

JET SKI SAFARI

Spicer visits the Jurassic coast in Poole with guided PW rental operation Jetski Safaris . . .



Based in the stunning Poole harbour, Jetski Safaris offers people the chance to ride personal watercraft for the first time. Or second, third, or 36th for that matter, as “we get a lot of repeat customers,” says Ross Ceaton, owner of the business.

Launched last year, Jetski Safaris has been doing very well considering the financial and meteorological climate. They had two people booked in on the afternoon that I visited, and Ross told me, “I have got a group tomorrow morning, and another in the afternoon.” Apparently, it is also very popular with

Stag and Hen parties, which would make sense considering the centre’s close proximity to Bournemouth.

Arriving at Salterns with my friend Howes, who had never ridden a PW before, we were greeted by Ross and James – two friendly young guys with an outgoing attitude and a sense of humour. Opening up the Jetski Safaris van, there was a rack of wetsuits and buoyancy aids for us to choose from. Howes wasted no time in getting changed, as he was itching to get out on the water. With us were Mark Moisley and his son Joe, from York, who were also excited to go riding for the first time. It was Joe’s 14th birthday and he was grinning from ear to ear. What a birthday present.

Jetski Safaris can accommodate people as young as 14-years-old, as long as they are accompanied by an adult. It is one of the only centres in the country that permits youngsters to ride, and works on the proviso that an instructor is on the water with clients at all times, and that children between 14 and 17-years-old are accompanied by an adult (18-years or over). And before you ask, yes, both Ross and James are qualified RYA instructors for personal watercraft, as well as powerboats, and have a thorough approach to training.

Ross Ceaton, owner of Jetski Safaris



craft with the jet of water. Regulations within Poole Harbour were also covered, including the 10-knot speed limit within the harbour, and the need to pass other vessels to the right. James was attentive and happy to answer any questions that the group had.

Launching the three runabouts from the dock, James got each craft in the water, getting Howes on first, followed by Mark and Joe on the next ski, and finally himself. Giving them instruction and checking that they were all comfortable, they started the craft and idled slowly out of Salterns. They use Sea-Doo GTIs, which are 130hp, and nice and stable so perfect for new riders. Ross said: "They're great. I haven't had any problems with them in two seasons and they have enough power to put a smile on everyone's face."

Ross and James work closely with Emily at Offshore Performance, and both send business each other's way. Ross said: "A lot of customers want to buy a ski when they finish with us and, more often than not, they will go to Offshore and buy a GTI, as that is the ski they have learnt on and they usually want to continue their experience. Likewise if somebody is keen to try jet skiing for the first time, Emily will send them over to us. It works well." Offshore also service all of Jetski Safaris' craft on a regular basis, which is good to know.

Once the trio of sit-downs had exited Salterns, James gathered the group in a quiet area and instructed them to drive slowly in a straight line to a red buoy ahead, turn round and then come back again. Mark and Joe went first but must have thought he meant another buoy, as they went a little too far! But within a matter of minutes it was clear that everybody was comfortable and in control, so after a couple of more turns, we headed on to the jet ski area with the beautiful Brownsea Island as a backdrop.

The jet ski zone is a relatively large buoyed area within the harbour, where skis are permitted to ride above the



They also run RYA PW Proficiency courses at the centre, on a very frequent basis.

Down at the marina, James ran through the basics of how to control a PW. He explained how a pump works and the need to accelerate in order to steer the



Mark, Joe, Howes, James and Ross



Riding past the RNLI headquarters



Chopping it up in Poole Harbour



Getting radical on safari



James gives on-water instruction

JET SKI SAFARI



Old Harry Rocks

usual 10-knot limit, so Mark (with Joe on the back) and Howes practiced turning at speed and overall control of their craft. Each Jetski Safari lasts approximately one and a half hours on the water, which is a good amount of time to get used to the handling and power of a PW.

While they were practicing, I had a good chat with Ross. Originally from South East London, he has always been involved in watersports and sailing since he was a kid. After university, Ross worked as an investment banker for a year but desperately wanted to get out of an office, so fled to Greece to pursue his true passion. He worked there as a sailing instructor, embracing the sunshine and marine life. Then, three years ago he moved to Poole where he gained his RYA qualifications for powerboat, sailing and PW instruction, and worked at The Watersports Academy across the bay. Ross is a keen wakeboarder and kite surfer, and used to teach both.

Both Ross and James have an ardent passion for watersports. James used to be part of the British Wakeboarding Team, and is also heavily involved in Thundercat, having competed in the British race series, and racing being crowned European Thundercat Champion (P750S Class) in

2008. He said: "I miss the sea if I'm away from it for more than a day." He is also a massive fan of jet skiing, and explains: "I used to have a Superjet but I sold it and have been regretting it ever since. I was just starting to pull barrel rolls but I had to sell it at the time. But now I have decided I'm going to buy a motocross bike and a Superjet. No reason not to really!"

It was time to move out of Poole harbour and see some coastline. We passed Harry Redknapp's mansion and, nextdoor, Louise and Jamie Redknapp's more modern and equally large house on the waterfront. Idling on, we passed the chain ferry that goes across to Shell Bay, which was recently included in a Top 10 Beaches in the World feature in the Guardian newspaper. Heading out of the harbour, keeping clear of sail and power boats in the harbour, we then put the power on and went for a good solid blast.

Riding past a Condor Ferries ship, it really put the size of our PW into perspective but, giving it plenty of room, we cruised on towards Old Harry Rocks. Directly east of Studland and north of Swanage, the towering stacks of chalk and granite are an impressive natural landmark – similar to the Needles off the Isle of Wight. It is a beautiful area, so we stayed there for the bulk of our time on the water.

After an hour or so, it was time to head back. On the return journey, birthday boy Joe took the controls and was having the time of his life – getting up some real speed and quickly turning the Sea-Doo left and right, while poor Dad hung on the back for dear life! Likewise, I took the controls and gave Howes a taste of being a passenger.

Back on dry land, we thanked Ross and James, and then Howes, Mark, Joe and I stopped for a cold beer (and one cold Coke!) outside at the Salterns Marina bar. The sun was shining and, as we watched the boats come in and out - including a Walls boat that was selling ice cream to boaters - it actually felt like summer. Smiles on everyone's faces gave a good impression of the day we had, but what did the guys make of Jetski Safaris?

Mark said: "It was fantastic. It's great the fact that you can get on with minimum instruction and just do it. You don't have to have a really long lesson, and then you can ride for ages. I think it's good value for money." And did he feel safe? "I felt



Ice cream anyone?



The Jurassic coast is stunning



Jump around!

in control, although not when I was a passenger with Joe driving! But the tuition was really good."

Howes said: "My preconceptions were that jet skis weren't going to be that fun, but they are! It was amazing. The thing that took me back was just how fast they go. It was insane! And the guys were really nice. Very helpful and informative, and the training was more than adequate. There were times where it was choppy and I thought I might fall off, and it is quite demanding on your arms, but I loved it. I only wish that I had longer!"

JETSKI SAFARI PRICES

Weekend/Bank Holiday

£85 per person for one person per PW (group size 1 - 3 people)
£65 per person for two people per PW (group size 2 - 6 people)

Weekday rates

£75 per person for one person per PW (group size 1 - 3 people)
£55 per person for two people per PW (group size 2 - 6 people)

Group / Family Rates

For groups of 6 or more people or families email info@jetskisafaris.co.uk for further details.

RYA PW Training Course

£130 per person.



Joe enjoys his 14th birthday jet skiing with dad Mark