



How have you spent lockdown? We catch up with sailors worldwide to hear their...

Lockdown stories

Jess Lloyd- Mostyn, Adamastor Flores, Indonesia

“When the full-scale impact of Covid-19 became clear and countries began to shut their borders the situation for most cruising yachts was like some horrid version of musical chairs; everyone scrambling for a safe spot when the music stopped. We know many who were caught out, those on ocean crossings or turned away from countless ports and even pushed out of safe anchorages. Elsewhere in Indonesia we’ve heard reports of severe aggression against foreign boats by officials, with weapons involved and shots fired, as the fear of outsiders escalated.

“We have been exceptionally fortunate to get stuck at anchor outside a town that we had already been relating to since mid-January, while I work on a cruising guide. It is a place we know well that is tourist-friendly, well-stocked, and provides an all weather secure and flat anchorage, equally free from mosquitos and cyclones, and has the unusual bonus of an immigration office within walking distance. Each

time my partner James goes to town for supplies he is made to wash his hands before entering the supermarket or using the ATM and people are wearing gloves before handling goods. Many cafes and restaurants are offering delivery or take-away, and some groceries are available this way too. We have a decent amount of food stored on board, but no freezer and no water-maker, so some trips for supplies are necessary.

“Our two major concerns were the likelihood of being forced to repatriate to the UK or being ordered to leave either by boat or plane to another country once our visas expired. When the FCO advises you to go ‘home’ it prompts more anxiety than comfort for a liveaboard cruiser. Struggling to get the boat to somewhere in Indonesia to leave it long-term, grabbing a flight to Jakarta, which has the highest number of cases and get a long, shared cough and splutter flight back to London and go where? Our properties are rented, our families our self-isolating, so we’d be cooped up in some form of

ABOVE AND BELOW
Jess Lloyd-Mostyn has spent lockdown on board in Indonesia

temporary accommodation. And the thing is, we are home now. Our home is our boat.

“Handling the crisis in an island nation with over 17,000 islands was always going to be a challenge. We are lucky that the visa situation was solved by an automatic and free emergency stay permit being issued to all foreign nationals so, for the time being, staying put at anchor is our most viable option. But Indonesia was very slow to shut borders and has only just halted inter-island travel. The immediate future of cruising here is uncertain but all we can do is to be grateful for our current situation.”

Sailing Today with Yachts & Yachting editor, Sam Jefferson, Black Joke, Morecambe Bay Prawner 28

Bouzigues, France

“Lockdown made everyone do strange things. For many, it seemed to inspire them to buy more toilet paper than they needed. Yet for me, the madness involved fleeing to the south of France and taking refuge on my yacht, moored at the little





port of Bouzigues on L'étang de Thau. I think it was something to do with the clear air out there and the growing feeling that the UK's herd immunity policy seemed like insanity. I envisioned myself lazily sailing across the etang in the spring sunshine, anchoring off one of the lovely ports like Marseillan, sipping sundowners and dining on oysters. It didn't quite work out that way; the sunshine was there alright but it rapidly became clear that all forms of sailing were forbidden; all yachts were confined to port and you needed to produce a signed form even to go to the shops. I couldn't visit friends in nearby Montpellier.

"I started to look at my boat in a different light; I had always loved the low freeboard and coachroof but it now occurred to me that living in a boat with 5'5" of headroom was not ideal. I might emerge from

lockdown a hunchback. The key became good weather; if there was sunshine, all was well and the cockpit served as a good office. A day of rain was essentially a disaster and spirits would plummet. I was also terrified about breaking my phone as I was totally reliant on it for work and friends. The gendarmes were a constant menace; I was stopped three times in one day at the peak of their terror and, on another day when some poor fool made a break for freedom in their speedboat, the police were on the scene within five minutes. I saw only one sailing boat go out in all that time; a sturdy Breton with a little gaff-rigger who somehow got away with a few hours of freedom one sparkling Sunday.

"There were plus sides though; my position on the quayside meant the people of Bouzigues on their one

ABOVE
Missing a salty Sunday morning afloat?

ABOVE CENTRE
Editor Sam Jefferson has been working remotely from his Morecambe Bay Prawner, locked down on a quay in the south of France

BELOW LEFT
The editor was adopted by a solitary cat, surveying the unusually quiet quay

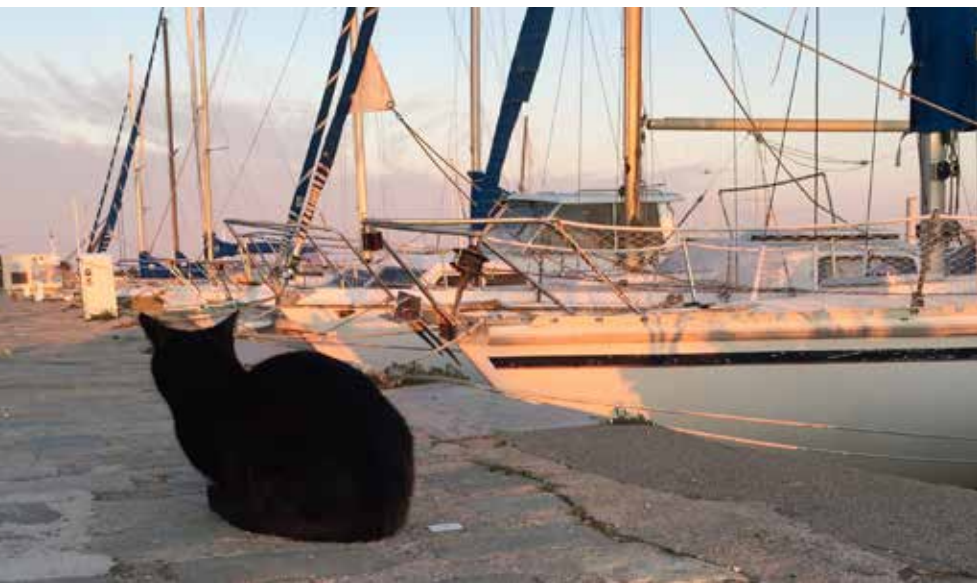
hour of liberty per day would often come and pass the time talking to me despite my rudimentary French. One kindly gent even brought me wine and cachaca, though he dared not drink with me. I was adopted by a cat and made friends with the port's two liveaboards. It was beautiful watching the season change; the snows recede on the distant peaks of the Pyrenees and the fields turn blood red with poppies. It was cruel, however, to have the Mediterranean there beckoning and to remain shackled to the dock."

Jenevora Swann and Fergus Dunipace, *Two Drifters* Tahiti

"My husband Fergus and I cast off from Panama on 12 March in *Two Drifters*, bound for French Polynesia, a little over 4,000 miles away. Just 48 hours later, Coronavirus took hold in Panama, with 12 cases and one death announced. Panama's reaction was to shut its borders, not just to arriving boats, but also temporarily to those wishing to depart.

"A week into our passage, and we received word that French Polynesia had also closed its borders, except to residents. We were shocked; to sail so far and to not be allowed into a country was unthinkable, let alone, heart-breaking.

"We left Panama in good faith, having checked that we would be



allowed into French Polynesia. We also had a signed medical certificate proving our health was good on departure. As a visiting yacht, the government of French Polynesia gave us two options:

1. Arrive into a port of entry such as Nuku Hiva in The Marquesas or Pape'ete in Tahiti and find a safe anchorage, mooring buoy, marina or hard standing to store the boat. Then leave and return home on the first available flight.

2. Arrive in a port of entry to re-supply, re-fuel, effect repairs and then leave French Polynesia for somewhere else.

"The first option was not even a consideration for us, for many reasons, the main one being that our insurance company will not cover the boat to be in French Polynesia during cyclone season, which isn't for a while yet, but who knows how long the closed borders will last.

"By now, it was too late to turn back as the borders at Panama were closed, as were the Galapagos Islands, which we had just sailed past.

"The French Polynesian government requested we fill out a 'DPAM' form, detailing our intentions. So, we asked to make landfall in Nuku Hiva, to stock up on essential provisions, make repairs and to rest for as long as possible after our long journey.

"Stalling for time, we requested to stay in Tahiti for up to six months or until borders re-opened, enabling us to safely sail towards New Zealand, our intended destination come November, in time for cyclone season.

"Our DPAM was returned very quickly, granting us six days in Nuku Hiva, with an onward passage to Tahiti. Until we check in at Pape'ete, we won't know how long a stay we will be granted there."

Kate Staniforth, Senior UK Marketing Manager for Sunsail and The Moorings

"We anticipate that some of our guests will choose to take advantage of our Sunsail UK base in Port Solent, as a drive-to-destination once the UK restrictions ease.



Sunsail is The Moorings' sister company and are both part of Travelopia.

"We also expect to see an increase in online sailing theory courses. The Sunsail online theory course is delivered by Sailing Course Online, a RYA Recognised Training Centre specialising in online training. The online course can be completed in the comfort of your own home with full support from the instructors at Sailing Course Online. On completion of the course customers will have sound knowledge of tidal systems and how to apply their knowledge to practical sailing skills.

"Worries about international travel are having an impact and consumers are now looking at holidays that involve less travel overall. Holiday style and accommodation sought is also changing, with a shift toward a more remote setting. When travel restrictions lift, a yacht charter holiday is a great way to enjoy a holiday with close friends and family, in your own private sanctuary, vs sharing facilities as you would with busy cruise ships or hotels. We believe customers will prioritise exclusivity and avoid destinations with large groups or crowds. The desire to go on holiday to a safe place and switch off from the panic of current affairs will see a rise in off-the-grid holidays."

Simon Morgan, of beach holiday company Wildwind

"We already have a base team for Wildwind and Healthy Options in Vassiliki that has been there over the

ABOVE
Sunsail anticipates a demand for remote holidays with a small group of family or friends

BELOW
Simon Morgan's beach club Wildwind is ready to go in Greece, which has been relatively lightly affected

winter, and our plan is to send the remainder of our staff out before any clients arrive. This way, they can be quarantined on arrival and can start the season with a clean bill of health.

"It is still early days and much is uncertain, but it may well end up being that actually going on holiday to Greece, especially Lefkas, is one of the safest things to do this summer. To date Greece has 136 deaths and no cases of the virus now on the island of Lefkas. On 4 May the Greek government is due to start to ease the restrictions and the plan is to open up regular hotels again on 15 June and seasonal hotels like ours on 1 July. The big challenge for Greece is to open up the country to tourism without risking bringing in the virus. The authorities are confident they can find a solution. The main idea currently mooted is requiring a 'health certificate' from all travellers. We assume that it will take the form of some testing several days before taking a flight to Greece, followed by another test on arrival. This appears to be a solution that might hold water.

"Meanwhile we are accepting reservations without the need to pay a deposit from any guests who has booked with us before. We kept the same competitive pricing as our 2019 season, which means that a full week of Wildwind sailing with flight and accommodation is now available from £975. If you were forced to cancel your holiday because of the Coronavirus, we would allow you to transfer your payment on to a similar holiday for later in the year, or in the following year."





Meanwhile the Wildwind Facebook site is busy with online classes and activities, including online barbecues, to keep customers involved.”

Skipper Lin Parker, of Velvet Adventure Sailing, has been in Rota, near Cadiz in Spain, aboard her Oyster 55 charter yacht. In early May she reported: “Here in Spain it is day 50 of lockdown and the first day we are allowed out for exercise or to do individual sport, one hour a day, max 1km from home and with only one other member of your household. No stops allowed and different ages go at different times. We are the ‘blue’, between 6am and 10am or 8pm and 11pm. It is still light here at 9.30pm so we are opting for going out at 8pm when it’s cool! Looking forward to it.”

Hannah Le Prevost, sales director at Key Yachting, said: “We have had two people working full-time from home and we are open for business. We are taking enquiries for new and used boats every day. Meanwhile we are running live interviews online with owners, with some of the yards, we did one with J/Boats president Jeff Johnstone, and we’ve seen amazing viewer figures from those, plus we’ve had some direct sales enquiries come out of it.

“It’s a great opportunity and meanwhile it’s about being available for clients.

“As for the rest of the sailing season, the J-Cup was due for July and we are allowing the host club to take the lead, because there are so

many people involved other than the competitors, from volunteers to race committees, whose safety has to be considered.” [Note: the Landsail Tyres J-Cup has been postponed until 3-5 September 2020.]

Ian Walker, Director of Racing at the RYA

“We have had about 35 staff furloughed across the whole organisation but not many in my department of Racing. We are trying to deliver as much as we can online and we’ve had an extraordinary response. We had more than 1,000 people on our Rules webinar and more than 17,000 people have signed up for our YouTube channel [search for RYA on YouTube].

“Meanwhile we are trying to ensure the British Sailing Team



ABOVE
The RYA’s Ian Walker was lobbying Government to get sailing started again

ABOVE LEFT
Lin Parker was stuck on board her Rustler for 50 days under Spanish measures

BELOW
The J/70 Worlds in Torbay last year – this year’s event in California has been postponed until 2021

sailors are engaged and well and moving forward.

“For me, I’m involved in how I can support the RYA effort in getting the sport back on the water. Part of that is lobbying Government and making sure that sailing is at the front of the queue when we start to run sporting events again. Of course it is a very complex issue. I’m on a government working party looking at all elite sports, from sailing to basketball to football.

“Personally, I would normally sail once or twice a week and most weekends are spent with my daughter, 420 sailing. That’s been really odd, having all these weekends free, because normally we’re charging around. It is frustrating but my garden has never looked so nice!”





Island RIBs on the Isle of Wight has remained busy in its factory, keeping production going with a smaller team than usual. Director Jo Burke said: “We work in full PPE anyway, with full vapour masks and full paper suits, so in that respect nothing has changed. We have introduced more cleaning and sanitation regimes and we’re having no external people into the workshops. We are busy building three RIBs – including for [photographer] Rick Tomlinson and for Sea Start – and our focus is getting our current builds out of the door, with a team of four building the boats and me at home. We had done a lot of purchasing just before the restrictions came into place and we build everything in-house except the tubes, so it has been a matter of assembly and GRP work.”

Sailing Today with Yachts & Yachting reader Pascal Arts, an experienced sailor, found time to inflate his liferaft in his garden in Utrecht, Holland (below). He says: “I have enjoyed teaching my children about safety on board, about wind, the oceans and more. It is a chance to remain connected with the life we led before the outbreak.”

Monika Thomae, *Harmoni Jacare, Brazil*

“Our little marina has been home to over 30 international yachts that slipped into the country just before Brazil commenced the closure of its sea borders.

“Under the initial procedures, of

24 March, foreign yachts were still allowed in, albeit after undertaking 15 days quarantine at anchor. One week later that door slammed shut: “No foreign vessels will be accepted into ports or marinas unless there is a compelling emergency, or unless their crew repatriate on the first available flight”, stated the federal decree issued on 1 April. And to make matters worse: “All foreign yachts that have not yet formally cleared in will be evicted and must leave within 72 hours.”

“The unpleasant task of informing the four newly arrived boats in quarantine fell to marina manager Francis. “But where will we go?”, exclaimed the horrified skipper of French-flagged *Sedna*. With the



ABOVE LEFT Island RIBs in the Isle of Wight have been able to maintain production

ABOVE RIGHT Monika Thomae has been sitting it out in Brazil

BELOW Pascal Arts tries out his liferaft in his back garden

Caribbean in lockdown and hurricane season fast approaching the options were few. Flying back to France was too expensive for the three young sailors. The alternative was to attempt the 4,000-mile voyage back to France in one hop.

“British yacht *Azur* arrived in Jacaré from Cape Verde on 3 April and was also unwelcome. After agonising overnight, the British family decided to leave the boat behind and buy extortionately priced plane tickets to the UK. ‘Under the circumstances we felt we had no choice,’ said co-owner James.

“One boat that sought to clear in under the force majeure exemption was American yacht *Althea*, which limped into Jacaré with a broken propeller shaft. Marina manager Francis understood the situation and directed it to tie up at the pontoon. Whether or not the Brazilian immigration authorities would be as understanding was yet to be seen.

“Our 90-day Brazil visa allows us a breathing space, and a safe harbour for now.”

Alison Sly-Adams, President, Antigua Sailing Week

“We cancelled on 19 March, so still five weeks out from the event. We were most certainly in the last stages of planning, but had already started looking at options to scale back the event and how we could deliver it with social distancing measures in place. Antigua announced its first case of Covid-19 on 13 March and we immediately called an emergency →

meeting with stakeholders to discuss whether we could even begin to operate an event with social distancing, and no contact between visiting sailors and people in Antigua. At the same time the Government announced a one-month ban on social gatherings over a certain size. Even though Antigua Sailing Week was a week outside of that cancellation period, the restrictive measures would make it impossible to deliver an event of the expected quality and standard.

“In the UK, Europe and North America, although none were yet in lockdown, travel advisories were starting to be issued, as well as warnings for high-risk people to stay home.

“That had immediate impact on us in terms of race officials and many owners/skippers. We received many emails saying people really wanted to come but realised it was looking unlikely. Plus people needed to make decisions about what to do with their boats for the hurricane season, and might want to speed these plans up before borders closed.

“Sponsors and competitors are being kind to the regatta, but where we will be challenged, like most events, is operating into next year in a business environment we perceive where sponsorships will not be top of the expenses list. But we are resourceful – we have a number of community programmes to maintain engagement at a local level and a committed team who are passionate about the event.

The positive of a cancelled event is that all the work does not go wasted, as we have a fantastic base to build on for next year, and have time to really think outside the box about how to make the event an even bigger celebration of sailing. We will be looking at planning in a way that allows us to scale the event depending on the global situation at the time. We’ll be looking at how much we can still do remotely and have plans for operating a socially distanced event.

“Critically, as with the rest of the world’s tourism and yachting industry, a big part of delivering an event of scale will depend on airlines



and people’s confidence in flying. With that said, there are a lot of boats in the Caribbean, more than usual, and so a ready market for us to recruit for 2021 and with our media reach we will be able to deliver content with our digital media relationships to the world.”

Tony Toller, who runs the Solent-based boatphotos.co.uk website, has been in Cape Town, South Africa

“I was about to go into self-isolation for three months with my friend Bob, who had just bought a new 40ft Leopard catamaran in Cape Town docks. We were meant to be heading for the Caribbean, via St Helena and eventually onto Barbados if they let us land. We were to be at sea for about three months, hoping that by then the Coronavirus would have come to an end.

“We flew into Cape Town four days before lockdown and literally just after the South African

ABOVE
Antigua Sailing Week cancelled with five weeks to go as Covid-19 hit the island

BELOW LEFT
Desiree and Jordan, who run the Project Atticus vlog on YouTube, were one of many crews stuck in Panama, just as they were about to depart for a voyage across the Pacific

BELOW RIGHT
Tony Toller hoped to be en route to the Caribbean from Cape Town

government imposed a State of Emergency. Ours was probably one of the last flights to land. Even then the famous Waterfront, normally heaving with tourists, had never been so quiet, according to a local waitress, but a few days later it was deserted, like a scene from a disaster movie.

“We were effectively impounded on the boat and were uncertain about when we’d be able to leave. I could think of worse places to be, but there was one snag – we were not allowed to buy alcohol, although we were given 48 hours notice. A week previously it had been toilet rolls in demand.

“On Easter Sunday the government announced a two-week extension to the lockdown and at the end of April, after six weeks of lockdown on the new boat, we went from level 5 to 4, whereupon the wearing of a mask became compulsory and we still couldn’t buy any alcohol.”

