

The perfect wind

To the editor: Sailors, true sailors, know how to grab their moments. A mere 10 knots of wind guarantees them swiftly casting off the lines or, for the truly skilled, stylishly sailing off the anchor to go out and play in the light breeze. Strengthening winds don't faze them and they will happily glide along, heeled over so far that you can see more keel than deck, in a sea frothing with white horses only to later remark nonchalantly at the local bar that it was "a little fresh out there today."

Cruisers are, by and large, not as cool as sailors. We're dreadfully fair-weather, really. We reef early and sail cautiously. We sail for comfort, particularly with little ones on board. And, we make that crucial error of having a rough plan or direction that we hope with all our might the weather will comply with. Quickly "nipping out" for a daysail if the conditions are favorable is a daunting prospect when you're tied up in a marina with countless boat projects strewn across your main saloon, or secure at anchor with a hefty amount of chain out and two snubbers on.

Having said all that, we do sail as much as possible

and try to let the wind do a lot of deciding for us. And, of course, the forecast that gives you the idea to go out may well not be what you encounter out on the water. Coastal sailing in particular often sees us dealing with unexpected wind in our faces rather than at our backs. "Why is it upwind every time?" I lament as we adjust our sail plan and our ideas yet again. Even trade winds are not quite the constant creatures that we imagine them to be. Our cruising of the south coast of Cuba from east to west seemed to give us nothing but upwind passages when we imagined gorgeous downwind trades

carrying us along. Journeying westward along the South Pacific's "Coconut Milk Run" often had us tackling bizarre westerly winds that would hold us in harbor for days.

Even without using the autopilot and before we installed our Hydrovane, we could merrily fly on, perfectly balanced upwind without touching the helm if the conditions were right. I remember a passage we did across the Caribbean Sea that was meant to be a four- or five-day stretch downwind. However, the forecast proved wrong and it turned into nine days of tacking upwind. But we didn't mind a bit; the

**Jess Lloyd-
Mostyn's sloop
Adamastor in a
groove.**



Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

conditions were lovely, the wind strength was just right and, with the boat balanced and content, we were able to enjoy the extra time. I think I read four books on that journey!

The wind is a rather fickle mis-

tress. And even when you do get it in the right direction, the strength can be frustratingly fluky. It's not really surprising when the ideal amount of breeze is really only between about 12 and 18 knots.


Sure, we're happy to sail in far more than that, well reefed and even slightly depowered if needed for comfort, romping along in 30. And yes, if we really have to, we might pop the engine on for a short passage in far less. But the most relaxing, luxurious and enjoyable sailing for us has to be when we can have our whole main and headsail out, maybe even slinging up our staysail on the inner forestay to run as a cutter. And, for this boat, laden with the stuff of cruising life, that state can only really happen in that narrow 6-knot margin that roughly relates to a force 4.

It's hilarious how stubborn James and I can get about trying to squeeze every last scrap of a knot of speed out of a dying wind. We've been known to put up bits of extra sprayhood or even an awning to help try to carry us along before succumbing to using the engine. After all, in a vessel that trips along at around 5 knots on a good day, it's not as if we're in a hurry.

Just like those true sailors, we cruisers will still seek out and aim for that idyllic sail, sometimes as more of an ultimate goal than even the destination. Because maybe, just maybe, if the weather gods are smiling and you do manage to get the perfect wind, then the magic of the boat, canvas and crew all happily doing what they want to is an exceptional prize to be won. No matter how elusive a prize it actually is.


—Jess Lloyd-Mostyn lives aboard the *Crossbow* 42 *Adamastor* with husband James, daughter Rocket, son Indigo and daughter Autumn.


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'Remote' is a relative term

To the editor: Great Barrier Island, New Zealand, is only 50 to 60 nautical miles offshore of Auckland — a dense and populated place by most standards — yet the island truly feels a world apart from that big city. In little Port FitzRoy in Great Barrier Island's northwest quadrant, aboard



Rich Ian-Frese

Left, Rich and Cat Ian-Frese's Tayana 37 Anna. Below, Port FitzRoy on New Zealand's Great Barrier Island.

Anna, our Tayana 37, we were the only yacht in sight.

Great Barrier Island has no grid power. The few people that live here utilize solar energy and wind turbines backed up by portable generators to handle their electrical demands. They also catch rainwater. Marine mussel farms are scattered around the harbor. There is a ferry that runs once a week from the mainland carrying cargo and people. The roads for the most part are rough, unpaved, winding and steep graded with the exception of the narrow sealed tar road that connects the south end of the island with the north. There is a cell tower here that manages, somehow, to supply remarkable (albeit low-bandwidth) mobile, roaming, voice and data connectivity, which is how we download weather data at our

anchorage. The outer anchorages near Port FitzRoy are satisfyingly isolated, if not exactly remote.

Remote, as we have come to understand it, is a relative term that we reserve now for places that we can identify only by a coordinate set, hundreds or perhaps thousands of miles out to sea — days or weeks, a month or possibly more, from any inkling of civilization. A place where, for us, Anna slips stealthily

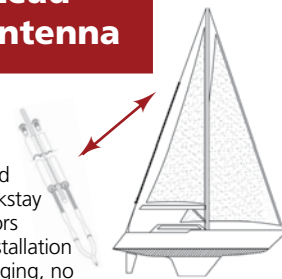


through moving mountains of waves and ocean current, rising to the peaks to catch the steady breeze and fleeting gusts, and settling in the deeper troughs for a few seconds of calmness before repeating the cycle, as day folds into the blackness of night, and night into increasingly more luminescence as early morning materializes. ■

—Rich Ian-Frese, a retired research engineer, lives aboard Anna with his wife, Cat.

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— Sail Magazine

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