

DE-SALTING

LIVING ABOARD FULL-TIME
EVEN THE SIMPLEST OF TASKS
LIKE HAVING

THE SAILORS'

MEANS THAT SOMETIMES
ISN'T STRAIGHTFORWARD.
A SHOWER.

By Jessica Lloyd-Mostyn



Unlike many other boats, we don't have a watermaker on board, so the fresh water that we do carry is a precious, finite amount stored in tanks. We have two separate heads, each with an extendable hose-type tap at the sink, but they're not wet rooms, so you can't actually shower off inside. Friends in the fleet have much better bathroom setups on board, but our only decent dedicated shower is at the sugar-scoop stern, which allows you to wave to your audience of neighbors at anchor while going about your ablutions. It sounds bizarre when mentioned to

folks on land, but you get used to these idiosyncrasies when cruising.

Our sailing route has been mostly in the tropics, but even some of the fanciest marinas we've tied up in only offer cold water in their washrooms. In the blistering heat of the Mexican midday sun, that coolness is a welcome

respite before you are forced to leave the air-conditioned sanctum of the amenities and return to the boat. However, during our time in New Zealand, you wouldn't shower in cold water even in the height of summer, so we saved our two-dollar coins for the few meager minutes of hot water the marina provided in the slot-machine showers.

Our preference to live at anchor means being a bit more creative with opportunities for good showers. Some dinghy docks include the use of washing cubicles, others have an arrangement with a nearby hotel. There are countless stories of grubby looking sailors sneaking into resorts to use their facilities on the sly, emerging all gleaming and fresh twenty minutes later, but walking briskly with a security guard on their tail. We've dabbled in that, but I would rather a tad more relaxation and a little less high-octane drama to my bathing. And, of course, you can always jump into the sea

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for a dip and a wash and then sluice off at the stern.

In Bora Bora, we asked a dive shop if we could use the showers where they flush down their wetsuits; in Morocco, someone kindly lent us their garden hose; whilst in Costa Rica we lathered up at the beach showers that people use for rinsing off the sand. You grow pretty savvy to spotting chances to get clean (and less embarrassed about taking them). Occasionally you can stumble across a swimming pool where you can make use of the facilities. Motoring into an anchorage means that there will be some engine-heated water available



to use once you've dropped the hook and are settled, a real luxury. We've even had people hand over the keys to a house while members of their extended family were out of town in order for us to have a good scrub. Are we projecting an image of filthy sea dogs, I wonder?

An even more opportunistic way of grabbing a good wash is when it rains, which it does in the tropics—a lot. A torrential downpour is like pennies from heaven for us. We collect the rain in buckets, using tarpaulins to direct it, and the children can play happily with a water container for hours at a time. We dance about on deck with



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shampoo suds frothing in our hair. A really heavy shower even turns our dinghy into a bathtub. How extravagant our yacht is in Fiji with it's own external bath!

And there are times when the context of the water that's available makes it a treat. When we arrived in French Polynesia, after 26 days at sea, I rowed ashore and walked to a small building where there was a fruit stand. Just in front of this was a kind of open compartment of three walls made of concrete block, with a metal pipe sticking out at head height. The water was cold, the day was hot, and the novelty of feeling fresh and clean and sparkling again after becoming increasingly grimy during our passage transformed that humble setup into the most fabulous shower I could



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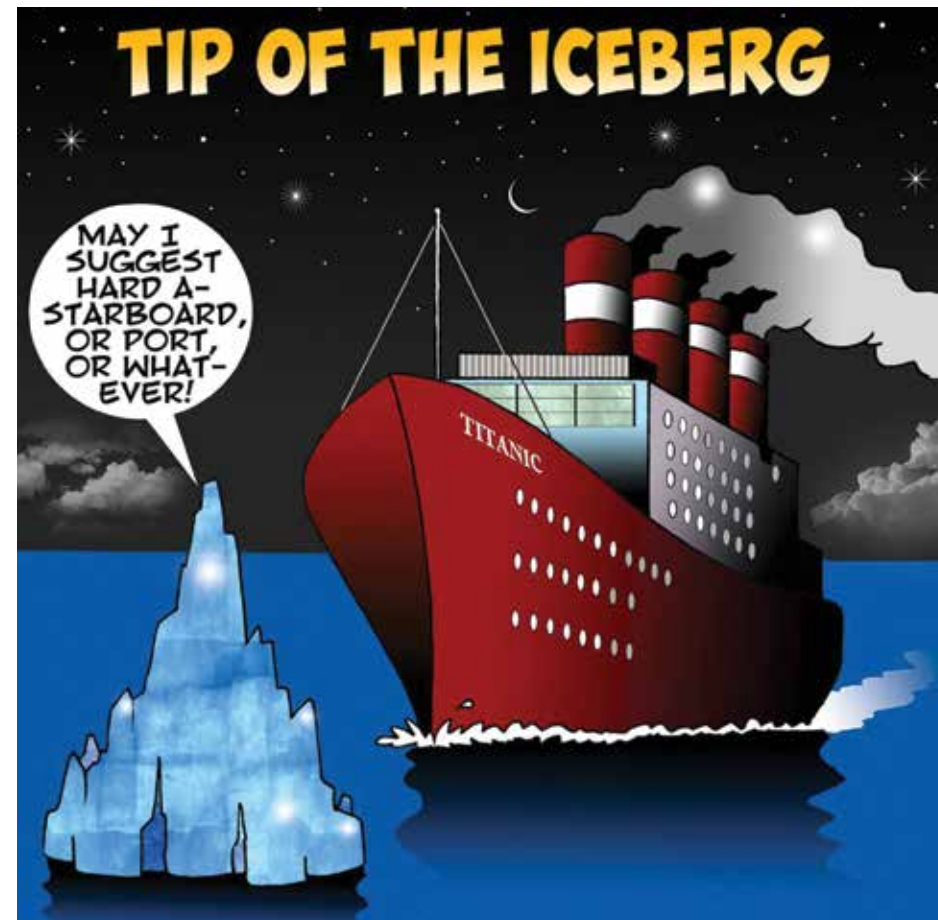
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have wished for. Who cared if the whole mooring field could see me in my bikini—I was clean at last!

Sometimes the appreciation of the little things makes you realize how unusual boat life is. Hot running water probably doesn't seem that special to you, unless you have a chance to stop taking it for granted. Once you've collected it, heated it, or put aside your coins for a scarce four minutes of it, grabbing a quick shower becomes much more magical than turning on a tap. 🚤



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