



Wolfgang Bierer

Anchors Aweigh

The open sea holds opportunities for both adrenalin-fueled adventure and tranquil contemplation for one Club Member.

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Four years ago, Wolfgang Bierer met an eager, inquisitive young financial adviser at a social event.

"He wouldn't stop bombarding me with questions," Bierer recalls. "At one point, [I said], 'Leave me alone!' 'But what's your dream?' the young man stuttered. '\$1.5 million in 10 years and you make the plan for it, because then I want to buy a catamaran,' [I answered]."

The next day, Bierer received a phone call from the man's boss about an upcoming event hosted by the Tokyo Sailing and Power Squadron. There, he was introduced to a co-owner of a boat who was looking to sell his share. "He invited me for a test sail," Bierer says. A couple of weeks later, they closed the deal.

"It's not a catamaran, it's a trimaran, and it's not worth 1.4 million, but

it's still nice," he says of *Gone with the Wind*, a 27-foot (8-meter) trimaran that's around 25 years old.

A seasoned windsurfer, he credits his father with igniting his passion for sailing when he was 12 years old. "My father used to go to this lake just to sit and watch the windsurfers out on the water. One day, he came home with one of those early windsurfing boards. It was 5 meters long, you almost needed a license for it," he says with a laugh. "That's when I got the bug."

While at university in his native Germany, Bierer spent many weekends in the south of France, where he tackled the more challenging waters of the Mediterranean, rather than Germany's northern coast. "People do sail there, but it's really cold," says the 47-year-old, sitting on his moored boat at Tokyo's Yumenoshima Marina one Friday afternoon.

In contrast, Japan's milder climate makes sailing possible all year-round. "In the warmer seasons, I try to go sailing at least twice a month with my family," he says. "In the wintertime, I go out with the other sailors. We have proper Neoprene winter gear and waterproof jackets."

For Bierer, the salty spray and white-capped waves of the open sea are synonymous with adventure. "Our boat has an extension for the rudder, so I can sit out on the net, on the high side, and fly over the water," he says. "Sometimes, near Tokyo Bay, you see fish jumping on our net. It's a lot of fun."

There is also a meditative aspect to sailing that appeals to Bierer, who is a member of the English-friendly Tokyo Sailing and Power Squadron and who recently joined Sailability Tokyo, a nonprofit that promotes sailing to the public.

"I love the total relaxation. Out on the ocean, there's no mobile coverage, so we don't get bothered with that," he says. "I just love that it's powered by natural forces and the fact that you hear nothing but the wind and the waves splashing against the boat."

Annabelle Landry is a Tokyo-based freelance journalist.