

Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

Living on a boat is a challenge in more ways than one but probably one of the greatest is acclimatising to the ever-changing tempo

It sounds obvious but probably one of the greatest challenges of living on a boat is adjusting to a home that is constantly moving.

I mean, your house never loses its foundations and drags its way down the street. The average apartment doesn't buck and bounce in a storm or when another, bigger apartment, moves past it too quickly. And, unless your home is a campervan, gypsy wagon or bus conversion, you grow accustomed to more or less the same view out of your windows.

Yes, there was a definite learning curve to suddenly being in constant motion even when not underway, actively sailing. It reminds me of those scenes in *Mary Poppins* when the cannon fire from the eccentric naval captain next door sees the family yelling "posts!" and scrambling to catch or secure the falling precious ornaments or stop the piano from ricocheting across the room. Our home has three growing children in it so, in place of the jangling chandelier and Ming vases in imminent danger, we suddenly hurtle around the saloon trying to save various toys that are rolling around, or Lego from flying everywhere as well as trying desperately to stop the washing up from crashing onto the floor.

And of course, we have slightly different modes that we assume on the boat. When we're on the move, making several hops over the coming weeks, or months, we pair down the clutter and debris of family life, stowing and streamlining the toys, paints, pens and books that normally festoon our yacht when she's in a more stationary mode. Tied to a marina dock and going nowhere we breathe out a bit more, expanding our tolerance for mess and let the normal shipshape mentality slide a little.

But we also live in a lot of in-between states. A stop at a particular anchorage may have only been planned for a few days but the days stretch out as we find more enjoyable things to do and explore there. As time slips so our belongings spill out of their designated places and the domestic side of boat life takes over for a while. And all it takes is a sudden squall, or a powerboat roaring by to send everything rather topsy turvy.

Then there is the innate, almost inner, dance that you adopt when you live aboard. Your knees always have a



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slight flex-ready bend to them, your core semi-tensed, your sense of balance heightened as the bob and swell of waves and wake set up rhythms and silent music for you to move to. There is a continual subconscious dynamic component to how you exist on a boat.

When we fly back to visit the UK and go on trains or buses, the children get a kick out of standing up, holding nothing for support, and testing their balance. It alarms our fellow passengers no end but it clearly harks back to our passages at sea, when they feel the boat at heel down in the cabin below and play the exact same game. They are accustomed to the very fabric of their familiar, warm and cosy family home veering and slanting under their feet. The distinctions of wall and floor all become a bit blurred and higgledy-

piggledy and they respond by climbing and clambering about with excitement.

Then there are some sea states that can turn you a little green. Underway on a sloppy sea, when the bed or sofa seems to swing and lurch beneath you, there is always comfort to be found in knowing that it won't be forever; eventually you will glide into a sheltered bay and drop the hook for a blissfully still night's sleep and this particularly sickly motion of the ocean is only to be briefly endured. You are nestled and enveloped by your home, and the sheer intimacy of the space brings consolation.

And despite having this watery tempo, this constant bounce, almost written into our DNA now, we've only ever felt the reverse effect, suffering from landsickness just once, four days into what is now 11 and a half years of sailing, when we stepped off the dock in Spain, having crossed Biscay. It seems the sea wanted to stay with us as we stumbled and swooned, lightheaded at the feel of solid ground underfoot.

So although it is somewhat startling to leap up and hurl yourself over to the galley to save your coffee mug from disaster, or irritating as you curse the multitude of plastic bricks showered over the saloon floor, the movement keeps us on our toes and I know I'll miss it when we swallow the anchor someday.



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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

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