

Board-Sailing: Thrills and Spills

Crests and troughs are the ups and downs of those who choose to venture upon the waters in search of fun and excitement. Unlike the mountaineer who tries his skill upon a predetermined and permanently sculpted mountain face, the sailor pits his nautical wits against an unpredictable and undulating surface; an ever-changing and uncharted waterscape where the skill of the navigator is tested by every nuance of its tides and temperament. It is probably that very element of uncertainty that makes sailing the most exciting of sports and pastimes. Messing about in boats is one of the great challenges in which man can seek to overcome nature's might. It is, if you like, a hand to hand affair without too many technological aids.

Messing about in boats can be enormously expensive in initial outlay. A yacht of any appreciable size can run into many thousands of pounds and even the most modest of sailing dinghies is not cheap. It is, or rather it was until recently, the preserve of the privileged 'few'.

The advent of board-sailing, a sport which first reached these shores around 1975, has brought waterborne excitement within the reach of 'the man in the street'.

To mere spectator, boardsailing appears to be the most perilous of pursuits. The sailor, perched upon a slender board with sail attached, steers the craft across the sea by means of changing the angle of the sail in relation to the wind. It sounds easy, but there's a good deal of acquired skill involved.

I first encountered these maritime cavaliers when out for my Sunday morning constitutional in south County Dublin. The climatic conditions that prevail in Ireland make its coastline and its loughs ideal for boardsailing. Wind and water are the essential ingredients and we have plenty of both to satisfy the needs of the most accomplished boardsailor.

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