

# Blue note

A salty life is far from a lonely life, as Jess Lloyd-Mostyn explains

The stereotypical view of a sailor usually implies a fairly solitary, perhaps lonely existence. One man on his boat gives the impression of being a hermit, quite private, choosing a quiet life away from others. Even we, sailing as a family of four, often have people remarking about what an isolated time we must have, anchored in remote islands or sailing so far away from home. And yet the reality of our social life as long-term, long-distance cruisers is the complete opposite of that.

I must admit, it took me by surprise as well. Before adopting the sailing life I had no idea that there was such a thing as the 'cruising community'. Truth be told I was even slightly taken aback when we first heard a loud knock on our hull while anchored in Portugal and found that a neighbour had dinghied over to say hello and invite us to breakfast. But it is actually just that simple and easy. Need an extra pair of hands on board to go up the mast? Ask the chap moored next to you. Managed to land too large a fish for your crew to eat? Why not share the wealth with your dockmates? And that's before you even get into all the radio nets, pot-lucks and swap-meets that bring all the local boat folk together.

The fact is that now, more than ever before, we are all part of a growing, rowdy, helpful and talkative global cruising fleet – capable of pooling our group resources and knowledge with the result that those of us who quit our nine-to-fives in order to live the sailing dream now have a network of thousands of 'work' colleagues to consult with and advise. Believe me, the world in those terms has never felt smaller or easier to navigate.

I suppose it's all down to us really having an element of the herd mentality in us. As much as we enjoy and yearn for the peace and seclusion that sailing affords us we also enjoy the comfort of easy communication. Sailors start to make friends not by asking "What do you do for a living?" but by saying "Where are you heading?" or "Where have you been?". Friendships are born out of geographic coincidence. If you're both headed in the same direction you become pals almost by accident.



ILLUSTRATION: AIMEE JEWITT-HARRIS

**‘SAILORS MAKE FRIENDS NOT BY ASKING “WHAT DO YOU DO?” BUT “WHERE ARE YOU HEADING?”’**

We spoke briefly to a couple on the Caribbean side of Mexico to warn them about the poor holding in a particular anchorage. As we were both heading south along the coast of Central America we kept in touch, exchanging the odd email and recommending stops en route to each other. Once reunited in Panama we went for drinks or meals together, transited the canal to the Pacific at the same time and rejoiced in both couples announcing that we were expecting a child a few months apart. This one chance meeting resulted in us gaining two friends for life, not to mention our boat babies enjoying their early months playing together. Despite the oceans that now separate us from our comrades, those shared salty miles spent in each others' company have solidified a relationship that started out of sheer happenstance.

And we've been lucky

enough to have made so many friends in just that same way. We decided to buddy-boat with a couple we'd just met on a catamaran and it worked so well that we celebrated Christmas and New Year jointly, did some inland travel together months later and are still in touch years afterwards. Another boating family in the same marina as us was also leaving Pacific Mexico bound for French Polynesia and we ended up rafted together in New Zealand, nine months and 7,000 miles on from our last meeting.

Perhaps what is even more astounding about these saltwater connections is that they seem to go beyond the lifespan of the sailing bond. So many people that we've met along the way have now sold their boats and moved onto land but still maintain the same generosity and easiness that the floating life exposed them to. At the drop of a hat we know full well that our whole family has a home-cooked meal and a bed for the night anytime we need one in countless places all over the world – a sort of open invitation forged out of this floating camaraderie.

We, meanwhile, sail on knowing that the next time we need extra crew on board we can dip into the rich mix of folks we've met along the way and use it as an excuse for a reunion.



**JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN**

Jess and boyfriend James decided to buy a boat in 2010; four months later, they were setting off on a trip that has so far taken them as far as New Zealand in their Crossbow 42