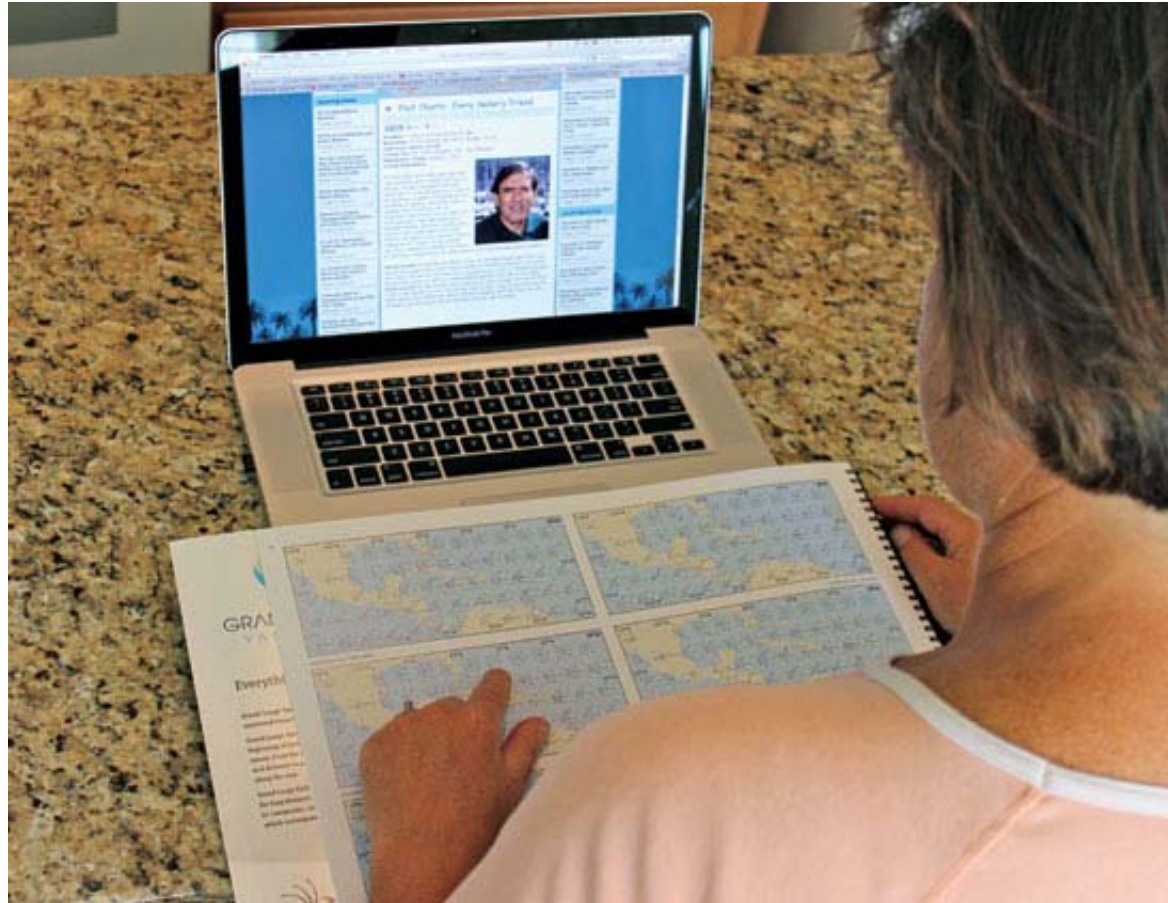


Learning Online – Back to School for Cruisers at Seven Seas U

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Terry Boram learning online how to read pilot charts with Jimmy Cornell's expert instruction via the web.

It's back to school time across the country. Where can cruisers go if they simply want to be learning online more about marine technology, arrival procedures at various islands or even how to read a pilot chart? [Seven Seas U](#), the educational branch of the [Seven Seas Cruising Association](#), covers these topics and more right from the comfort of your own living room or salon. All you need is the Internet.

SSCA members Tom and Barbara Theisen approached the SSCA in 2009 about offering learning online courses to cruisers. The concept fits well with the organization's goal of sharing cruising information and also provides a vital stream of income to help keep membership dues low. Utilizing cutting edge technology, Tom and Barb began offering webinars to members and non-members from around the world.

Early instructors included Beth Leonard and Lee Chesneau with topics ranging from Weather Forecasting to Spanish for Cruisers. No matter what the topic, the presenters are top in their field and offer firsthand knowledge for learning online. I've taken a learning online class about insuring my boat presented by Al Golden, who has been writing marine policies since 1981, and another about preparing my boat for passage by Beth Leonard who has logged more than 110,000 nautical miles.

My favorite webinar was with Kathy Parsons, Pam Wall and Gwen Hamilton presenting Women and Cruising. Once logged in for this course, I could see many participants already typing in the chat box catching up with friends from around the country. Once the class began, Kathy, Pam and Gwen opened up their microphones and a presentation appeared on the main screen.

After introductions, the ladies asked students what we wanted to have addressed for their learning online course. The chat box began humming: Sea sickness? Storms? Pirates? Night watch? The ladies each presented their views, opinions and actual experience about the requested topics. Kathy explains that women are more open about discussing their fears in a chat box. "A woman might not get up in a room and say 'I am afraid of something,' but will easily type it in a chat box, and other women will quickly respond to the first person."

As great as it is to attend a live webinar, life often gets in the way. Luckily, all learning online webinars are recorded, making them available to registered participants to watch at their convenience. SSU instructors also make themselves available via e-mail to take questions.

"People love the convenience of the recordings," Barb says. "You can watch as many times as you want (within the timeframe that they're available), you can pause to take notes, etc. Even people who attend the live webinars love that they can use the recording to review."

Jimmy Cornell, Claiborne Young and Chris Parker have recently joined the exceptional list of presenters for the fall. Courses fees range from \$10 to \$100 with a discount for SSCA members. To see schedule of upcoming learning online classes and register, visit www.sevenseasu.com.