CLASS AFLOAT
2026-2027

THE BEACON

OCTOBER
EDITION



by **Abigail P**

Welcome back to The Beacon! It's been a busy few weeks since our last issue, and we have LOTS to catch you up on!

For starters, we've officially embarked on our beautiful ships and are getting the hang of life at sea! We've been learning all things sailing, from new nautical vocabulary to mastering manoeuvres and getting familiar with the rigging. And of course, it hasn't been all work! We've had swim calls, boat races, and some pretty incredible wildlife sightings. Dolphins, whales, sunfish, jellyfish, and all kinds of seabirds have kept us company along the way.

Between spotting marine life, stargazing under some incredible night skies, and watching the sun rise and set over the ocean, there's never a dull moment out here. Our days have been packed with laughter, learning, and plenty of memories. We even got to sail through the Strait of Gibraltar, which was a pretty magical experience!

We've also had some luck with fishing, with our catches turning into delicious fresh-from-the-ocean ceviche and sushi. There have been bingo nights, card games, and Halloween activities to keep us entertained, too.

On land, our port programs have taken us on some amazing adventures, from hiking the Caminito del Rey to exploring local art museums and castles.

So, grab a seat, settle in, and enjoy this issue of *The Beacon*, filled with stories, photos, games, and a little glimpse into our adventures so far. There's lots to share, and we're only just getting started! ⚓



PORTO, PORTUGAL - By Leonore K.

On the 7th of October, we left Serra da Estrela for a day to go explore the city of Porto, where we would join our ships 9 days later. This Portuguese city is well known for its coastal sidewalks along the sea, its markets, its restaurants and its bridge over the river overlooking the whole city. You might've also heard of its library, called the Livrario Lello that inspired J.K. Rowling for the one in *Harry Potter*. Next to that library, there's the famous Majestic Café, where J.K. Rowling would go to write her books. From the Porto sign to the cable cars over the river, to the one-to-many pasteis de nata and Francesinhas we had, the day passed by very quickly.

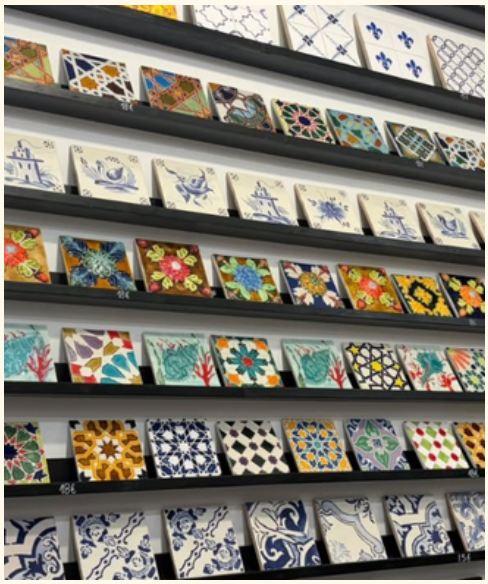




Our port program of the day was a tile-making class, illustrating the importance of showing history and art through tiles for the Portuguese. Heading back for our three-hour ride home, we were all so excited to come back.

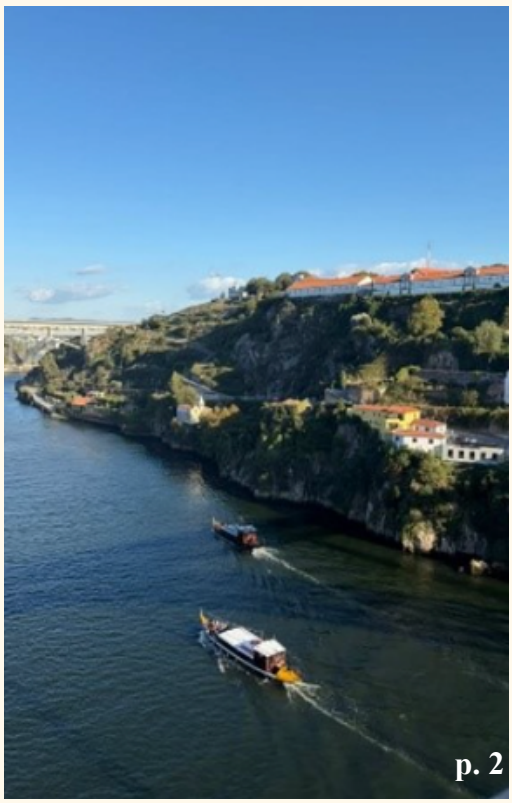


On the 16th of October, it was finally time to join our home for the rest of the trip. We headed back to Porto, eager to finally be on the sea. Before heading out into the open ocean. We were docked for 3 days, allowing us to discover the city of Porto a little more. We spent our nights exploring cafes and beaches, and doing some last-minute shopping and snack stocking for the days to come.



To finish our stay in Porto, we walked along Praia de Gondarem, a beach with a beautiful sidewalk that leads to the lighthouse of Felgueiras. We finished the night at the foot of that lighthouse, as the waves were crashing against the rocks and the fishermen were packing their rods and lines. Looking at the horizon, we were all feeling blessed by the incredible adventure that was about to begin.





SAIL TRAINING IN THE MOUNTAINS

By Sydnie D.



Reading week is a great experience on university campuses in Canada. It occurs around Thanksgiving, about six weeks into term, when the leaves start to turn yellow. Almost as if September were a false start, October announces a real beginning. Outdoor socials give way to indoor library sessions, and the work to be done is revealed by the silence that falls when classes skip their anticipated beat. In my best attempt to connect you with a relatable experience, and to include former floaties who may be reading this from their dorm rooms now, I'd say sail training here at Class Afloat had a similarly nostalgic reading-week feel to it this year.

For a month and a half, we'd been going hard at classes, no weekends and few days off, and then suddenly, when we looked up, we were sitting on top of Portugal's highest peak, *Torre*. In front of us, a gorgeous sunset spun clouds into vibrant cotton-candy pinks and blues. We knew that, following our gaze west on a crisp day, we might catch a glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean, where the sun melts into the horizon that would soon become our own.

They say the person standing on top of the mountain didn't land there, and, well, we didn't walk from Spain to Portugal; we did climb, as a community, reaching a milestone along the way. It's a moment that may go unnoticed if I don't write about it: the end of our land-based programming and the true start of an adventure beyond extraordinary.

Sail training took place between October 8 and 12, and subject classes were replaced by training sessions during which we learned about fire safety and how to respond to a person overboard. We pulled ropes, threw life rafts, and discovered what comes in a survival kit (we were all disappointed by the cracker quality). We were inspired by Irving Johnson's documentary *Around Cape Horn* and discussed at great length the things we're most looking forward to, while also acknowledging the challenges we might encounter.

Although this *Beacon* edition will rightly be wrapped in news of the excitement of embarkation day and everything that comes with adjusting to our new routines on ships, I wonder what day this year's cohort will look back on, after a year of memories collected across thousands of nautical miles and a thousand more precious moments. Will there be a time they can turn to and say, *"That's when it felt real"*? A moment when their hearts beat a little faster, and they thought, *"Is this really happening?"* Or when their heads spun, and they stressed, *"Will I be okay at this?"* And hopefully fewer will have wondered, though surely some have, *"What in the world have I signed myself up for?"*

I'd place my bet that for several students, they'll forever carry the moment they put on an immersion suit and hit the cold water, accidentally kicking each other in their best efforts to scramble their way into a life raft for the first time. There are few more uncomfortable, tense, and clammy moments one experiences in life than the sobering reality of sitting in a tight raft with strangers turned crew, realizing that what you're about to do carries a staggering amount of responsibility. If students didn't feel totally alive when they got into that raft, I guarantee they did on their way out. And what is adventure for if not pursuing exactly these kinds of mind-bending reflections? I know because it's a moment I didn't give much thought to last year while I was living it. Only in looking back, I am reminded of the icy pool in the Netherlands (October 2025), the first moment I'd really considered the realities of life at sea. Cold water to the face is in fact, that memorable.

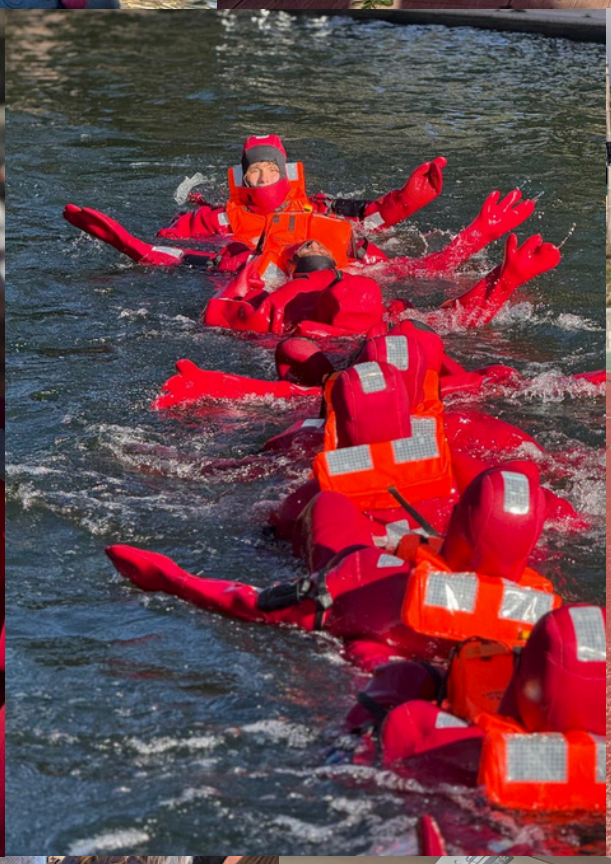
We are alive and well, and sail training left us feeling more prepared than ever. We are trained (rest assured), and confident that we will know how to act in the face of an emergency. The momentary reflection of this pause-week has come and gone, and we are back in the busy rhythm: engaged, excited, and so ready for the epic adventure ahead. Thank you to the sail trainers who made this week awesome, to Jannik, Bernt, Linda and Adam. Your efforts in kitting us up were substantial.

Bring on embarkation day!






"NEPTUNE"
ULT UNIVERSAL









THANKSGIVING

BY SOPHIA, B.

To celebrate Thanksgiving, our crew cooked up a large meal to enjoy with the floaties, teachers, and staff here at Serra da Estrela. Students had the exciting opportunity to take over the kitchen and make a Thanksgiving feast. We prepared traditional dishes that were representative of our cultures: pudding chomeur, stuffing, pasta, slow-roasted beef, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, and many more plates. The students who were not cooking spent the day decorating the mess with handmade décor, including hand-turkeys made by each student. Before the actual meal, the crew all dressed up in nice clothes and participated in a reception in the lower hall, where we had fancy mocktails and ate freshly cooked dumplings. After the reception, we ate dinner as the Class Afloat family.















During this dinner students took turns making a few speeches and enjoying each other's company. Afterwards, there was a dance party in the dungeon, with loud music and disco lights. Throughout the dance party students slowly made their way up to the football court and many of us stargazed to end a fun night. The crew are all very thankful for not only the delicious meal and fun night, but also the chance to bond as a cohesive group. This was an opportunity to appreciate our unity as a school one last time before we separated on our two boats. Thanksgiving was hard for many of the students, because it is typically a holiday celebrated with family and friends back at home. This allowed us to better appreciate the unique family we are already forming and helped us look forward to the many adventures to come.



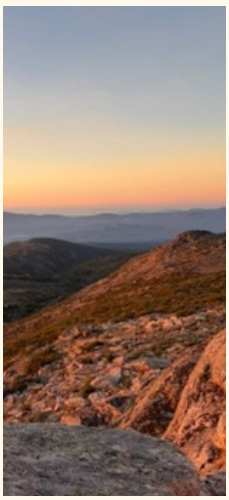
SERRA DA ESTRELA, PORTUGAL - By Leonore K.

When moving into a new home, you never really know how much you will get attached to it once it's time to move away again. This is what Serra da Estrela felt like for me. A rustic and homey ski-like chalet in the middle of nowhere, where hiking, watching the sunsets and sunrises, and stargazing are the only things on your mind.

In a span of 11 days, we really got to explore the surroundings as if we had spent a month there. Serra da Estrela is situated at a high altitude (around 2000m high), in the middle of the mountains, 3 hours east from Porto, Portugal. Therefore, numerous different hikes were possible during free time.









From the group sunrise hike we did to the sunset ones after climbing the highest rock we could find, we were all amazed by nature's beauty and capacity to bring calmness to the mind. A couple of friends and I got the chance to do an incredible hike to the observatory at night, and let me tell you, we had never experienced a hike like that.





Near our place, there is also a lake where a lot of students spent their time either fishing, skipping rocks, lying on the highest rocks we could find, or laughing at the loud echo of our voices there.

The observatory is one of the highest points we could reach from where we were staying. We arrived for sunset, made our own little stone pile at the top, and headed back down with our headlamps. I don't know how we managed to do it, but we did a 2h30 hike in 1h30 to get back on time for check-in. It was one of the best hikes we've done there.





From the cafés down the hill to going to the city of Covilhã to the intense football games, we will all remember this place as our last home before sea. What an incredible chance we had to be there for the span of two weeks.





During our time in Serra da Estrela, all students and teachers participated in a game called:

ASSASIN

Similar to Senior Assassin, the goal is to eliminate your designated target with a specific action and place. Once your target is eliminated, you take the target of the person you eliminated, until the clock runs out. Therefore, whether we were in class, eating meals or going to cafes, the friendships and trust built were tested by the harsh kills that took place. What a way to have fun altogether before separating in our two boats!

BY LÉONORE K.













SUNSET HIKE

BY LÉONORE K.



For the evening of the 4th of October, everyone left together for a sunset hike that would become a core memory for many, as it was the first big hike of the trip. Everyone was running through the rocky fields and climbing the highest rock to be seen. Instead of following a GPS, we made our way to the viewpoint by finding and following piles of rocks left behind by other hikers for others to follow. Being united by the beauty and silence of nature was definitely worth the effort.

The Sublime:
The feeling of absolute overflowing of joy that overwhelms one's soul…



ART!

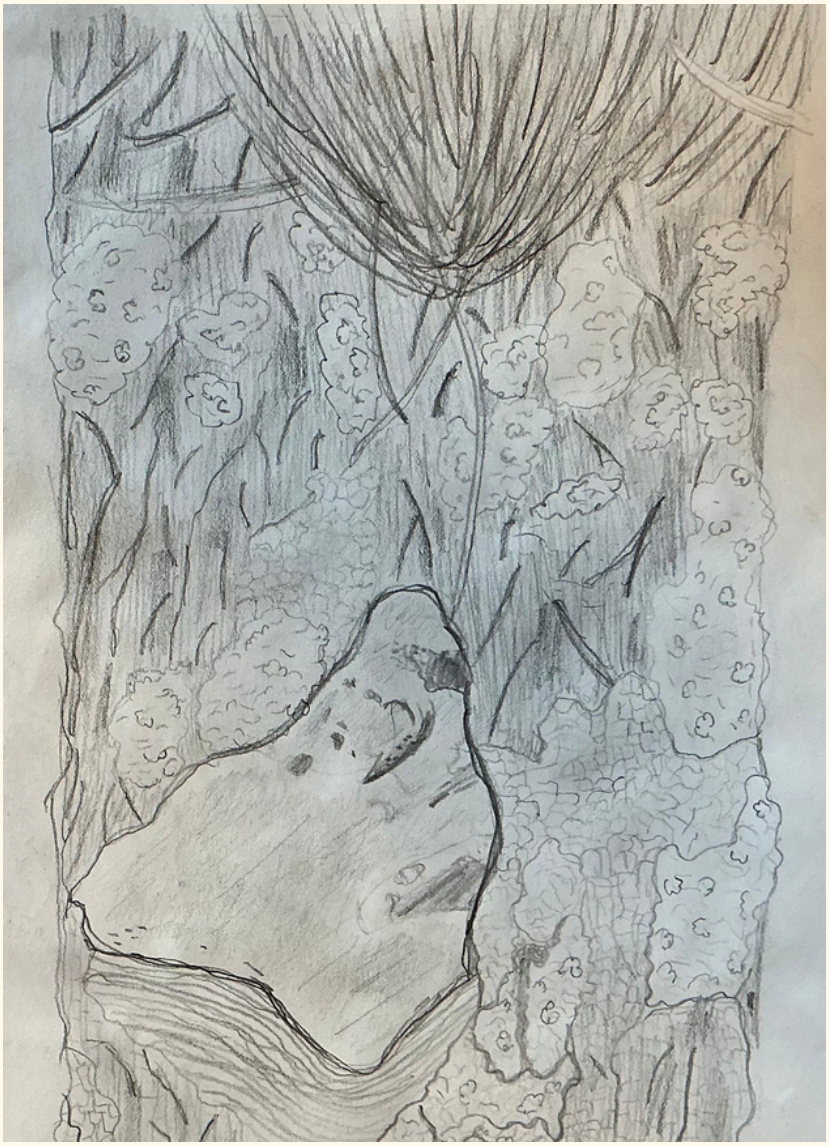
By Beatrice R.

Over the past month, art students of Class Afloat have been focusing on observational art. They have been developing skills for realistic drawing by paying attention to detail and textures in the natural environment. In Portugal, at Serra da Estrela, art students drew scenes from a small park featuring a stream with a bridge arching over it.

Art credits: Ona, Angelo, Regina & Sammy





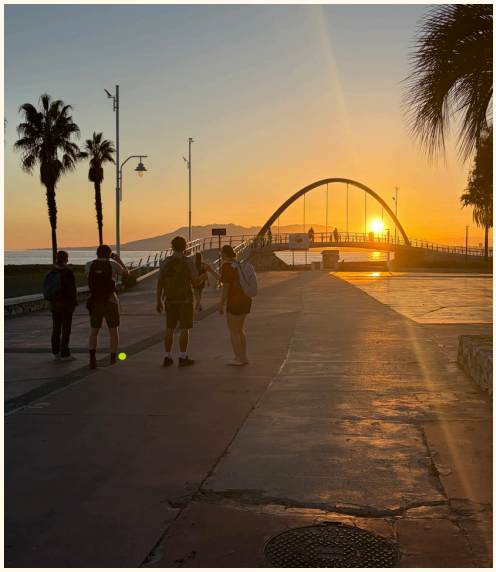




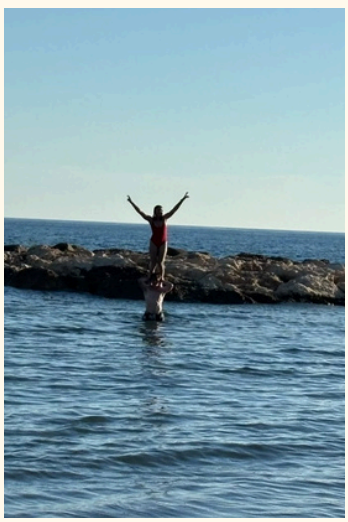
MALAGA, SPAIN

- By Leonore K.

Arriving at the port of Malaga was such a special moment for our crew. After our first time being at sea, seeing the land we were about to explore was quite exciting. While we were mooring, we were impressed by how many yachts and prestigious boats were docked there. Shortly after, we were released from our duties and enjoyed our first evening shore leave. The port of Malaga is known for its lively walkways with numerous outdoor artisanal shops, popular brands and restaurants. From petal ice cream to the arcade center, to the rooftop restaurants, there was so much to discover right outside of the port!



The next day, the 29th of October, was the port program. We were either part of the Caminito del Rey hike, the Alcazaba of Malaga tour, or the exploration of the art of Jorge Rando. We then had the rest of the day to explore the city, and the next day as well. While many spent their time exploring the city center, where there were shops, cultural and historic sites such as the Roman theatre and the music museum, street dancing and restaurants, others spent their days at the beach. Malaga is in fact known for its different beaches with quite interesting names (El Dedo, El Palo… Spanish speakers will understand). Some of us played sports near the sea, and others climbed rocks and found coastal restaurants to enjoy views of the sun setting over the water. Overall, Malaga was an incredible city to explore. Except for the docking situation, where the Alex was docked right next to us but a 30-minute walk away because of a closed gate separating the two crews, we were all pleased by this first port experience that allowed us to reunite with our Alex friends and share the stories of our first adventure at sea.









A little about Caminito del Rey…
Known for being one of the most dangerous hikes back in the ‘70s due to its lack of maintenance, it was rebuilt in 2014, with the help of alpinists. It was therefore a very safe hike compared to what it was back in the 1900s. An interesting fact about this path is that the old one was built by sailors, who knew their way around ropes and rigging. Also, the hike was named the Path of the King because of the time the King once crossed a section of it. Even though it was created for the dam workers who crossed that path thousands of times to quickly cross from one side of the cliff to the other to keep the dam in good working order, the name of the trail shows the importance of social classes and monarchy in Spanish culture.

HALLOWEEN

BY LÉONORE K.

Our last night in port at Malaga was the 31st of October. For the occasion, student council decorated the Blue Clipper's mess for Halloween, Natalia made us some pumpkin pie for snack time, and we all got changed into our costumes for the night. Tate and Emma, our student leaders on the Blue Clipper, organized a costume contest for the evening. We all laughed together as we paraded up and down the mess in our homemade costumes. We ended the night watching a movie, ready to leave Malaga to sail to Agadir, Morocco for the next few days.







EMBARKATION DAY & FIRST SAIL

BY LÉONORE K.

On the 16th of October, we left Serra da Estrela for a five-hour bus ride to Porto, the port where our homes were already waiting for us. After imagining the boats for weeks, months, or even years for some of us, seeing them in real life was surreal. We'd never been on them yet, but we already felt a sense of homecoming. Walking onto the boats, it felt like a hole in our lives, a missing piece we'd always suspected, was finally filled. The size of our small Blue Clipper, hidden behind the impressive Alexander Von Humboldt-II, was quite amusing. However, that little boat holds a precious sense of home and comfort with its caramel wooden interior and forest-green couches. After unpacking our numerous bags in our rooms and making ourselves comfortable, the maritime crew and our Class Afloat crew introduced ourselves to one another, getting to know each other before embarking on this long adventure together. We spent the next 3 days preparing for our first sail between Porto and Malaga. Just like that, 18 passionate students, 3 determined teachers, our beloved cook Natalia and 5 experienced sailors became the family of 27 that we get to spend our time with for the next few months.









Our first sail from Porto to Malaga was quite the adventure. The first few days, some of us suffered from seasickness, whether it was simple tiredness or throwing up overboard with our buckets close to us. What a fun way to start the journey! After 2 or 3 days however, everyone seemed to have conquered it and could finally focus on our sailing experience. We got the chance to have 2 swim calls, where we were all delighted to jump off the bowsprit into the sea. Mark caught a fish so big it fed the boat for 2 whole meals! We quickly learned some of the basics of sailing, like the main 5 knots we use, the names of the sails and some ropes, how to change direction (gybe or tack), how to take the helm and how to plot our position on the chart when we fill up the logbook. Adjusting to our night watches was quite hard at first, but we quickly started seeing the benefits of it, like the silence that the sea brings in the dark (except Oli's and Declan's sea shanties occasionally) and the countless stars that are prettier than any skies we've seen before. On the Blue Clipper, we have an excellent chef who makes us the most wonderful food each day, adding to the incredible experience that sailing has been for us. One night, while anchored, the teachers took over our watches so that we could enjoy a movie night together (we watched *Surf's Up*). After only 8 days of sailing, the Blue Clipper had become more than a boat for us: it became our home far away from home.



THE VOYAGE "IRV" By Sydnie D.

We embarked on the Blue Clipper in Porto, Portugal, on October 16th. Our journey to Malaga, Spain, was ten days, double what was needed to get there, so that we could get some good training on smooth seas. We had northwesterly winds, which on a Schooner means we were running and had to gybe several times. On this voyage, we navigated through the Strait of Gibraltar, the only natural link between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and one of the world's busiest waterways.

Several of us had a rough start on this sail, the simple stuff expected from our bodies adjusting to living on a ship. We experienced seasickness, and a few caught a gastro bug, but we all powered through. Our cook Natalia took excellent care of us, and we were nursed back to full energy in no time. By the time we'd reached the rock, we'd turned over a new leaf.

Once on the Med, we were met with dozens of pods of dolphins, splashing all about. First mate Ollie estimates 200. We anchored just off the coast of Marbella and got our first jumps off the bowsprit into warmish waters and the most picturesque sunsets we've ever seen. We also had a full moon on October 26th that illuminated the night sky for several nights on either side. I couldn't paint a more beautiful setting.

After watching the movie *Around Cape Horn* at sail training week in Portugal, we're carrying over a tradition that DSST member Adam D. began last year - awarding one crew member per passage the title of the "Irv" of the voyage. If you haven't seen this film, I encourage you to do so, as Irving Johnson was an extraordinary seaman. This is a character award, given to the crew member with a community-driven spirit and a love of sailing.


THE
IRVING JOHNSON
AWARD

This certifies that

Mark Lewis

has been recognized as the crew member who most embodies the spirit, character, and seamanship of an "Irving."

Congratulations on being awarded the *Irving Johnson Award*.

For the voyage from Porto, Portugal, to Málaga, Spain.

Your dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to your shipmates and the vessel have distinguished you as a true young Irv. Throughout the voyage, you have demonstrated the seamanship, humility, and spirit that embody the very heart of this award.

Your presence has strengthened the crew, uplifted morale, and set an example worthy of recognition.

Well done, and well deserved.

Presented on the 1st of November 2026

by the Blue Clipper Faculty Crew

For this sail, we recognize Mark Lewis, not only for catching a massive tuna that fed us all the freshest ceviche we've ever had in our lives (see p.14), but also for his patience in teaching us all how to tie different types of knots, for his eagerness and willingness to jump in whenever needed, and his overall stellar attitude towards sailing and the program. Well deserved, Irv! (Mark!)



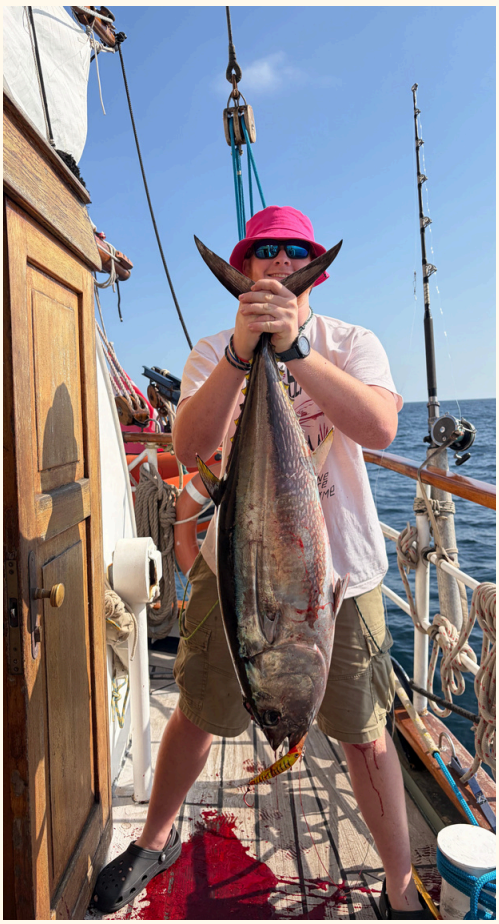
CATCH OF THE SAIL

Welcome to the fishing page! We have a few dedicated fishing club members, and we've been lucky to enjoy some of their catch on our last few sails.



Fisherman: Mark Lewis
Catch: Bigeye tuna
Weight: ≈30 lbs
Vessel: Blue Clipper
Date: 21st of October
Location: Somewhere off the coast of Portugal
Lure used: Purple Squid
Comments: Delicious ceviche feed, thanks, Mark!





Fisherman: Mark Lewis
Catch: Bluefin tuna
Weight: ≈37 lbs
Vessel: Blue Clipper
Date: 1st of November
Location: ≈13 miles inside the Strait of Gibraltar
Lure used: Diver lure (photographed)
Comments: We think this fish would sell for $400- $800 USD on the market! What a dinner we had!

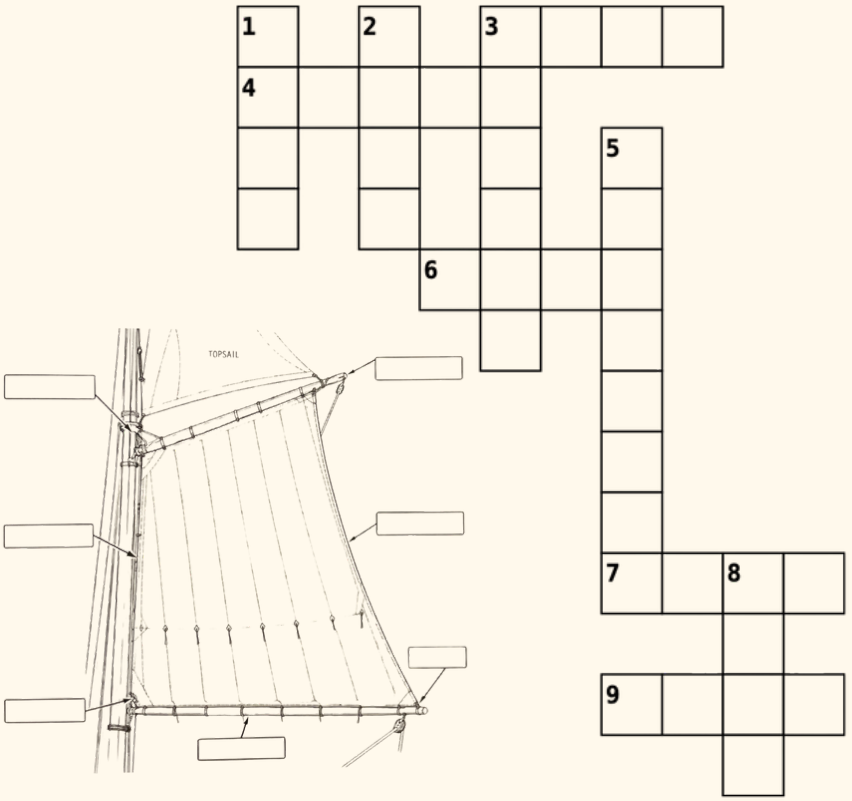






CROSSWORD

by Sydnie D., Oli E., & Eleanore R.



Across

3. The lower windward corner of a sail. Also a maneuver. (*A pushpin.)

4. The aftermost edge of the sail. (Also a water slug.)

6. The spar along the headrope of the sail. (*Used in fishing and in cinema.)

7. The foremost edge of the sail. (*The pronunciation of the word "love" by a two-year-old.)

9. The spar along the foot. (*In Zoe's catchphrase "Ka-_____"!)

Down

1. The bottom corner of a sail furthest from the wind. (*A synonym for "hint".)

2. The highest corner of a gaff sail. Gives its name to a halyard. (*The top of a mountain.)

3. The top corner of a gaff sail closest to the mast. It also gives its name to a halyard. (*A body part.)

5. A fore-and-aft rig sail with a wooden spar along its head.

8. The bottommost edge of the sail. (*What you put in a boot.)

SUDOKU

Easy

	2	5	3	7				9
			6				8	2
8		6	5			3		
1	4				9	7		
	9		8		5		6	
		2	1				4	8
		4			3	1		5
9	7				1			
5				2	6	4	3	

Medium

3			6		9			7
			7	4			1	6
	8			1			6	
	9	7		6		2	3	
	2			8			5	
4	6			9	2			
9			8		1			5

Hard

	4						9	
		6	1		8	7		
9				2				5
	1	4		9		3	7	
		8				4		
	3						4	
	6	1				9	8	
7		9		4		2		1

Expert

				2	7		4	
7			6			1		
	6		1	5				
1						7	5	
8		4				6		2
	7	9						4
				6	9		2	
		8			1			3
	4		2	3				

Evil

9		3	1		6	8		5
1	4		5		3		6	7
		2	3		4	1		
	6						8	
		4				6		
8		7				3		2
			8		7			
	5						9	

WORD SEARCH

Ocean Vehicles

U X P M A J B H U K X O E H B N D U P Z K S C J
Y I D P X S A I R C R A F T C A R R I E R Z J M
O G A I C E B R E A K E R F B G D W Z J B X I T
P J L F R I G A T E T E V H G P F K M C U S W I
A Z O V U T K X M T H C A Y G N I C A R Q G B B
D L I S X N N Z O G H Y D R E M M A J D N I W O
D P L C F G Z N W L I E K E T C H B R C E M C N
L K T C D D H C E V Q R G Y M K E B S P D Y T W
E C A K J V W H N S N W L W I F V I I E H Y Q A
S P N N G D K I X I G M L I F W E H S K M F Y S
T J K B I L O N G S H I P Y O L S T H T G K Q X
E M E K E M J B H J X B J T B E R O C B D V B B
A O R S W D W Y T M Z J G Z S O V A N L I J A C
M X C E M D D M I T Q S P I Y E R H Y E G T Y W
E C I E H T M B Z I M Z U E R G Q C Q Z T C S M
R H Y T A O B G U T J R R C O A G I R L J J U J
I K U B M N T F N F C J R S X A W C E U F X M P
L U N H I I L I B F W A H R A X A S M M I I X O
X L B X W U T I P R F I C M E Y H M U N U S O P
B T I E H Z V Y N T P I R Y O I K C V T D D E S
P S U B M A R I N E I Q F R P I U B B A T Q A R
D W M D N N X R Y D R P K W V V M X H L X G W W
F Y G A P D U R B C Q V N B D R D T M B Q K L I
M P L N S S T A O B E F I L H K R S H D S A U W

Aircraft Carrier	Paddle Steamer	Racing Yacht	Cruise Ship
Ocean Liner	Battleship	Cargo Ship	Hovercraft
Icebreaker	Oil Tanker	Windjammer	Destroyer
Submarine	Lifeboat	Longship	Cruiser
Frigate	Oil Rig	Tugboat	Ketch



WORD SCRAMBLE

AGPEDUUAL _____

ITPODRSE _____

WBSPROTI _____

OAFEREPK _____

BCAO DEEVR _____

ELLAYG _____

DOTBRSRAA _____

RYLHSDAA _____

TFERENEI _____

LSYZJCAAK _____

ATCINTLA CSGORNSI _____

NOSCOHER _____

SUAEMINR _____

GUESS THAT COUNTRY



happy birthday!



2ND CARTER D.

8TH LINDSAY W.

20TH JORDAN C.

23RD SAMMY S.

27TH KIRIN K.D.



