

These FAQs apply only to BIG BOAT

We have three types of boats:

- [BIG BOAT](#) – This is our 36-passenger party boat. This FAQ is specifically for our Yachts.
- Yachts ([46ft Luxury](#) and [40ft Premium](#)): These are power boats that have very large areas (foredecks) at the front of the boat (bow), and very large areas (cockpits) in the rear (stern) of the boat.
- [Sailboats](#): These are our 39' sailboats with very large cockpits, and nice sized foredecks. This type of boat is a classic Chicago experience.

- How many people can we bring on board?

On BIG BOAT, 36 is the maximum number of passengers.

- Is there a captain on board?

Yes, there is always a licensed captain on board, as well as a crew member.

- Where do we cruise?

Your captain will set a course based on your preferences and the conditions of the day to give you the most enjoyable cruise. Shoreline cruises and anchoring in [South Monroe](#) or [The Playpen](#) are popular choices.

- Do you have a bathroom on board?

All of our boats have bathrooms (a.k.a. “marine heads”).

- Can your boats tie up to or raft to other boats?

No, not under any circumstances.

- Can we bring food and drinks?

Yes, and we suggest the more simple you keep it, the more you will enjoy your charter. Things you can eat with one hand like sandwiches, fruit, bite-size things, are the easiest to manage on a boat. Please avoid red wine and glass bottles (except for white wine and champagne bottles).

- Is it ok to bring alcohol?

Yes, alcohol in moderation is fine. Please avoid red wine. Please avoid glass bottles. White wine and champagne bottles are kept down below for you for safety.

- How does billing work?

We take a deposit of 15% when you make a reservation and charge the same credit card the remaining balance 60 days prior to the charter.

- Do you sell bar / alcohol packages?

Yes, we have optional beverage packages, but you are free to BYO if you prefer.

- Do you offer catering?

We can guide you to several caterers on Navy Pier that are conveniently located for your charter with us on Big Boat. We do not have any business arrangements with those vendors and are not responsible for their service or provisions in any way, we are only making the introduction.

- What kind of shoes are best to wear?

Light colored, soft-soled, non-marking shoes like deck shoes or top-siders are best to wear. Gym shoes that do not have dark colors (black, blue, red) in the sole are best. High heels are not allowed. Please don't wear shoes such as loafers, which have hard soles, which are slippery on boats. Sandals such as TEVAs are normally perfect. Don't worry, if you show up with shoes that are not OK, your captain will work it out with you.

- What should we bring with us, and what should we avoid bringing?

In addition to the map included in your confirmation email, some good suggestions are: simple food and drinks, sun screen, maybe a hat and sunglasses, and possibly some extra clothing (even when it is 75° on shore, it can feel cool on the lake with a breeze). We bottled water, paper plates, forks, knives spoons, cups, napkins, cooler space, tin foil, ice, etc. that you will need.

Please AVOID red wines or any other dark staining liquid like grape or cranberry juices, etc., glass of any kind above deck (except white wine and champagne bottles which we will keep below for you), hard sole, dark sole, or marking shoes, metal rivets or buttons on the backside of pants (they damage the finish on the boats), and illegal substances.

- What about seasickness?

We find it uncommon except in people who are prone to motion sickness. If you are worried about it, you may want to take one of the over-the-counter medications suitable for you (please read the directions and speak to your doctor) WELL BEFORE boarding. You must take it well before your charter to be effective. If you are prone to motion or sea sickness, you might find it best to avoid boats in general.

- Should we still show up at the harbor if the forecast is for rain or it is raining on our way to the harbor?

Yes, please show up on time unless your captain contacts you to do otherwise. We will use the current and predictive radar, as well as the marine forecast to determine if we will go out. While the weather forecast may say there is a high chance of rain (even on an hourly basis), this is very broad and may not affect the time of your charter or the area where we may travel. So if your charter is at 9am and it stops raining at 9:45am, and looks like it will stay clear, we must consider 9:45am the start of the charter. There are no refunds for a charter for which you do not show.

- Do you go out in the rain?

Charters will go out in the rain (feel free to take cover in the large covered area if you choose), but not persistent electrical storms. We will not begin a charter during an electrical storm, or if we

believe that such approaching conditions will be unavoidable during a charter by altering course or returning to harbor. Please see our detailed weather policy in the [terms](#).

- Will you shorten or delay our charter if conditions are bad?

In some instances, charters may be delayed for up to 1 hour at most before departure. Shortened charters are not common, but we will do so for comfort and safety if the situation dictates. Charter fees are prorated for trips which are shortened by your captain. Please see our detailed weather policy in the [terms](#) for more specifics.

- Will you or the harbor give us a refund for parking if we are rained out?

No, parking is not refundable. If you arrive a long time prior to your charter and it is raining, we suggest that you stay in your car and wait to pay the parking fee. This way the captain has a bit more time to contact you in case he is making a charter time decision to delay or cancel your charter.

- What if there are big waves?

Waves do not typically affect BIG BOAT charters since we are harbored at Navy Pier Marina which is behind the offshore break wall. Waves are broken on the wall before they get to the charter area.

- What if there is a small craft advisory?

A small craft advisory can be very misleading. For example, a 22 knot West wind can cause large waves 3 miles offshore, but almost no waves in the first couple miles – and you will be well within a mile from shore or less, and behind the offshore break wall. We use current conditions and predictive radar, coupled with marine and local forecasts, instead of obscure non-specific small craft advisories.

- What if I don't want to go out on the water unless it is my ideal weather and lake conditions?
Please wait until the day before to book, and make sure you are 100% happy with the forecast. Even then, the forecast may be wrong, and you may not get the conditions you are seeking. There may not be availability, and it may not be possible to get a captain with such short notice, but that is the only way to be confident that the forecast meets your criteria.

- How do I make a reservation?

Please go to our [Book Now](#) page or call us at 773-236-7245.

- What if I want to change or cancel my reservation?

You can check available dates/times online or call us. Please call if you need to cancel or change your reservation (or if you are considering it). Please note that if you are rescheduling or cancelling a charter, change fees will apply as specified within the [terms](#). Higher fees apply for specials events dates. The further in advance you make a change or cancellation, the lower any applicable fee will be.

- Do I need to bring my confirmation email to the charter?

We would really like you to bring the map that came with the email so that you do not end up in the wrong area (which may lead to delayed departure and a shorter charter).

- How do I contact my captain?

You will receive a text providing the captain's cell number for the day about 60-90 minutes before your charter. Prior to that, please contact the office with all questions.

- When should we arrive for our charter?

Please arrive at the meeting point at least 15 minutes before your charter time. Your captain will meet you there a couple minutes prior to your charter. If you can, we strongly suggest arriving earlier in case you hit any delays along the way. If you arrive early, please let your captain know you are there, and if possible, you can begin your charter early. You can also enjoy a walk along the beautiful shoreline if you are early.

- How do we get to the harbor?

There will be a map and directions in your confirmation email. Do NOT simply put our name into a search engine or map app, as we have three locations.

- Where should we park?

Please use the directions included in your confirmation for parking.

- If we take a cab, where should we be dropped off and how do we get a cab when we leave?

Please use the directions included in your confirmation for ride drops.

- Where do we meet for our charter?

Please meet at the spot indicated on the map included in your confirmation email.

- What if we are late for our charter?

Please contact your captain if you think you are going to be late. Of course, your captain will wait for you if you are late but will still have to return to the dock at the scheduled time. To completely avoid this issue, we suggest that you plan to arrive well in advance of your charter, and plan for traffic delays and time to park. Even if you are there 45 minutes early you can enjoy a walk along the shoreline, or along the harbor wall. Please be warned that drinking alcohol on Chicago public spaces is illegal, so you will want to wait until you board to enjoy a cocktail. There are no discounts or refunds for charters shortened due to late arrivals.

- What if I miss my charter due to circumstances I cannot control?

Unfortunately, since we will have already reserved your boat and staff for you, we will still have to charge you the full cost of charter if you are not able to make it for whatever reason. If you give us some advance notice, lower change fees than the no show 100% charge may apply.

- Can we go swimming?

During daylight hours, if the conditions are determined to be safe by your captain, you can go swimming. Please let your captain know in advance that you wish to go swimming so he can plan for it. If there are any children, one person over 18 will have to be in the water with each person under 18.

- Are children allowed on our charter?

Of course. We do like to talk to you about the ages and the number of children so both you and we know what to expect and have the correct size and number of child life jackets on board. We also need to make sure that there is a reasonable number of adults for the number of children on board. This will depend on the number and age of the children, and the type of charter.

- Can we smoke on board?

There is no smoking on any of our boats. Ash generating smoking and use of cannabis products is not allowed. E-cig/vaping is allowed in areas designated by your captain at appropriate times.

- Can I bring my pet or service animal on board?

Sorry, no animals are allowed.

- Is tipping customary?

BIG BOAT charters have a standard gratuity included in all pricing. Should you feel that your captain and crew did a fantastic job, feel free to show them your appreciation with any extra gratuity that you wish.