



SAILABILITY and BLIND SAILING

Blind Sailing New Zealand and several 'Sailability' organisations maintain independence as non-profit organizations around New Zealand to reflect the specific demand for specialist sailing groups for people with all types of disability.



SAILABILITY

The word 'Sailability' is an identity that some groups choose to adopt to make them known as an inclusive organization. Sailability is a global movement aimed at making the sport accessible for all, and takes a different shape at each sailing club or stand alone group that offers specialist sailing opportunities for disabled people. Sailability programmes around New Zealand provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to learn to sail, take part in racing, or just to experience being on a sailing boat.

As of early 2018, there are 10 Sailability groups/programmes in New Zealand: Sailability Northland, Sailability Auckland, Sailability Rotorua, Sailability Waikato, Sailability Tauranga, Sailability Hawkes Bay, Sailability Taranaki, Sailability Wanganui, Sailability Wellington and Sailability Nelson.

There is a handful other sailing clubs that offer inclusive programmes and adaptive equipment (without taking the name Sailability).

Commonly used equipment by Sailability groups/programmes include a C-Crane for helping to lift people in and out of boats and adaptive boats such as those made by Hansa with a weighted centreboard to prevent capsize.

Disabled people who sail with Sailability groups that take part in racing are also members of sailing clubs, and race at many of the same regattas with the exact same rules as all other sailors in New Zealand.



BLIND SAILING

Vision impaired and blind people in New Zealand have been given sailing tuition and access to racing through Blind Sailing New Zealand (BSNZ) since the 1980's.

BSNZ is most active in the central and upper North Island, both competitively and socially. Groups sail regularly in Auckland (with the Auckland Blind Sailing Club), Rotorua, Tauranga, Taranaki, Wanganui and the Bay of Islands.

Most frequently, visually impaired people sail keel boats in the 20 - 35ft range with limited assistance from sighted crew; however, BSNZ is increasingly working closer with Sailability groups and yacht clubs to foster sailing skills in dinghies before progressing to keelers.

There are two racing formats for Blind Sailors:

Fleet Racing: Sailors race in teams of four, where two visually impaired crew act as helm and mainsheet, and the sighted helpers act as jib trimmers and tactician. A series of races are held over a period of days with many boats on the start line concurrently.

Most years, there is a National Championship organized by Blind Sailing New Zealand, often in the Farr MRX or J24 classes. New Zealand has a rich world championship trophy success in Blind Fleet Racing, and was particularly proud to be host for the 2009 World Championships in March 2009 at Rotorua.

Match Racing: Sailors race in teams of three, where all three visually impaired crew work together to manage all aspects of the race as guided by audio buoys and indicators on the boats to judge distance and angles.

Contact details for these groups can be found on the YNZ website.