

Too close for comfort

To the editor: There's a fine art to anchoring well. It's on the rare occasions that someone gets it wrong that you truly appreciate the skills involved in doing it right.

In addition to my husband James and our young daughter Rocket and infant son Indigo, we have an additional member of crew on board our Crossbow 40, *Adamastor*, for a while providing us with some extra help now that we're sailing with two young children. This puts me in the slightly uncomfortable position of not only having to relinquish some of my usual jobs and duties but also to train another person in the skills that I have spent the last few years learning.

Although my husband James and I now have two ocean crossings and a substantial number of miles under our cruising belts, we look at our experience and abilities as very much a work in progress. There is always room for improvement, a better method to master and more to learn. I think it's an aspect of the sailing life that is incredibly satisfying and helps to keep you humble.

Having said all that I'm really proud of my talent for anchoring. Since leaving Europe we have always



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approached finding the right spot to anchor in with me at the wheel and James at the bow. We get into a position we like, we nod in agreement and I stop the boat in a flash while he drops anchor and we then use the wind or the tide to help us in laying out the chain. Feeding out the correct amount of chain or making sure that the anchor is well set and dug in are easy enough elements to teach to our new crew as they don't take long to get the knack of. But I've found that the real mystifying flair lies in knowing exactly where to place the hook to end up with the final happy positioning of your yacht in relation to the others in the anchorage.

You need to really know how your boat moves in wind and tide and then add that to what you can deduce

about each of the surrounding boats and whether they're lying taut or idle on their chains. For example, as a monohull owner, I prefer to not anchor next to a catamaran or a full-keeled sailboat, as I know they will dance in the current very differently from us. Likewise, you read the immediate topography of the land and water, anticipating the directions from which you may get wind gusts or strong currents, if there are forecast shifts in the weather and if any of that will affect the other vessels contrarily in relation to you.

Above all, you need to be satisfied about the depth you're in and what changes the tide may make to where your boat sits. You have to assume what depths the other boats are in, how gen-

Well-ordered rows of boats on either side of the channel at Martinique.

erous they're likely to be with the scope of chain or rode they lay out and keep your eyes ever vigilant for if there are additional stern anchors set. The difference between where you drop and where you'll eventually sit, either when lazing on the chain or pulling back on it, is a calculation that takes precision and practice. Sometimes the greatest challenge is to enter an anchorage when there is no wind blowing at all and every boat is floating about, all pointing in different directions and you can only wildly guess at where each anchor may be.

However, just how close is too close is a matter of subjectivity. It varies from anchorage to anchorage, country to country and is a mixture of habit, etiquette and the order in which people arrived. A single boat, anchored off a pristine beach, is likely to be disappointed once another boat finds that same slice of paradise and anchors a measly boat-length away. Yachts tend to cluster in a formation, filling in gaps in between until any given anchorage becomes jam-packed. But being able to hear music booming from a neighbor, the incessant running of a noisy generator or an all too close-up view of the occupant using their boat's stern shower are all downfalls of being that little bit too crowded. From Portugal to the British Virgin Islands to Tahiti, we've experienced some pretty busy anchorages where being quite so full to capacity makes you seriously concerned about the consequences of a shift in weather. We tend to prefer a middle ground,

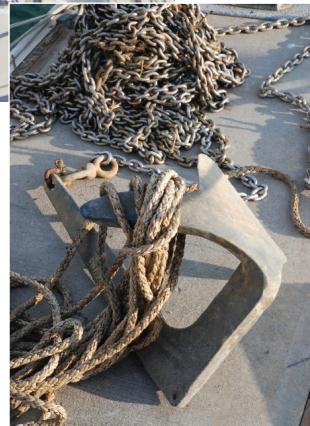


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where you can be near enough for a shouted greeting or wave but feel you have your own privacy and room too.

The trick of being content

with the spacing is something that simply comes with the more anchoring experience you gain, which is why it's hard to articulate to a beginner. Yet it was in a fairly spacious bay that I was able to demonstrate to our crew what defined "too close" for me. It was in good mud holding but really deep water, so each boat had a considerable amount of scope out. Fortunately there was plenty of room for this, which added to our surprise when, just as the sun set, a catamaran anchored immediately off our beam. Now, to clarify, this was snug enough that they could talk at a normal, quiet volume and we could hear every word from our cockpit. In my book that's certainly uncomfortable anyhow, but we were especially wary of them given that we were in 65 feet of water with more than 200 feet of chain out. However, the other skipper was clearly not unnerved by this and everyone settled for the night.



Left, James Lloyd-Mostyn puts down the anchor on Adamastor, a Crossbow 40. Below, Adamastor's ample anchor and supply of mooring chain.

By 0200 the next morning there were gusts of 25 to 30 knots and, having dragged on no less than three occasions through the rest of the anchored fleet, this same boat motored back towards us, dropping anchor well within our swinging circle again.

My sense of charity had worn thin by then and I pointed out the problem, the differences in our boats, the depth, the strong gusts and the impending damage. Heads were scratched, shoulders shrugged and they offered the farcical solution of merely putting fenders out along their starboard side before all filing off to bed once more. It was with a little gratification that I noticed our novice crew staring at this action with disbelief and muttering to himself "Are they just rather stupid or simply rude?"

Luckily we haven't met that style of sailor very often as we're normally a rather well-mannered bunch. But it did help with my explanation of the extreme case: Close enough for a friendly wave is just fine but too close is when nobody sleeps for fear of the outcome.

—Jessica Lloyd-Mostyn and James sail aboard *Adamastor*, a Crossbow 40, intending on a circumnavigation. Follow their progress at www.water-log.com