

Roll with it

Swooping across ocean rollers in a fresh breeze is one thing, but a swell in an anchorage is altogether less fun, as **Jess Lloyd-Mostyn** notes

Ugh!"
<crash>
<clink>
<thud>
"This sucks."
<slam>

<bang>
<thunk>

I'm awake now, although I'd rather not be, but the swell has other ideas. It is then that my brain starts cataloguing the sounds I'm now hearing, and how important or damaging any of the potential impacts might be.

<chink> is the sound of the washing up, left to dry on the chest fridge. It's reasonably secure so not too much of a worry.

<shhh> is the noise made by a tray holding the kids' Lego, rattling on the spare bunk in our single cabin.

<thwack> sounds louder, as we're flung back over to port, and a book that was resting on the chart table is sent flying across the saloon.

<blam> as we hurtle back over to starboard and the violence of the swing makes our bedroom door slam shut.

"Stern anchor?" I suggest, in a desperate plea, as the final trump card that might free us from this misery.

Hands down, I consider a roly anchorage to be the very worst thing. Give me a lumpy, bumpy passage any day, even with me getting seasick, and I would still prefer it to a night of bouncing at anchor. It can come from nowhere, a sneaky swell can creep in to even the calmest of hook-dropping spots. And then your peaceful night's sleep is transformed into a slow, lumbering lollop from side to side, building up pace and momentum until you're bashing one way and then another. We had just such a night in Epi, Vanuatu, once, where the anchorage was still as a millpond in the day but would churn about like a washing machine at night.

Sometimes the weather can switch round on you, out of nowhere, and the bay that was perfect for getting shelter from northerlies is suddenly subject to strong winds from the south, with the fetch sending you pitching and tossing as if you were underway. A lovely spot that I remembered from my



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previous sailing in Portugal was blissfully calm in one season but became a roller-coaster of short, sharp and choppy waves at the other end of the year, a totally untenable anchorage.

The trouble is, much as we aim to keep the boat in "go" mode at all times, you don't necessarily have the option of moving to a different place in the middle of the night. Even setting a stern anchor in the hours of darkness can be an unwelcome challenge. And the movement you might be rolling about in might be more of a corkscrew-like motion, that not even being held pointing into the swell will relieve.

Occasionally a jerky and rough anchorage is caused by the wake from other boats. Gili Air in Indonesia is a tourist hotspot and the many ferries that plow through the water,

coming from Bali, rip and roar through the anchorage at crazy speeds. It was once so bad for us that our children actually fell down from the waves that rolled through, and these are boat kids may I remind you, as used to their bodies responding to gentle boat moves as they are to the rhythm of their own walk.

Another annoying bumpy ride at anchor was during our time in Panama City. After transiting the canal we found that almost every sleep we had in the anchorage on the Pacific coast was interrupted with zooming local boats weaving their way between the yachts all night long. The noise alone was already disruptive but the huge wake was enough to send us sloshing around after the water glasses by the sides of our bed were sent tumbling over us.

Wakes and wake-ups aside, there is salvation available when a stern anchor does the trick, as avoiding taking the swell side-on certainly makes things more comfortable. A sway towards bow and stern is more bearable and can ensure a better night's sleep. But, there are some swells or weather conditions that mean there is nothing you can do to escape the roll. In those instances our choices as cruisers might be limited. Run to a marina? Maybe. Abandon ship and pay for a night in a hotel? Seems extreme but it's possible. Simply put out to sea? Might be the best option.



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