

Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

Passage making can be a rollercoaster ride prompted by far more than just a heavy swell. The elements are capricious and can dictate whether it's plain sailing or plain misery

Passage-making can be tough. The cruising lifestyle involves an awful lot more dawdling at anchor in enjoyable spots than it does hardcore sail manoeuvres. It's easy to slip into a rhythm of only moving somewhere when you really have to and choosing to eat up as many miles as possible when you're underway.

Once we had more than one child onboard we tended to opt for more day passages where we could. But, as every boater knows, there is only so far you can travel in one day on a sailboat without pushing the limits of daylight. And, to add a further complication, if you want to actually get there purely under sail, then you may be restricted to even less mileage. Throw in fickle winds, or adverse current, a teething baby and my seasickness and sometimes I wonder how we've managed to sail anywhere, let alone three quarters of the globe!

Sometimes you know before you even start that a particular passage is going to be a hard slog. Perhaps you're pushing it too late in the season, maybe you know that the winds won't be in your favour or that you'll be fighting current and you approach the coming hours or days by gritting your teeth and putting up with it, simply existing through it. Or maybe it seems like a hopeful beginning but once you push your bow out into the conditions you're met with a lumpy sea state, or the wind dies on you or what you thought would be a light downwind sail sees you bashing into 25kts on the nose instead.

The worst passages for us tend to be ones where all the forecasts led us to believe that we'd have enough wind to sail but what we actually experience is merely light breezes from astern, not even enough to truly motor-sail on. After lolliping around in the swell for an hour or two James and I will look at each other and sigh, roll our eyes and turn the engine on. Sure, we will now get to our destination faster, using more autopilot, having fully-charged batteries and hot water once we get there. But we'll also have to contend with a hot cabin, grumpy children complaining of the loud noise and a background growl as our soundtrack to the day.



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None of which marries up with my idea of a sailing passage.

Sometimes when we expect a journey to be particularly taxing I'll steel myself with travel sickness tablets, we prepare all the food and snacks for the day well in advance and get everything well-stowed for a bouncy upwind slog but we instead step out into an idyllic 12-15kts on the beam with a flat sea to help speed us along. And at other times, just when you think you don't have the energy to keep going all day, you'll encounter dolphins, spot an eagle, glimpse a turtle or any other one of the wonders that the sea has to offer.

The longer a voyage is, the more time you have to get used to the motions and patterns of it, settling into its pace. Plus, the greater the distance, the further you are generally from land, which

can be a lot more relaxing in itself, without the hazards of the coastline to contend with. Ocean crossings, for example, see you shifting into new routines of checking sail trim, changing watches, logging positions and moon rises, the bucking and swaying of the boat being fully absorbed by your body until you no longer notice that you've been in a state of constant dancing throughout.

And, at the other end, there are the day hops and overnights, where no matter how bad the conditions may be, you know you won't have to put up with it for too much longer. When we were confronted by yet another squall en route to Ambon, in Indonesia, while I was battling both seasickness and morning sickness, 35kt gusts and breaking waves, I comforted myself by the pure mathematics of how much further we had to go in either miles or minutes, and promptly threw up once we got the anchor down in a sheltered bay. Or when we finally began our approach into Bocas del Toro, Panama, after combatting a storm which shredded our mainsail to ribbons, we took heart in hearing the engine roar to life and power through the surging swell, inching us slowly but constantly away from the black mass of cloud overhead.

Yes, it's certainly safe to say that it's not all plain sailing out there sometimes. There are more than, enough trials and tribulations for any of us to be clamouring "are we nearly there yet?"



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