

What's in a name?

When it comes to choosing your boat's name, it is well worth putting plenty of thought into it, as **Jess Lloyd-Mostyn** notes

Once you've been cruising for a while you develop a shorthand, referring to every couple or family aboard by their boat name. We get cards or emails to "the Adamastors" and we never take offence at it, although it's a far cry from our much cooler friends on the boat "Rockstar". In fact, from the moment you step into your new boat, you are literally wearing its name so be sure to choose one that you're happy with or inherit one that you don't mind as it will become far more connected to you than your surname ever was on land. A yacht broker once told me: "After I sell a boat, I tell the customers that the easy part is over. The hard part is picking the name".

Old-school boaters advise first-timers to respect tradition and superstition. Our own "Adamastor" is a name that came with the boat, and is the mythological malevolent weather god that Portuguese sailors had to battle at the Cape of Good Hope. One belief is that changing names brings bad luck and we certainly didn't want to summon the wrath of any meteorological deity. There's also meant to be a stigma attached to boats with 13-letter names, and you must formally christen a boat too. The fact that the Titanic was never christened is often trotted out by conspiracy theorists as a logical explanation for its fate. Equally ominous is naming a boat after a woman but we've known many boats that buck this trend and show off girl's names with pride, "Bettie", "Pamela" and "Jean Marie"; although the cynic in me wonders if this strategy is a cunning way for a canny man to ease his wife into a sailboat purchase.

A life at sea truly embraces travel so it's understandable that some select a foreign name, with the classic Latin "Carpe Diem" probably being the most popular choice worldwide, as it exemplifies the sailing mindset. We've come across others: "Moana Roa" – Maori for "deep ocean"; "Tashi Delek" – a Tibetan greeting meaning "blessings and good luck"; and "Fluenta" – another Latin name, which translates as simply "flow". These are all quite lyrical names, but can be hard to hear or decipher over the VHF and met with blank stares in certain countries.

Often the name is a giveaway for the sort of sailor it



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belongs to as pun names like "Seas the day", "Overdraft", "Moor often than knot" and "Pair a' dice" indicate that the boat is used for brief pleasure or fishing trips, a little weekender powerboat most likely. Sure, these names might give you a quick giggle in a yacht club but you can guarantee that no long-term liveaboard would resort to such a label – having used it countless times each day the gag wears pretty thin.

Then there are aspirational and romantic names, ones like "Moondance", "Wind Whisperer", "Souljourner" and "Wave Dancer". But, although these names address the idyllic, picturesque and serene qualities of the sea I always feel as though they fail to acknowledge the raw power and force of the ocean, which can be a far cry from these milder tags. Weather and nautical names were particularly prevalent when we

were sailing round New Zealand. We would often come across a "Southern Cross", a "Navigator" or a "Solstice", perhaps because yachting is so intrinsic to the culture there, with Auckland being known as the city of sails.

Some names also help to broadcast who is inside and the nature of their journey, so that it comes as no surprise to learn that "Lil' Explorers" and "Tribe" are fellow family cruisers. Other names are just good fun or a private joke between the owners, such as "Mystical Crumpet", "Big Rock Candy Mountain" or "Happy Monster". The only downside is that they can become a bit of a mouthful when repeated three times when hailing them, and can become downright confusing when preceded by that urgent and all-important term "Mayday".

I must admit to being especially smitten by a name I heard arriving in St Lucia, after crossing the Atlantic. We were greeted by a smiling, friendly chap, offering us congratulatory beers, who sailed a boat called "Tabasco Jazz". It had the ring of the sailing phonetic alphabet and he further clarified it by drawing "Tabasco, as in the hot sauce, and jazz as in j-a-a-z-z"!

What's in a name? It's your calling card, a first introduction, the initial impression, an ambassador and brand. Your boat and, ultimately, you will forever be judged by it so whether you pick a soft or a harsh one, a cool or a jokey one, just remember that it's going to stick. ✦



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Jess and James left the UK in 2011 in their Crossbow 42 and have sailed halfway round the world, growing their crew en route. Follow their journey at water-log.com

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