

# Life at the extremes

Cruising round the world is not just a fair-weather activity— monsoon rains, tropical heat and icy winters all pose a challenge on a floating home says **Jess Lloyd-Mostyn**

Cruising full-time has moments where you seem to go from one extreme to the other. It's a feeling that I tend to associate with the weather: acclimatising to one set of conditions only to be unceremoniously faced with the total opposite just a short while later. This is something that we experience every time we make our trips back to the UK to visit family and friends.

I am suddenly brought face to face with the reality that my years in the tropics have made me soft. In our boat life, it's generally warm enough that we all live in shorts and T-shirts. No one in the family bothers with pyjamas or even bedcovers at night and, as we're always barefoot, trips ashore often come with the understanding that even footwear is optional.

But plop us back into our native England and even in sunny June we are shivering. I scramble through my suitcase at baggage claim to pull out anything that would even pass as a jumper and sadly note that my normal day-to-day wear amounts to nothing more than flimsy, insubstantial spiderwebs of fabric. Sun-worn, thin and tatty is fine when lolling about in the South Pacific, but of no use at all on the grey streets of London.

Our children are equally unaccustomed to the temperature and promptly all develop coughs, sniffles and noses dripping like taps. They chant in chorus, a constant, low-level mantra expressing their dislike of the cold, of how they are freezing and of how their beloved, colourful flip-flops are not enough. I nod in agreement and pull their sailing foulies out to double as British rain gear. I promptly purchase them "proper" shoes and, ugh, most ghastly of all, socks.

This double life generally means it's hard to avoid being ill-prepared for the conditions. In the tropics we get into a rhythm of sunhats, sunscreen lotion, mosquito repellent and swimming gear. We need at all times to be covered but cool at the same time and always make sure we have access to copious amounts of drinking water.

But life along the equator also brings sudden squally winds or utter deluges of rain. And, though we're all aware of the challenges of sailing in these



'Returning to the balmy seas of the islands felt like a blissful reward for enduring winter in NZ'



**JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN**

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](http://water-log.com)

changeable regions, living at anchor in them brings its own ups and downs to test us.

There are washing lines zig-zagging along our rigging as our laundry dries in the sun until it bakes, only to be drenched later the same afternoon with an abrupt downpour thanks to the North East monsoon.

Sometimes we spend a large part of our day in the cabin down below, having retreated from the tropical heat into the cool shade within the boat. Even to step out on deck in the midday heat would cause one of our kids to yelp that their toes are burnt so we cower in the interior, with all our 12 volt fans on full blast.

Other times, you're similarly hunkered down to escape the relentless wind and rain lashing against the portlights, and you occupy yourself with indoor tasks and games as the whistling and howling

sounds whirl around outside the boat.

We spent a considerable amount of time in New Zealand, the furthest south we've ever sailed. Our time there involved such dramatic shifts in season that we all struggled to keep up. July saw us tying up in a marina, just to have the shore power to run a heater and dehumidifier, bits of kit that we had ditched as we hadn't needed them anywhere since England. Thankfully we managed to borrow them from fellow sailors. We even had ice on the dock and I remember treading gingerly along it, clutching my towel and kiwi coins to pay for a precious few minutes of hot water in the marina showers.

Once cyclone season passed, returning to the balmy seas of the islands after that felt like a blissful reward for enduring winter onboard. We were back to jumping off the stern into bath-temperature water, where my writing "uniform" consists of a bikini and a sunhat and the juicy local papayas and pineapples taste like edible sunshine. And there isn't a single sock in sight...

But perhaps the change is what allows you to appreciate the best of both worlds. Maybe the romance of white sand and palm trees holds such magic for us because it is such a stark contrast to grey drizzle or freezing sleet. Perhaps, to be truly aware of how lucky we are, everyone could use a bit of a latitude adjustment. ✦

ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL PARKIN