

Blue note

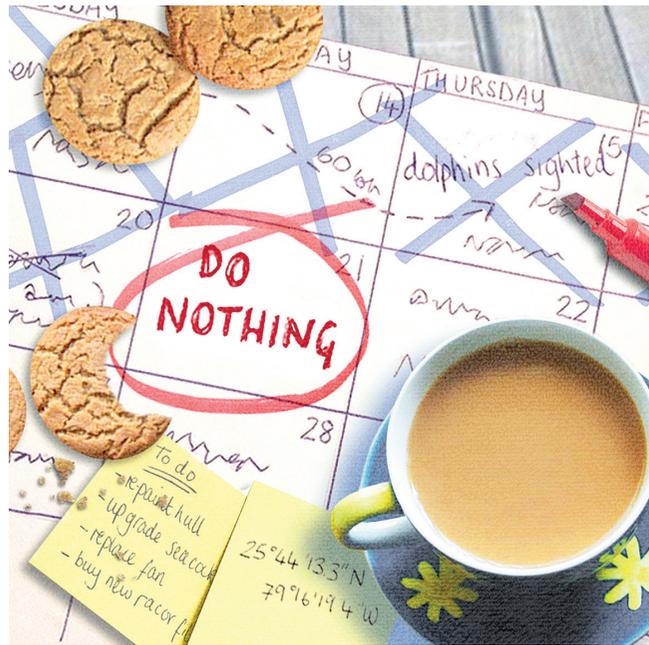
In liveboard cruising as in life on shore, says Jess Lloyd-Mostyn, it is important to know when to give yourself a well-earned break

Getting out on the water and sailing is a pursuit that most people have to save for their time off. It represents a respite from their other life of being defined by their weekday job and makes every weekend, every summer break and each public holiday a chance to play with the wind and the sea, as if reuniting with old friends.

For those of us who have chosen to live on the water, whether it be for just a short while or indefinitely, this pattern changes. We have the luxury that the separation of weekday from weekend becomes somewhat blurred, that days are punctuated by tides, sunrises and sunsets, and that 'time off' is more about lingering in a particularly lovely anchorage for a few more days than we had planned. It is into this seemingly blissful haze of non-schedule that James and I chose to re-introduce the Bank Holiday.

Full-time, long-term liveboard cruising is an incredible way of life but it is not exactly the total freedom that it first appears. Your movements and timings are forever governed by the weather, the seasons, the depth of water and the ability of the crew. The boat can laze by a white-sand beach for weeks on end but its inhabitants live in a perpetual state of readiness and poised for action, even if that feeling lingers only in the backs of their minds, like something you glimpse in your peripheral vision. Because the sailing life teaches you to always be alert to the unexpected changes, the sudden squalls, the anchor dragging in the dead of night, the frantic call for help over the VHF.

Of course, to the outside world, we may appear to be just reading a book in the cockpit, pottering around the local market, playing by the water's edge with our children or piling into the dinghy to explore the nearby reef, but this veneer of tranquillity that fools the casual onlooker (and even ourselves at times) hides the truth that we are always prepared for that calm to be dramatically shattered by some unforeseen boating drama. The more experience we have had at sea, the better we have learned to roll with the punches,



‘THE MORE EXPERIENCE WE’VE HAD AT SEA, THE BETTER WE’VE LEARNED TO ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES’

but it still means we need to keep our wits about us.

So our bank holidays are invoked on the occasions when one or both of us decides and declares that we are not in fact ready or capable of tackling the unexpected on the day concerned. It's the watery equivalent of a landlubber calling in sick at work.

The preparations for the next passage may have been made, all the provisions are on board and the weather window we were waiting for has appeared. It simply doesn't matter. Because, if for any reason one of us is feeling too tired, slow, unwell or off our game – or even just not quite convinced and confident enough about the forecast – we have learned it's more important to own up to the feeling of weakness and take a day's breather instead. It's particularly valid for our type of sailing, too, with two infants on board.

Sailing, particularly passage-making, requires a very engaged and aware kind of energy. Yes it's

essential to be capable of the physical strength needed for changing the sail plan, winching lines and hand-steering. But the real muscle that you need for offshore or ocean cruising is something more holistic than that: you need to have all-over responsiveness, no matter how second-nature and familiar all the processes are to you. And it's that quality that makes the difference between being ready to go or needing to take an extra day to recharge.

These pauses have been a great lesson to us so far. They've enabled us to take the time to make even greater preparations for going to sea, cooking more meals in advance, taking a more detailed look at elements of the passage ahead or learning new facts about the planned destination. Or the hiatus has given us welcome downtime, a few more hours to catch up on lost sleep, some extra brain space to relax and read a book or even to write. The result has always seemed to work in our favour as the additional day means that we come to face the next journey or passage well-rested, assured and calm.

It's funny to admit but sometimes the best thing that you can do in order to enjoy your everyday sailing life is just the opposite of what the casual, hobby boater does and say: "Let's not go sailing today". ✦



HAVE YOUR SAY

What would make you delay setting sail?

facebook.com/
sailingtoday
@sailingtodaymag
editor@
sailingtoday.co.uk