

Remote-Destination Boating

BY JENNIFER & JAMES HAMILTON

Yearning to get away from it all with long-range cruising? Learn the safest and most efficient ways to do it from this veteran cruising couple

For us, one of the rewards of boating is a sense of independence. Our goal on any trip—be it for several days or several weeks, to the Gulf Islands or Queen Charlotte Sound—is to be completely self-sufficient. Other than fuel and water, we don't want to have to stop anywhere for anything. Here are some techniques we've developed for cruising without relying on external resources.

Perishable Food Fresh produce and storage space for foodstuffs is always precious on a boat, especially on longer trips.

We remove the packaging from any store-bought perishables, such

as grocery store meats not carried by our butcher, before putting them in the fridge or freezer. This reduces the amount of space they take up and also the amount of garbage to deal with. We cut or divide foodstuffs into smaller packages to increase storage flexibility; four small packages often fit where one large package would not.

Alternate products can replace those that take up fridge space. Powdered drinks, for example, require no fridge space. We cool only drinking water and mix most other beverages on demand. Tang is a good substitute for orange juice with breakfast. Gatorade is an excellent thirst-quencher on hot, sunny days—and powdered Gatorade tastes the same as the pre-mixed.

Vacuum-sealing extends the life of foodstuff. It doesn't replace refrigeration or freezing, but since it removes air, many perishables last longer. Frozen foods don't suffer freezer burn, refrigerated foods spoil less quickly and other provisions stay fresher longer. Fresh-caught crab, vacuum-sealed, tastes as good after four days in the fridge as it did the day it was sealed. Cheese lasts for months vacuum-sealed, and large pieces can be repackaged into smaller portions so you don't need to use it all at once.

Our vacuum sealer is a FoodSaver Professional II. Despite the "professional" label, the sealer is a consumer-quality ▶



Anchored at the remote head of Robert Arm in Draney Inlet off Rivers Inlet.



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We always wear lifejackets when working out on deck.

product and will overheat after a half-hour or so of continual use. We've not had any other problems, and the power draw is not prohibitive.

Baking Fresh-baked bread is wonderful, but it can be difficult to carry. Frozen loaves take up valuable freezer space, and unfrozen bread often won't keep more than a few days, even if vacuum-sealed. A bread maker is an option, but these tend to be large and power-hungry. We've never been bakers and, at first, didn't consider making our own bread, but we've been successfully baking aboard since we started cruising to more remote places.

Bread is surprisingly easy to make and fits nicely in the cruising schedule. The ingredients are simple—water, flour, salt and yeast for a basic recipe—and no special equipment is required; just a large bowl, space to work and a few hours for the dough to rise and bake. We prepare bread dough by hand early in the day and let it rise while we're under way. In the afternoon, we pop a loaf in our small propane oven and have warm, fresh bread for dinner.

Water Conservation Our boat's water tank holds 77 U.S. gallons—paltry for some, princely for others and on par with many. Longer trips to remote locations introduce two water concerns: potability and sufficient supply; both could be solved with frequent marina visits or a

water maker. We could gather water from streams, but this would be a lot of work, plus we'd have to deal with the potability issue. Since it must be boiled or purified to eliminate pathogens that can cause intestinal diseases.

Frequent marina visits restrict travel plans, so they aren't an option for us. Water makers are becoming more popular. However, they are expensive, maintenance-intensive and power-hungry. For those with the machinery and the inclination to manage a water maker, freshwater will always be available for drinking, showering and boat cleaning. But since we don't have a generator and water is only an issue for us once or twice a year when we're aboard for

more than a week, for now, the overhead of a water maker is hard to justify.

By conserving and catching rainwater, we can go at least four weeks without having to replenish the water supply. To conserve water, we use saltwater for cooking anything that doesn't absorb water, such as vegetables and crab. Also, boiling-hot saltwater can be used for washing dishes, followed by a hot freshwater rinse. We boil dishwater instead of wasting water while waiting for the hot stuff to reach the tap. And for showers, we run the shower into a plastic jug (to be used later) until the water runs hot, and shower with a small amount of very hot water. We also carry an extra 20 gallons in five-gallon jerry cans in the engine compartment as a backup supply.

But over-consumption is not our only concern—twice, we have developed a leak in our freshwater system.

Medical Emergencies Being self-sufficient is particularly important when the nearest Coast Guard might be 50 miles away and help would take hours to arrive. It's essential to carry an adequate first-aid kit with good instructions on how to use it. We also carry a comprehensive, portable first-aid kit when travelling long distances in the dinghy or kayak or when walking for miles in the woods. We assembled our own, as most available kits were too large, too expensive or insufficient for the job.

Wilderness books that describe how to

“Carry a spare or backup for all equipment that could interrupt a trip or is reasonably likely to fail.”

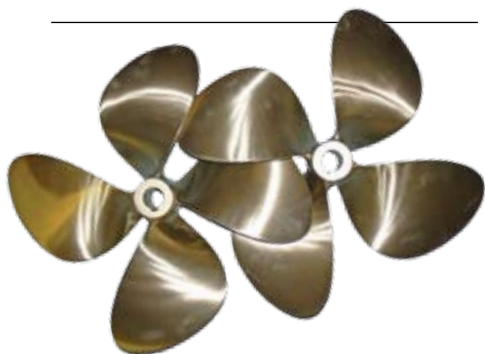
deal with medical emergencies when help is a day or more away come closest to meeting our boating, kayaking and hiking needs. Books for hikers are especially appropriate. *Wilderness First Aid*, by Gilbert Preston, has good instructions on how to handle common medical emergencies and a list of recommended contents for a portable wilderness first-aid kit.

We've also taken Red Cross CPR and first-aid classroom training. All boaters should have these skills, regardless of their cruising territory. Help takes longer to arrive out on the water, and we will certainly be the first responder to any emergency on board.

The first step in emergency preparedness



We carry dry suits and full scuba gear, but a lot can be done with just skin-diving gear.



Be sure all spares will fit.

is not to have an emergency in the first place. We're cautious around moving parts, such as the windlass, and generally avoid unnecessary risk. A damaged or lost piece of equipment can be repaired or replaced, but not a finger, leg or person.

We wear lifejackets in the dinghy or kayaks, with a portable waterproof VHF radio for each person. If our craft capsizes or breaks down, we both need to be able to call for help. Under way, we wear life-jackets when working on deck. This is the most likely time to fall in. And we follow the "one hand for the boat, one hand for yourself" rule—a reflexive action that has saved us both from falling overboard at least once.

Equipment problems are a fact of life on a boat. Especially in remote areas, we need to keep the boat running without calling for outside help. The first step is to maintain the boat in a high state of service. Before departing, we ensure all systems are fully operational and mechanical service is up-to-date. We also take the time and effort to understand all the systems and avoid installing new equipment just before a trip. Before making a longer cruise with ▶

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Help yourself

One night, we were anchored at Eagle Harbor, a busy port directly across Puget Sound from Seattle. Houses surrounded the shore and perhaps 200 vessels filled the harbour. Yet when a parachute flare lit the sky, the only reports to the Coast Guard were from a ferry and us. The point: Just

able to continue. We now carry a small hydraulic jack.

Skin-diving equipment—mask, snorkel, fins and wetsuit—can also be useful. Even if you don't actually repair anything, being able to safely and comfortably inspect the hull and running gear can save much time and effort. We once saw a boat hauled out in Port Hardy because of a serious vibration; the problem turned out to be bull kelp wrapped around the propeller shaft. We carry dry suits, tanks and full gear for scuba diving, but a lot can be done with just skin-diving gear. We've removed a line that was wrapped around our propellers without donning a tank. Wear at least a seven-millimetre wetsuit or a dry suit. In addition, we wouldn't go overboard without insulated five-finger gloves and a thick hood. The waters in this area are too cold. We don't bother with a snorkel, but we do wear a mask and fins.

Another useful onboard resource is *The Complete Rigger's Apprentice* by Brian Toss. We're far from marlinspike experts but have successfully made several repairs on the water by following Toss's excellent instructions. For example, we've mended a severed line with a short splice and also joined a backup anchor and chain to the remaining rope rode with a chain splice after we had to slip our main anchor.

Over the years, we've cruised extensively to remote destinations. Our food and water supplies have lasted well, and although we've experienced equipment and medical problems, we've been able to deal with them without impacting our trip. Preparation is the key. ☛

*For more remote-destination boating and other tips and techniques, see www.mvdirona.com and the author's new Waggoner sister publication *Cruising the Secret Coast*.*

because people are nearby doesn't mean anyone will notice when you're in distress.

Even with our immediate reports, an emergency crew took 20 minutes to arrive. But emergencies seldom occur so close to such a well-equipped Coast Guard station. Be prepared to help yourself. —J&JH

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