

Boat Dog Wanted

Dog breeds that make good sailing companions.

By September Morn

Q. I'm looking for a good sailing dog. I do not currently own a boat, but in a few years I hope to purchase a cruising sailboat. I'm a dog lover, and when I set sail around the world I'd like to bring a dog with me. Do you have any suggestions?

A. What an exciting adventure you have planned! Several breeds of dogs had original purposes that included working aboard boats. These include the Labrador Retriever, Newfoundland, and Portuguese Water Dog. These breeds historically assisted fishermen with nets and fetched items that fell overboard -- including fishermen. The Keeshond guarded barges and rid them of rats. There are also toy breeds whose main mission in life is to stay close to their special people. Some of these breeds could also make good nautical buddies.

All these dogs have different looks and personalities, so you decide what qualities you seek in a canine companion and let that guide your selection.

Whatever dog you choose, you'll need to teach him to use a litter box or other on-board doggie toilet, as you'll be far from land on much of your journey and he will need to relieve himself. Also, be sure to teach him to swim wearing a floatation jacket. Any time a dog is on board, he should be wearing his floatation jacket.

This will be a long journey, so teach your dog some tricks to while away those placid hours at sea. Tricks are fun entertainment for both dogs and humans, and a great way to exercise your dog's mind and body, to keep him fit and well behaved onboard.