

Sailors like to get naked.

A warm climate can have a transformative effect on even the most buttoned down cruising sailor, as **Jess Lloyd-Mostyn** relates -

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fter all your boat is your home and who needs to be covered up in sweltering layers in the tropical heat?

Why not simply strip down to your underwear and potter about the cabin more comfortably? However, among fellow cruisers it's an ongoing joke that an unscheduled knock on the hull and a friendly call of "ahoy there" will often elicit the response "Hang on, I'm just putting pants on!"

Perhaps it comes from being away from your home country and its associated stigmas. Or maybe there's an element of feeling on a perpetual holiday. It might even be as simple as no longer caring what anyone thinks. And a great deal of it is to do with necessity. It's hot, humid and averages 30° where we are, and there's only so much sweat trickling down your forehead that you can put up with.

To be honest, it's considered dressing up to be in anything other than shorts or a bikini. And, when the temperatures are soaring, you have to be ready to give in and jump into the water at any moment to stop yourself from going heat mad. The children are almost exclusively bathed or showered in full view of the anchorage too, and quite enjoy scrambling about on deck totally naked.

In fact, now that I think about it, our kiddos' nudity is in no way limited to the topsides, and it's probably more of a challenge to keep any clothes on them in the first place. One tell-tale sign of a 'boat kid' is one who frequently disrobes with no warning and a look of utter composure.

This is not a lifestyle choice I hasten to add. We haven't suddenly become naturists so before you write us off as a crazy, stark-naked bunch with no boundaries whatsoever, I should point out that even we have our limits when it comes to stripping. Every sailor probably has an idea of where this boundary lies but I found my own border both sharply defined and utterly ignored during a chance meeting one day.

There was a middle-aged couple that took great pride in keeping their catamaran a gleaming, brilliant white, and would scrub her down in the blazing sunshine.

We saw them undertaking this cleaning task daily as we were sharing an anchorage, so dinghy trips ashore



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would include us giving them a quick wave as we sped past. The wife would be going about the chore while wearing a bikini whilst her husband adopted a more European-style Speedo.

On one such journey, not only were we embarrassed to realise the chap had decided to skip his signature teeny, tiny, yellow trunks entirely for that day's cleaning, but we were further mortified when he warmly called us over for a friendly chat!

It is rather hard to avert your eyes demurely whilst in a dinghy, particularly when the pink tinge to your face does not come from sunburn! Had he stopped caring? Maybe he'd just been cruising too long? Or perhaps we, only on our boat for a year at that time, hadn't quite got used to the bold ways of certain sailors.

"Is this the norm?" we wondered. "Surely no self-respecting sailor expects to carry

out a conversation with another in their birthday suit?"

Although, I must admit that you do develop a false sense that there is a bubble-like forcefield surrounding your yacht. If you choose to go swimming in the nude at anchor then the other boats are far enough away that your modesty remains secure. You can frequently stand and shower at the back of the boat without accidentally flashing your neighbours, if the wind and angle of the boat are in your favour. And often there is frankly no risk of being seen anyway, as part of the joy of cruising is to seek out the uninhabited, quiet and remote beaches. You simply stop worrying about it and have your shower in the buff.

And yes, year-round sailors who are bashing about in the Solent wouldn't quite be able to relate to this condition, nor would those spending the winter in Sydney or Auckland or the boats that ply the waters of Canada or Scandinavia; truly, they probably shudder at the thought of it.

And certainly it's not best practice in any crowded Caribbean spot. But, for any of us who are silly enough to contemplate trading the safety of the office desk for time spent living on a sailboat, I'm prepared to bet that part of that cheeky dream includes some of the wild, uncovered life that comes with it.



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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