would like to get involved in the offshore championship to enter.

Any yacht can enter if they can attain the required YNZ safety certificate and meet the additional safety requirements stated in the Notice of Race.

Some people think their yacht is not eligible to enter due to size restrictions, however RPNYC does not have a size restriction in place for the offshore championship. Skippers of smaller yachts do need to be more mindful of safety considerations and weather conditions.

If you want to compete in the offshore championship, work through getting your yacht up to standard and signed off by a certified YNZ Safety Inspector. During this process, work through any requirements you are unsure of with the safety inspector before submitting the yacht for inspection.

7.2 Yacht Suitability

Your boat needs to be capable of handling conditions likely to be seen during an offshore race. Weather can change, putting you in a situation where you have to use storm sails or other safety items. We invoke the **category requirements of Part II of the Yachting New Zealand Safety Regulations** to decide on the suitability of a boat's stability, equipment and construction standards.

The Notice of Race may modify the category requirements above the standard prescribed by YNZ so yachts have more equipment available to deal with unforeseen situations. (Skippers seeking further information regarding safety may wish to consult World Sailing's Category 2 and 3 special regulations, which are similar but not identical to those of YNZ.
http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/OSR2017mo230012017-[19870].pdf)

The yacht's design and construction also need to be able to withstand the stresses and strains that could be encountered in a longer offshore race. Even though our races are coastal, we've discussed the conditions and circumstances that may be encountered.

Yacht Suitability

Yachts should hold a valid YNZ PHRF certificate, particularly if they are considering entering larger offshore/coastal yacht races that require this certificate, e.g. SSANZ Two Handed Rounded North Island Race.

Hull Construction	All yachts must meet the hull construction requirements as stated in the Yachting New Zealand Safety Regulation Part II category 2 or above. This includes the series or launch date requirements for build certificates and plan approvals.
Stability	All yachts must meet the stability requirement of Yachting New Zealand Safety Regulations Part II category 2 or 3. RPNYC recommend that where possible yachts exceed this requirement and meet the requirements of category 1 or category 0.
Safety Certificate	Yachts are required to be inspected by a Yachting New Zealand approved safety inspector, and provide to the organising authority, by the due date in the Notice of Race, a Yachting New Zealand Category safety certificate to the minimum requirement category, the validity date of which extends beyond the race to be sailed.

7.3 Hull Construction

To ensure that your yacht was designed and constructed to withstand the rigours of offshore racing, the yacht must meet certain design and construction standards.

To determine whether a hull construction certificate needs to be provided to the safety inspector or organising authority please find out the earliest of the age and series date for your yacht. When was your yacht launched, and when was the first yacht of your class launched?

Age date specifies the date the build of the yacht was completed. The series date is the date of the completion of the first yacht in the series for the class. Typically, the series date is the earlier than the age date. The requirements for hull construction are based on the earlier of these two dates. If you are unsure about this, please talk with your approved safety inspector about this requirement.

For older yachts and designs this documentation may not be readily available. But the yachts are proven and well-known designs within the New Zealand fleet. So this may require chat with the safety inspector to find out what may be required to meet this requirement on an older yacht.

These details would be required by your safety inspector when doing the safety inspection for a safety Category.

7.4 Small Yachts and Weather

The biggest determination of yacht suitability is whether the yacht can get the required safety certificate. There have been cases of where a yacht has been unable to get a safety certificate due to an issue such as how the yacht was w constructed, or a rudder stock that is too small.

Sometimes the safety inspection shows up other issues such as cracking around the keel attachment or a loose rudder bearing. In these cases the inspector will not sign off a certificate until the advised remedial action has been completed.

When the boat has been deemed suitable, skippers need to consider several things when deciding whether to compete in a race:

- Weather forecast for the race and return delivery.
- Experience level of the crew to do such races.
- Experience level of the skipper.
- Night sailing skills.
- Confidence of skills through training and drills, including safety drills such as man overboard.

This is where the rule 4 in the Racing Rules of Sailing applies: it is the skipper's decision to start, continue and finish in a race.

The club may make a decision to start and run a race in forecasted average windspeeds of 25 to 30 knots. Therefore, gusts to 40 knots could be possible in places. In these conditions quite a few crews on a range of yachts will be having second thoughts. It is not a bad thing to say "I will not be starting in this race" if you think the capability and safety of you, your crew and your yacht are in doubt.

This decision is made based on all the information you have, for your own situation. This is part of making good seamanship decisions: know what your limitations are, and when not to go.

When racing a smaller yacht, you are more likely to make this decision early.

Do not rely on the club or any organising authority to make that decision for you. Sometimes the club will call a skippers meeting to discuss willingness to race. Even after one of these meetings, you still need to make your own decision as to whether to do the race or not.

This is the skipper's decision, and cannot be passed off to anyone else. By law the skipper is solely responsible for the decisions and operation of their yacht.

8 Crew Training and Qualification

8.1 Overview

Coastal and offshore sailing is quite different to harbour racing, and crews must be warned and prepared for this. Crews must be prepared for severe weather, large and confused seas, and gale force winds and above. These conditions may not appear in the forecast when you leave port.

RPNYC emphasise that proper crew preparation, planning and training is essential for any race in this championship.

8.2 Crew Practice and Training

Crew training and practice is one of the most overlooked items in club level sailing. For the Offshore Championship this is a critical aspect of preparation as offshore racing requires skills and crew work that is not often practiced in the harbour. This includes headsail changes on the wind or reaching, spinnaker or gennaker changes and peels, setting and trimming of storm sails and reefing a mainsail. This training is very beneficial to harbour racing as well.

Crews should look to set out a number of structured practice sessions during the season to practice the following skills:

- Man overboard
- Fire fighting
- Safety harnesses
- Emergency Steering
- Storm sail setting and trimming. Especially trysails if you carry one.
- Reefing a mainsail
- Headsail changing
- Spinnaker/Gennaker changing and peeling

It is recommended that the dates and the details of the above drills and practices are recorded in a log book.

8.3 Advanced Sea Survival

Co-Skippers must both have completed an Advanced Sea Survival course and provide a copy of a valid certificate of completion. Please be aware that Advanced Sea Survival certificates are only valid for five years. We recommend that you check your current certificate and make sure it will be valid for the race. If not plan to attend a course to re-certify.

RPNYC recommends that if the whole crew need to do an Advanced Sea Survival course, if possible, all crew attend the same course together. This will prompt you to talk further about safety systems, equipment and preparation for the boat. Also, what further planning, equipment and practice of safety systems are required to be race-ready.

The Advanced Sea Survival course covers the following modules:

- General
- History, Statistics and Legislation
- Accidents and Emergencies
- Equipment
- Safety and Emergency Planning
- Risk Assessment

- Man Overboard, Life rafts and Equipment
- Distress Signals and Responsibilities
- Fire Precautions and Fire Fighting
- Medical Care Aboard
- Damage Control
- Weather and Forecasting
- Heavy Weather Techniques
- Storm Sails
- Wet drills include: Life raft, Lifejacket and swimming in clothes

There are a number of providers for Advanced Sea Survival Courses. The following organisations can be contacted if you need to book a course, however we recommend the Seawise Course as being the most comprehensive.

Wellington Ocean Sports http://www.rpnyc.org.nz/wos/

Coastguard Boating Education www.boatingeducation.org.nz

Seawise Boating www.seawise.info/ **(Auckland)**

Or check for local providers in your area.

8.4 First Aid Certificate

It is recommended that at least two crew members have a first aid certificate to workplace first aid level, or Coastguard coastal medic. Both these first aid courses cover the same modules with the coastal medic being more boating focused.

Crew must be able to deal with any accident or medical emergency on board, administer first aid and look after a person for an extended period of time until professional help or medivac can assist.

During races, you do not have fast access to ambulance services, and on the longer races you may be outside helicopter range for medivac assistance for twenty-four hours or more. Therefore, the crew need to be able to support each other and manage the situation.

If actual professional medical support is required, contact Maritime radio and advise them of the situation and medical condition. They will connect you straight through to medical professionals at a hospital emergency department who can provide support and advice.

8.5 Further Help and Coaching

If you would like help with crew training contact the Wellington Ocean Sports Centre and ask about their coaching options. They can come out on your yacht and take the crew through the various skills and safety drills required for offshore sailing.

It is hoped that they will have a short course available in the future as a starting point for teaching potential offshore crew the skills required.

Skippers and crew may wish to talk to experienced skippers about what techniques and skills they use when sailing offshore. Sailors are usually very willing to talk to other sailors.

9 Crew Wanting to Sail in the Offshore Championship

9.1 Wanting to Sail

If you would like to do offshore racing but the yacht you crew on for harbour racing is not be doing the offshore championship, there are always skippers looking for crew for the offshore races.

Offshore skippers, like the harbour skippers, want some commitment to the yacht and the offshore race calendar so you need to be prepared to commit.

To get on a yacht, ask around the club which yachts are likely to be doing the offshore races. Contact the skippers and have a chat as to whether they need crew and what they would expect. Remember to also have a chat to your harbour skipper about being absent for those race days.

9.2 Crew Skills and Training

If you are new sailing and especially offshore sailing, you need to start learning the skills to become an offshore crew. Everything seems simple on land - it is different once you are on the water.

See if you can go out on a yacht doing a practice session to learn. Observe what people are doing and ask questions when appropriate.

There are numerous books and online resource that will give you the theory, but do not replace the practical experience gained by time on the water.

We are hoping that Wellington Ocean Sports will be able to offer an Offshore Crew Skills course in the future. Other courses that can help you to get a crew position on an offshore yacht are:

- Advanced Sea Survival Course
- First Aid / Coastal Medic Course – Dr Dave Austin runs an excellent one day advanced level course that currently lasts for 5 years.
- VHF radio operators' course
- Boatmaster

9.3 Crew Equipment

Additional clothing and equipment is needed for offshore racing conditions – it gets very cold at night and can get very hot during the day. Weight is also a big factor in what you will be allowed to carry on board, so think about items that will provide maximum effectiveness for minimum weight.

Staying warm and as dry as possible is the most critical thing to prepared for. You need good wet weather gear that will keep you dry and layers of thermal garments to be able to lock in warmth, especially at night time. Items such as sea boots, socks, warm gloves (worn under your sailing gloves), neck gaiters and warm hats all help.

During the day you are likely to need lighter layers and protection from the sun and the glare off the water. Items such as cap or wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen (including lip balm) are needed.

It is important to be as comfortable as possible in all conditions so that you can concentrate on making the yacht go fast and do you crew position well. At night time, once you lose body heat it is very hard to get back and you could be in danger of suffering hypothermia. The night will seem very long if you are sitting on the rail shivering. The yacht should carry a light sleeping bag for those who get very cold.

Manage your own body comfort during the race, adding or removing layers as temperature or conditions change.

Talk to your skipper and other experienced crew about what clothing and equipment works for them. Ask them what they take, as weight is an important factor. Your skipper won't be pleased if you turning up to the yacht with a very heavy gear bag!

Here is a quick list of suggested items:

- Good offshore level wet weather gear
- Sea boots and warm socks
- Merino or thermal layers: base and intermediate
- A top layer
- Sailing shorts
- T-shirt
- Hats: warm for night-time and cap or wide brimmed hat for the day
- Life Jacket with harness
- Harness tether

9.4 Seasickness

Until you've been offshore, it's hard to know how seasickness will affect you – sailors that have done many miles of harbour racing (or inter-island ferry crossings) with no issues can become severely seasick offshore.

When talking to a skipper about crewing on their yacht, they should ask about your experience and whether you've suffered seasickness or other travel or motion sickness in the past.

Seasickness is a personal issue and taking action to prevent your own seasickness is your responsibility. Prevention can start well before the race, and continue throughout – medications and other actions are discussed below. If you feel unwell at sea tell your skipper so they are aware. Take action to prevent it getting worse.

Seasickness, and the way your mind and body react to offshore conditions, is personal to you so learn what works for you and how to deal with it. It is nothing to be embarrassed about, it is a human condition that most suffer from.

*Medication*Most common pharmacy medications are a form of antihistamine, which causes drowsiness. This is the last thing you need for a race that starts on Friday night after a day at work - being drowsy won't help your crew work. This is true of the most common medication in New Zealand is Sealegs.

Check with a pharmacist whether an antihistamine-based medication is right for you. If you do use this, start taking them as recommend on the label three days before the race so you are past the drowsy side effect when the race start.

Some other medications that people commonly recommend are:

- Dramamine
- Stugeron
- Paihia Bombs (or Cook Strait Calmers, etc., all the same medication)
- Scopoderm patches: Some people swear by these, worn behind the ear. These usually do not make you drowsy but can cause a dry mouth and headaches.
- Seabands (or other wrist bands): these have a plastic bead attached to them that you align with a recommended pressure point.

There are many others – keep trying them until you find what works for you. This could be a combination of medications, e.g. a pills and a Scopoderm patch.

The cost of seasick medication is far less than the cost on the crew once you're at sea.

Other actions to prevent seasickness

- **Keep hydrated**: One of the worse things about seasickness is that it causes dehydration, so keep up your water intake

- **Eat**: If you're feeling queasy, force yourself to eat if you can as having something in your stomach can sometimes settle it a bit.

  Also, if you do vomit there is something to come out which will hurt less than if you have nothing in your stomach. And if you vomit to the point of stripping the lining off your stomach it is going to hurt for a few days. So "always put in for it comes out!"

- **Avoid going down below** if you can, particularly for long periods of time.

If you get seasick, it will harm your enjoyment of a race or a trip to sea. More seriously, it impacts the safety and performance of the yacht and the rest of the crew

The impact of one crew being seasick can't be emphasised enough.

- Seasick crew members are a liability to the running of the yacht as they cannot perform their role effectively
- A crew member that is seasick to the point of being incapacitated is a danger to the yacht and the rest of the crew. Attention and resource are diverted away from looking after the yacht to looking after the crew member
- Your skipper and crew mates may be unhappy that an issue that should have been prevented has been detrimental to their performance in the race.

If you don't manage your seasickness and you become incapacitated and seriously ill from vomiting too much, then you become the skipper's problem. They can seek medical help via radio and phone, but more immediately it can mean the administration of suppository medication if carried in the yacht's medical kit.

These races can last from six to 72 hours. If you get sick you can't get off the boat so you could be miserable for many hours.

10 Berthage and Anchoring Before or After a Race

10.1 Berthage

Berthage at the race destination is usually up to the owner/skipper to arrange. For certain races, such as Akaroa, Lyttelton and Napier, RPNYC works with the local host club to arrange temporary berthage for the fleet after the race.

- **Akaroa** is usually a limited number of moorings with yachts sometimes having to raft on a mooring.
- **Lyttelton** usually has a limited number of marina berths available.
- **Napier** also has a limited number of marina berths, with most of the fleet rafting stern-to outside the Napier Sailing Club. Deeper draft yachts will be at the commercial wharves or other places that the NSC can arrange. Napier can struggle to deal with yachts over 2.5 metres in draft, hence the commercial wharf sometimes has to be used for yachts over 3 metres in draft.
- **Nelson**, it pays to contact the Nelson Marina to arrange a berth for when you finish (phone: 03 546 7768 or e-mail: marina@nelmac.co.nz). Due to the timing close to summer holidays, RPNYC and Tasman Bay Cruising Club don't always have this organised. So, it pays to check and arrange your own where necessary. Nelson Marina also struggles to accommodate yachts over 2.5 metres in draft.

If you are travelling to another club in New Zealand for the start of a race then you will need to arrange your own berthage in the local marina.

You will also need to make your arrangements with the local marinas if you have damage that is going to take time to repair, or if you wish to stay longer after the race (e.g. for Nelson race week).

10.2 Anchoring

As most of the races in the offshore championship finish in the outer Marlborough Sounds, yachts usually need to anchor in a bay to rest and relax before returning home. The Marlborough Sounds Cruise Guide is handy to identify good anchorages.

Quite often there will be a raft up and socialising after the race. Suitable locations will be discussed depending on conditions. All boats are very welcome to come and meet up with those that have finished. You may need to get on the VHF or cell phone and confirm where the other yachts are.

When coming into a raft up, always respect the instructions of the skipper on the anchored or moored yacht. Make sure you have good fenders and lines available. The lines should preferably be nylon or polyester with some stretch in them. This will allow a better night's sleep without too much jerking. Yacht sheets have no stretch so using those to tie up causes more jerking motion on the boat and more shock loading on the fittings.

If raft up is large then other yachts may need to put an anchor out to stabilise it. You should be ready to anchor and reverse alongside a yacht in the raft up.

Raft ups can be a really fun social time after a race. It's also an opportunity to gain knowledge from others about their course choice and tactics, and seek advice on any issues you may have experienced.

11 Position Reporting, Trackers and AIS

11.1 Position Reporting

All yachts are required to make twice daily position reports by VHF radio to Maritime Radio on channel 16 or the local channel in the area.

The position report schedule is usually at 0733 hours and 1933 hours with Maritime Radio, but this can change for a race. The correct times of the position reporting schedule will be detailed in the sailing instructions for that race.

It is the skipper's responsibility to ensure they report their position at the scheduled times. This is a safety requirement for the race, so that the organising authority knows the position of each yacht in the fleet. This information is collated and shared with the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre in case there is an emergency.

The navigator or skipper usually do the position reporting scheds. There may be times when an event, such as a urgent sail change, occurs when a scheduled position report is due. It is recommended that the person delegated to do the sched not be involved in that event. If the yacht is sailing short-handed and this is not possible, do the position report before the scheduled time. If this is not possible then do it straight away after dealing with the situation on the yacht. We would rather you report late than not at all.

If you have a technical issue, try using VHF radio on channel 16 to Maritime Radio, or calling them on your cell phone if you have coverage. You can request a yacht near you to relay your position to Maritime Radio.

A penalty of 1% of your elapsed time for the race will be added to your elapsed time for that race for each and every missed scheduled position report. That can add up to quite a large penalty if you miss several reports.

RPNYC needs all skippers and crew to understand that this is a very serious safety requirement.

11.2 Trackers

RPNYC quite often use a tracking service, the Predictwind smart phone app. The race is registered to the app, and before the race start the app needs to confirm it has the link to the race and is transmitting its position.

It pays to have the smart phone plugged into the yacht's main power source as GPS location and regular text message transmissions that the tracking app uses consume quite a bit of battery. You also need to confirm that the app is working where the phone will be located inside the yacht.

When the telecommunications company you use has no coverage in the area, there will be gaps in in the track. But when there is coverage it means the race can be viewed by the race management team, and friends and family on shore.

Trackers are a race management and media/publicity device only. They are not a safety device, even though they may be available to be used in emergency situations if coverage is available. The primary safety update is the scheduled position reporting with Maritime Radio.

11.3 AIS

Automatic Identification System (AIS) is now becoming very common on coastal and offshore yachts, whether racing or cruising. RPNYC recommends installing an AIS transceiver if you can.

There are two classes of AIS:

- Class A is both satellite and VHF transmission and received by large ships and some commercial vessels.
- Class B is VHF only (therefore cheaper) and is used by recreational vessel and smaller commercial vessels.

Some RPNYC yachts already have AIS installed onboard. When installed correctly these yachts can see other vessels transmitting their AIS details on the chartplotter. This gives a visual symbol and dotted line of their track. AIS transmits a vessel's MMSI number, name, call sign, course, and speed at regular intervals. Therefore, you can see what they are doing in relation to your course and speed.

AIS has become a very handy tool for all vessels that are using it. RPNYC recommends that if you are going to install AIS that you install a full transceiver and not just a receive only unit. This means you will transmit your details as well as receive other vessels' details. Some people think this is giving away too much information, but if everyone is sending the same information it is available to all.

When racing in Cook Strait, transmitting your information allows the inter-island ferries and other shipping to see you. This can be very helpful at night or when you are getting close to Wellington Harbour entrance or Tory Channel. While the ships are supposed to give way to sail, a lot of the foreign ships do not give way to yachts in Cook Strait. This gives you another tool as well as visual to monitor the situation.

In an emergency situation Maritime Radio and the Rescue Co-Ordination Centre get a full satellite and VHF AIS feed. They can then monitor your progress in an emergency and see what other resources may be available in your vicinity to help. This can be a huge help to you.

Friends and family can also use the AIS through website such as Marine traffic and Vessel Tracker to follow your progress like the trackers. The free use of these apps relies on local VHF receiving stations. So, coverage once again can be a bit patchy. You can purchase full access to view if you want to.

12 Official Websites, Facebook and Media

12.1 Official Website

The official website for the race is the RPNYC website http://www.rpnyc.org.nz/

This website will have all race information including amendments to sailing instructions and notices to competitors. This is the online noticeboard for the race. Access to the race tracker page and the RPNYC Facebook page will also be available through this website.

12.2 Facebook

RPNYC runs its own Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/rpnyc.org.nz and updates regarding a race will be added to this page.

All competitors are welcome and encouraged to run their own social media for any race. RPNYC may request that you add a hashtag to your posts so they can be linked into our own sites so the story of the race can be told to everyone. The more photos, videos, and updates you can post, the more we can report to race followers.

12.3 Media

RPNYC will do its best to get as much media and publicity for the longer races as possible but this is not guaranteed. Press releases and reports will be distributed via sailing media and any local media outlets that we are communicating with.