

# Blue note

When you live aboard full-time you find even the simplest tasks tricky. Like having a shower, says Jess Lloyd Mostyn

Unlike many other boats, we don't have a watermaker on board so the fresh water that we 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 but our only dedicated decent shower is at the sugar-scoop stern, which allows you to wave to your audience of neighbours at anchor while going about your ablutions. It sounds bizarre when mentioned to folks on land but you get used to these idiosyncrasies of cruising.

Our sailing route has been mostly in the tropics and even some of the fanciest marinas we've tied up in only offer cold water in their washrooms. At midday in the blistering Mexican heat 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 save our two-dollar coins for the few meagre minutes of hot water the marina provides in the shower slot machines.

We prefer to live at anchor and that means being a bit more creative with opportunities for good showers. Some dinghy docks include use of washing cubicles, others have an arrangement with a nearby hotel. There are countless stories of grubby sailors sneaking into resorts to use their facilities on the sly, emerging all gleaming and fresh 20 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 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; while in Costa Rica we lathered up at the beach showers that people use for rinsing off the sand. You grow pretty savvy



**'OUR ONLY DECENT SHOWER IS AT THE STERN, WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO WAVE TO YOUR AUDIENCE AT ANCHOR'**



**JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN**

Jess and boyfriend James decided to buy a boat in 2010. Four months later they set off on a trip that has so far taken them as far as New Zealand in their Crossbow 42.

about 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 and 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 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 its own external bath!

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 blocks, 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 again after slowly becoming increasingly grimy on passage, transformed that humble setup into the most fabulous shower I could 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 realise 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 have collected it, heated it or put aside your coins for a scarce few minutes of it, grabbing a quick shower becomes much more magical than turning on a tap.