Job profile: Merchant Marine Deck Officer

Read the text and answer the questions.

A. What is the work like?

Merchant marine deck officers work aboard container vessels, bulk carriers, tankers, cruise liners and ferries. They help to manage a ship's navigation, crew and cargo. They also look after passengers on ships and take part in onboard social events.

As a deck officer, you would work at one of four levels, depending on your experience:

- **Master (Captain)**: you would have full responsibility for the overall running and safety of the ship, crew (ratings), passengers and cargo. You would handle legal and commercial matters and keep all the ship's records up to date.
- **Chief Officer**: you would assist the Master and oversee deck operations and maintenance, cargo handling and storage. You would also manage work schedules and supervise other officers.
- **Second Officer**: you would be responsible for navigation, using radar, satellite and computer systems. You would also monitor the vessel's position, speed, direction and weather reports, and carry out watch duties at sea and in port.
- **Third Officer**: this would usually be your first post after training, dealing with the ship's safety equipment and lifeboats. You would assist the Second Officer and carry out watch duties.

B. What salary and other benefits can I expect?

- Cadet trainees' salaries are around €1,000 per month of service.
- Qualified junior deck officers earn between €3,500 and €4,500 a month.
- Experienced officers earn from €6,000 to over €8,000, depending on rank.
  Your employer would pay for food and accommodation whilst at sea, and for some travel costs when onshore..

C. What are the hours and working conditions?

Merchant Navy vessels operate around the clock and you would work shifts, known as "watches" that vary according to the size of your ship. On a larger vessel, you would work four hours on duty followed by eight hours off.

Your time at sea could vary from a few days or weeks to several months. Periods of leave between voyages would also vary.

You would work on deck, below deck and on the bridge, in all weather conditions.

D. What skills and knowledge do I need?

- a confident approach and the ability to inspire confidence in others.
- an interest and understanding of the latest vessel technology.
- the ability to cope with being away from home for long periods of time.
- good teamworking skills.
- excellent maths skills for navigational calculations.
- good spoken and written communication skills.
- the ability to deal with emergencies in a calm and controlled manner.
- enthusiasm and self-belief.

E. What opportunities are there?

According to economic forecasts, there will be a considerable increase in seaborne trade over the coming years.

You could find both onshore and offshore positions with shipping companies, port authorities, maritime insurance companies and shipping brokers.

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1. Which is NOT a vessel onboard which a merchant marine deck officer would work?
a) cruiser b) bulk carrier c) minesweeper d) tanker
2. Which officers carry out watch duties?
a) the Master b) the Chief Officer c) the Second Officer d) the Third Officer
3. Who is the most inexperienced deck officer?
a) the Master b) the Chief Officer c) the Second Officer d) the Third Officer
4. Which officer decides who will have which watch?
a) the Master b) the Chief Officer c) the Second Officer d) the Third Officer
5. Which officer has to keep track of the ship's course?
a) the Master b) the Chief Officer c) the Second Officer d) the Third Officer
6. Which of the following is the salary a Chief Officer might earn?
a) €1,000 a month b) € 3,000 a month c) €4,000 a month d) €6,000 a month
7. How many hours in a 24-hour day would you have to work on a larger vessel?
a) four b) eight c) twelve d) sixteen
8. To be a good deck officer, you need to be good at:
a) History b) Maths c) Religious Education d) Music
9. The shipping industry is expected to _____ in the coming years.
a) grow b) be replaced by airborne trade c) stay the same d) decrease
10. If you become a deck officer, you will have to work on board a ship for the rest of your career. TRUE / FALSE