

# Blue note

You can take the girl out of the boat, but you can't take the boat out of the girl, says Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

It may come as a surprise to learn that there are long stretches of time when we are not sailing. World cruising comes with what I refer to as 'go times' and 'slow times', which are largely dictated by hurricane seasons and family events.

For example, our sailing in the south Pacific was a nine-month period of continuous momentum as we explored numerous groups of islands in the countries that lay en route from Mexico to New Zealand. The key factor was to tuck ourselves in safely out of the cyclone belt before December signalled the start of the tropical storms. We would then have to limit our movements to coastal hops or marina life until the following May when the forecasts would show it to be safe to return to the tropics.

These pauses in the sailing season allow you to travel inland and get up to the mountains, take on major boat projects and other work that wouldn't be possible when on the move, or even pay a flying visit to your homeland.

This is the option that we have taken for the moment, travelling halfway round the world to introduce our latest little crew member to the rest of the family; combining our absence with work in the boatyard that would make life on board quite awkward. Our land legs, however, are somewhat uneasy as leaving our boat home on the other side of the globe gives us a strange pang and we find ourselves oddly tuned-in to certain sailing patterns and rhythms, which are less usual in city life.

First, it's the constant wearing of socks that seems so bizarre to me. Having dwelt in the tropics for the last four and a half years, my feet are used to the touch of teak and sand underfoot or the well-worn rubber of my ageing flip-flops. Pulling on both socks and shoes to tramp the London streets feels as though my toes are over-dressed and restricted. The years in the warm have made me soft and the English weather sends me running for hot water bottles, cups of tea and woollen jumpers and our boat babies are bundled in countless layers of clothing.



ILLUSTRATION: AMEE JEWITT-HARRIS

## 'I DON MY FOULIES AND BOOTS, RECEIVING A RAISED EYEBROW FROM GREY- AND BLACK-CLAD CITY TYPES'

Then there's the question of space. Accustomed to cabin-living, the four of us have happily set ourselves up sleeping in one bedroom of a two-bed flat, ample room for the whole family when you're used to the confines of a yacht. This 10 square metre room is also spotless, with everything stowed away neatly, every shelf and cupboard organised, and all the clothes lined up and folded, despite there being no chance of rogue waves or dragging anchor in the night. The rest of the tiny flat seems enormous to us now. James describes the boat as being a space that you almost wear, as everything is within arm's reach, its proportions and distances tailored to that of the human body. By contrast the kitchen here is cavernous and the walk from stove to sink seems inefficient.

Then there is the question of weather. A glance outside shows the trees in the street battered by the wind and I wonder if we should venture out in these gusts. Or else I don my foulies and boots and walk down the high road looking all wrapped up like a fisherman in bright yellow, receiving a raised eyebrow from the grey and black clad city-types. And I can't help but prick up my ears when I hear the shipping forecast, although my boat is thousands of miles away from Dogger and Fitzroy, and on the hard-standing at that. The unbroken presence of electric light means that our evenings get later and we're less ruled by the natural cycle of the day. A glimpse at the moon, now full, makes me realise I had no idea that we were approaching the spring tide, and gives me a twinge of guilt as it feels like bumping into an old acquaintance that I have forgotten to keep up with.

I too look different. My hair is no longer tousled with salt spray and my skin seems grey and pasty. The frenetic and intense pace of life in the capital, no matter how enjoyable, leaves a furrow in my brow and I find myself looking wistfully at the calendar, counting the days until we can return to 'normal'. Until then I'll tie my hair up using a reef knot, put powdered milk in my coffee and go to bed when the sun goes down just to remind me of my other life. ✦



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