

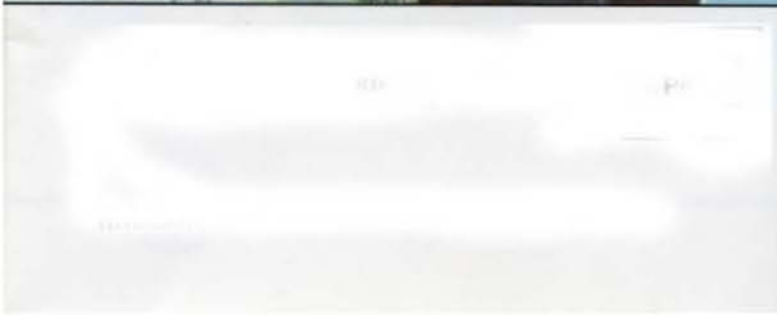
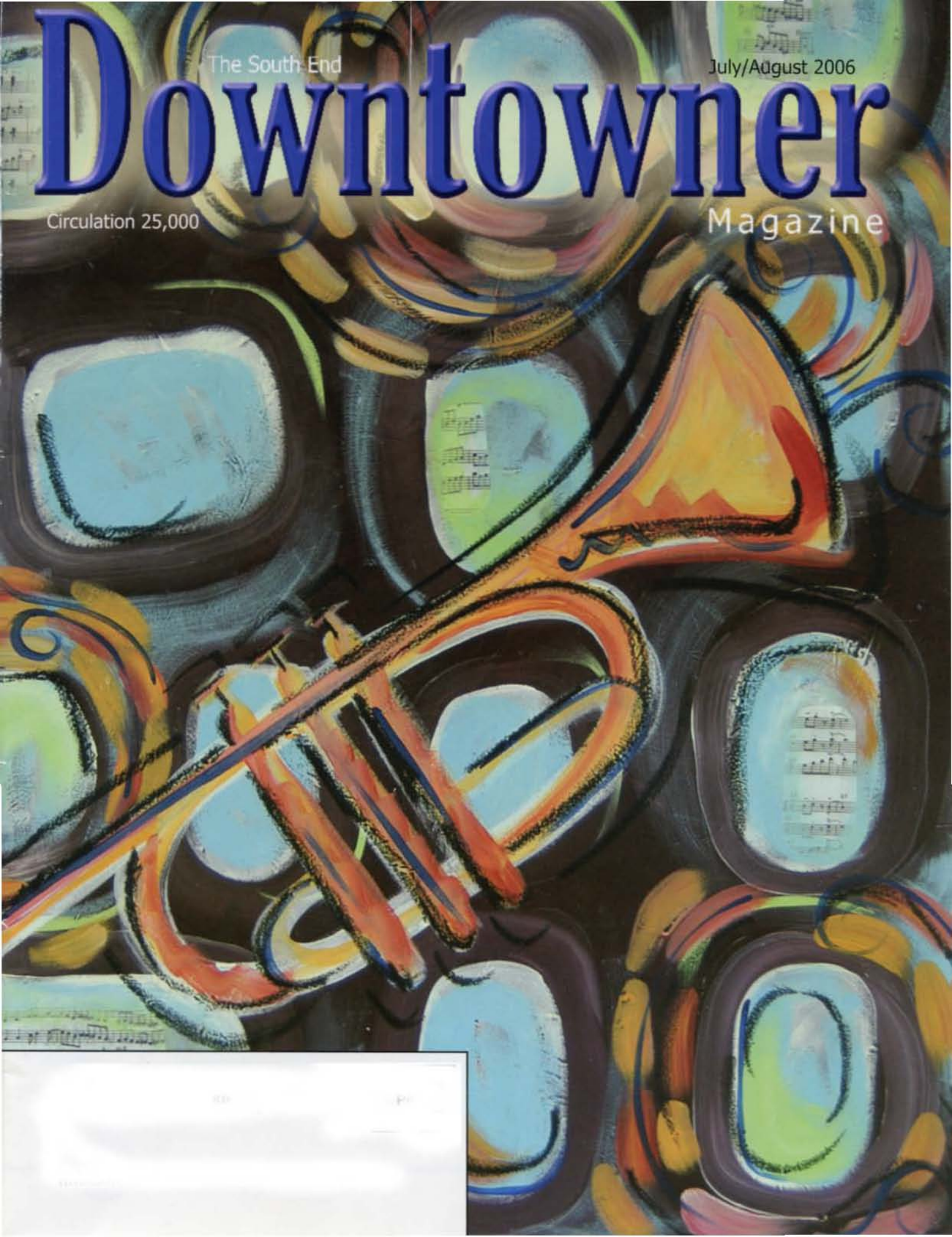
The South End

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# Catch the Wind

By Michelle Hurni



A Sun Sail 36-ft Beneteau sailing downwind, wing on wing. Photo: Chris Titmarsh.

Just picture the wind blowing through your hair, the only sound the wind filling the sail as you sit on the deck of a sleek sailboat cutting through the deep blue water like butter.

Sailing in Colorado is an activity that can take you away from the crowded beaches and onto the cool mountain waters of the local lakes and reservoirs. Over sixteen Colorado lakes and reservoirs offer full service marinas where sailboats can be rented for a day, or boat slips can be rented seasonally if you have your own sailboat. The high mountain lakes have a sailing season from May through October, but closer to Denver, the mild weather allows for sailing year-around.

## Becoming a Sailor

Most marinas require a certification, or proof of sailing ability, before they'll allow rental of their sailboats, but that education is easy to obtain. There are several American

Sailing Association (ASA) certified schools in Colorado that offer the opportunity to become a competent sailor in a short period of time. Locally, Cherry Creek Marina and Sandcastles Sailing offer beginning to advanced ASA classes. As a beginner sailor, Basic Keelboat is the first class to take to gain basic skills such



Swimming with a native in Seychelles. Photo: Hurni collection

as boat terminology, safety regulations and knot skills. After the classroom training, the sailing sessions take place over two days, where you will gain first hand experience in boat preparation, crew

duties, using commands, tacking, jibbing, safety skills, motoring and mooring. The class takes just one weekend and usually costs around \$250.

## Sailing

With a Basic Keelboat certification in hand, it's just a matter of finding a place to sail and suddenly days at work become a countdown to the next time you cast off the lines and raise the sails.

In order to get the most from your sailing experience, especially when just starting out, wide open spaces and few motor boats and jet skis are key. A few good sailing lakes in the area are Cherry Creek Reservoir (Aurora), Dillon Reservoir (Frisco), and Carter Lake (Larimer County, near Berthoud). Cherry Creek Marina rents small sailboats, from Sunfish to a J-22 by the hour (\$17-\$30) or a full day (\$50-\$200). On the largest of the three lakes, the 9,000-ft high Dillon

Reservoir, Dillon Marina and Windrider of the Rockies (Frisco Marina) rent 18 to 23-ft sailboats in 2 hour (\$80-\$120) and 4 hour (\$110 -\$165) increments. Carter Lake is just north of Denver and one of the nicest mountain sailing lakes in the state. Sandcastle Sailing rents a 22-ft Santana sailboat on Carter Lake by the day (\$100/day).

## Going the Distance

Once bitten by the sailing bug, it's only a matter of time before bareboat sailing becomes a dream. The bareboat sailing concept is simple: a major company rents you a boat, then you sail and stay aboard the boat for a week or more. A few more advanced classes are needed to be able to charter a larger boat in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, or farther abroad. Basic Coastal Cruising is the next weekend certification, and usually required by chartering companies such as Sun Sail ([sunsail.com](http://sunsail.com)) and the Moorings ([moorings.com](http://moorings.com)). Before heading out, charter outfits give a detailed chart briefing of local customs and hazards. If it's your first time chartering, or if you don't want to do everything yourself, a captain and cook are available for an extra fee.

The British Virgin Islands (BVI) are only a few hours by plane from Colorado to the main island of Tortola. Once there, the BVI provide world class sailing and plenty of chartering companies to choose from. One to two weeks make for a perfect sailing holiday, just make sure you pick your sailing partners wisely, as the quarters on a monohull sailboat can seem small. In BVI, the winds are consistent, the sailing is line of sight from island to island, and there are plenty of mooring balls to be tied into safely for the night. It's a perfect first time chartering destination. One of the big draws to the BVI are the famous beachfront bars, including the Soggy Dollar, Foxy's, and now Foxy's Taboo. Sandy Cay (pronounced "key") is a lonesome dot of sand just of

Jost Van Dyke, with a single palm tree, only accessible by boat. The Baths are a natural formation of rocks and tidal pools on Virgin Gorda. Where ever you end up in the BVI, the water is warm and clear, the snorkeling and diving is colorful and there is always another magnificent beach around the corner.

For the truly adventurous, on the other side of the world are the Seychelles. Four hundred miles off the east coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean lay yet another sailing paradise, with 115 islands to hop between. Slipping into island time, it's easy to let the days go by lazing around a beach or snorkeling with turtles, but the beauty of Seychelles is the location. It's a world away, just south of the equator, where you might have a bay to yourself, or share it with one or two other boats.

Sailing opens up your world to new and unique destinations, and it can all start with a lake in Colorado.

## Local Resources:

Cherry Creek Marina  
[Cherrycreekmarina.com](http://Cherrycreekmarina.com)  
303/779-6144

Sandcastles Sailing  
[Sandcastlesailing.com](http://Sandcastlesailing.com)  
303/423-5469

Lake Dillon Sailing School  
[Dillonmarina.com](http://Dillonmarina.com)  
970/468-5100

Windrider of the Rockies  
[Windrider.us](http://Windrider.us)  
970/390-4327

### Author Bio:

Michelle Hurni began sailing on a Hobie catamaran in the early 90s and has since sailed extensively on bareboats in the Caribbean. Her most recent adventure was on a 36-ft Beneteau in Seychelles. Her home lake in Colorado is Carter Lake.