

# Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

Much is made of anchoring given that at its most basic level it is throwing out a heavy iron object on the end of a chain. Nevertheless, at certain moments, it is a fine art

There is a real art form to knowing how to squeeze yourself into an already crowded anchorage and also acknowledging when there is simply no more space to fit. There are certain spots all over the world that are popular and at the height of cruising season they can get busy, and I mean silly busy.

Try snagging a decent anchorage spot in St Lucia around Christmas time or getting a place in one of Antigua's top harbours during the holidays. Anywhere that also has a charter fleet is likely to be somewhere that you're vying for a position to drop the hook and if you find yourself still doing laps of an anchorage come sundowner time the chances are that you won't be able to find one.

It's not exactly a Caribbean phenomenon. Just try getting into Oneroa Bay in Waiheke in New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf on a weekend or during the summer holidays. The same goes for the prime spots in the Bay of Islands, further north. How about the Med during the height of cruising season? Or the Scilly Isles? Or the farther flung first landfall in the Marquesas islands? Absolutely jam-packed.

Maybe it's that more of us are out there on the water now. Or maybe it's that there are certain spots that have just the right balance of beautiful scenery and great facilities. Whatever the magic mixture is there are definite locations where your anchoring prowess will be tested to the limit in order to get you properly set, with the correct scope, and equally well-prepared for an easy evening sipping g and t's in the cockpit or wild weather with strong winds.

Recently we approached one of the few southern island anchorages in Singapore on a weekend just before sunset. It's just two miles from the largest marina so there is a natural exodus come Friday afternoon when boats of all shapes and sizes head out to play. Upon arrival I could see the challenge ahead: this is a place with uncertain holding, where all the depths are over 10 metres and we were already surrounded by many large powerboats. Add to that swimmers in the water, paddleboarders on the surface and the odd, ubiquitous jet-ski. About half were charter boats, with their own skippers, hosting groups of



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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](http://water-log.com)

partygoers so the place was packed with music, lights and drinking.

This also means lots of eyes on you as you manoeuvre about. Fortunately, having anchored our boat thousands upon thousands of times now, I know well how much room she needs. I also knew that in the mild afternoon breeze we would have no worry if our scope wasn't ideal, especially as we'd be staying aboard and that, come nightfall, many boats would be clearing out, allowing us to put out more chain.

In the British Virgin Islands I remember boats hovering, their engines idling, turning in endless circles, waiting for the few mooring balls relating to the top snorkelling spots to become free. We had a similar situation in Indonesia's Komodo islands, as everyone wanted to snag the closest place to shore in order to do a particular hike or trail. But New Zealand really

takes anchorage squeezing to a whole new level.

Perhaps it's because they are a nation of boaters. Ocean goers, weekend trippers, casual fishing boats, big gin palace power boats, classic-lined sailing yachts, all of them all at once happily sat on top of one another. We learned early on when the Friday crowding would start so would choose to arrive on a Wednesday or Thursday in relative seclusion and simply sit back and watch the madness ensue over the following days with a nice cup of tea in hand.

It became like watching sport on the telly. The natural slots and openings would fill in so that the bay was covered and yet still more upon more would keep coming. The spacing would get tighter and tighter and the arriving boats would reconnaissance for longer and longer, slowly patrolling like patient sharks, looking for an opening or desperately hoping to spot a departing yacht. As dusk would fall there would be more crews shouting in panic "I think over to starboard there's one!". What makes it all the more hilarious is that two days later we'd be alone with the place to ourselves in this country that has so much space and wilderness.

Sometimes you'll find space, but maybe you won't so, as is the way with so much of sailing, make room for a plan and a backup to save the day.