

EXPERT ON BOARD

RYA Coastal Skipper
Graham Snook has been sailing for nearly 40 years. He sails his Sadler 32, often solo, from Gosport



21 tips from transatlantic cruisers

Every year, hundreds of yachts sail thousands of miles across the Atlantic with the ARC. Graham Snook finds out what they learned en route

The reward of the ARC is Christmas in the Caribbean



Everyone has done something to their boat to improve life on board, to make her more comfortable, safer or easier to sail. Pinching ideas from someone who's done the brainwork for you is an easy way to find solutions and improve life afloat.

While the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) starts from Gran Canaria and sails to St Lucia, it's clear from speaking to all of the crews that it's a journey of two parts. The first part is getting the boat, skipper and crew to Las Palmas, the second is crossing the Atlantic. For many,

their first experience of ocean sailing, hundreds of miles from the nearest land, is the passage to the Canaries. It's a chance to find out what works and hopefully fix what doesn't, before the 2,500 miles to the honeymooners' paradise of St Lucia.

A cruising masterclass

The 2016 ARC saw light winds for much of the crossing, adding days to the ETA of many yachts, mostly those who didn't resort to engine power in the early part of the crossing. While some were happy to drift around, with a daily routine of wake

up, swim, have lunch, rest and end the day with another swim, others had flights booked and a schedule to meet.

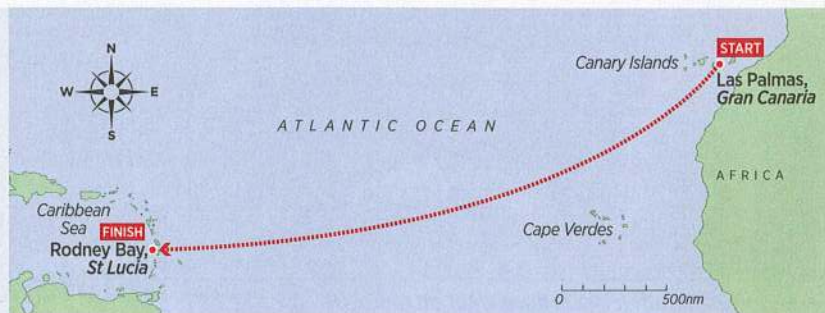
Where better to go brain-picking than the finish of the ARC in beautiful St Lucia? There's a melting pot of ideas and experience from which almost every sailor can learn something, and the tips we compiled from this year's ARC sailors are as varied as the boats and the crews.

So whether you're a coastal sailor, an offshore cruiser or planning to cross oceans, there's plenty of useful advice on the next six pages. ➔

Facts and figures from the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers

■ **2016 saw the course record broken.** The ARC is for cruisers, but there is also a fiercely competitive racing division. In 2016 *Rambler 88*, an 88ft canting keel maxi, crossed in 8 days, 6 hours, 29 minutes and 15 seconds, but for most participants the crossing lasted around 3-4 weeks.

■ **In 2016, a total of 212 yachts set off on the ARC.** The official entry was 216 yachts from 31 nations, but three yachts couldn't start due to technical



problems while one was involved in a collision before the start

■ **The ARC+ crosses via Cape Verde.** While both the ARC and ARC+ leave from Las Palmas, 71 yachts from participated in the ARC+ which stops at Mindelo, Cape Verde before progressing to St Lucia.

■ **29% of the ARC fleet was made up of multihulls.** 152 monohulls and 60 multihulls started. The largest yacht was a Swan 90, the smallest were two Comfortina 33s at 9.5m (31ft 2in). The minimum size allowed is 8.23m (27ft) LOA with at least two crew on board.

ALL PHOTOS: GRAHAM-SNOOK.COM. CHART: MAXINE HEATH/VN

7 tips for everyday cruising

Use cable ties for less washing-up

If all your mugs are the same and you're bored with always having to wash them up between brews, a simple bag of multicoloured cable ties could be handy. Attach a different coloured tie on to the handle of each cup and nominate a colour for each member of the crew.

If you want to be super organised you can have a chart by the galley so no one has to remember the on-watch's tea/coffee/milk/sugar requirements.

	David (Yellow)	Vicki (Red)	Paul (Blue)	Helen (Green)	Jon (Black)	Fiona (White)
Tea	White 1 sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar
Coffee	Black no sugar	Black no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar	White no sugar

A chart and some cable ties can reduce washing up and avoid mix ups



Avoid wear on the boom end by rigging a quiet preventer

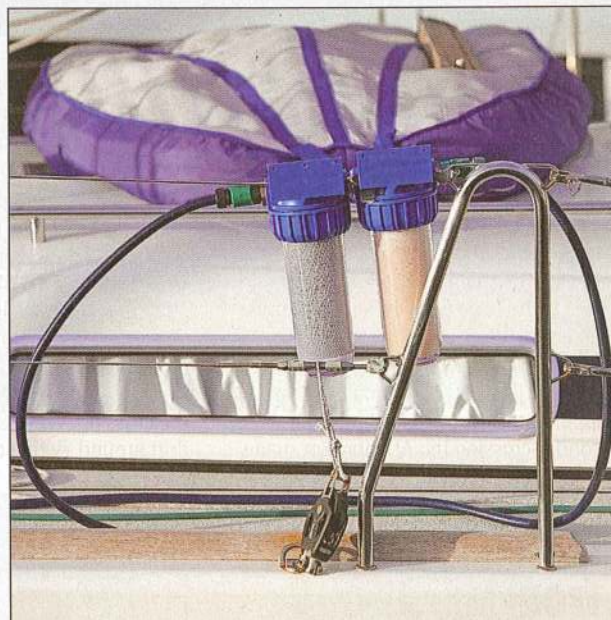


A simple precaution can reduce wear on metal fittings

Most booms have an end fitting suitable for rigging a preventer. If you are inclined to use a snap shackle, try using a small loop of rope attached to the end fitting. This way it won't wear the

fitting or rattle your crew to the verge of insanity.

If you're using this set-up, it might also be worth extending the tripping line for the snap shackle so it can be released from deck.



Filtering water can remove a host of contaminants

Filter your drinking water before it reaches the tank

If you often fill your tanks with water from different sources, it might be worth investing in a couple of in-line filters with a hose attachment on them.

Rig the hose from the dock to the filters, so

you know all the water in your tanks is filtered from sediment, sand, metal particles and so on, as well as making it more palatable.

I'd rather use these than rely on smaller, less effective filters below deck.

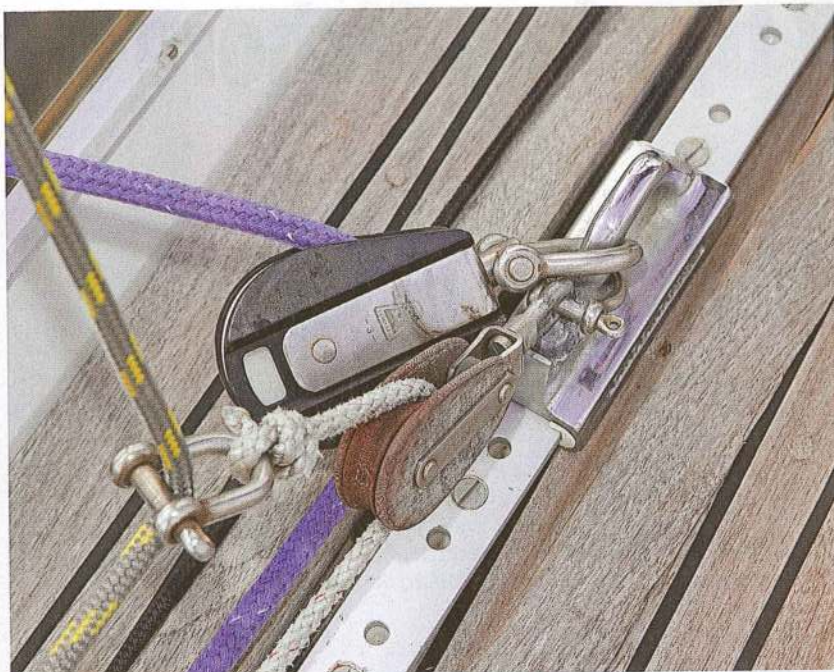
Tape can protect your vulnerable deck cable runs

The electrical wiring to your navigation lights is vulnerable to attack by sun, seawater and sails.

An extra layer of tape, like self-amalgamating or insulation tape, around the wire where it exits the pushpit should increase its lifespan and gives you one less thing to worry about at night. Adding sealant around gromets will add support too.



Protecting vulnerable wires could increase their working lifespan



There never seem to be enough padeyes on deck, but now there can be

Expand your options with adjustable padeyes

It's always handy to have some spare strong points on deck in advance of needing them. One often-overlooked strong point is the genoa track.

Adding a second car at the forward end, which can be moved and locked into a variety of positions for a number of attachments, will give more options.

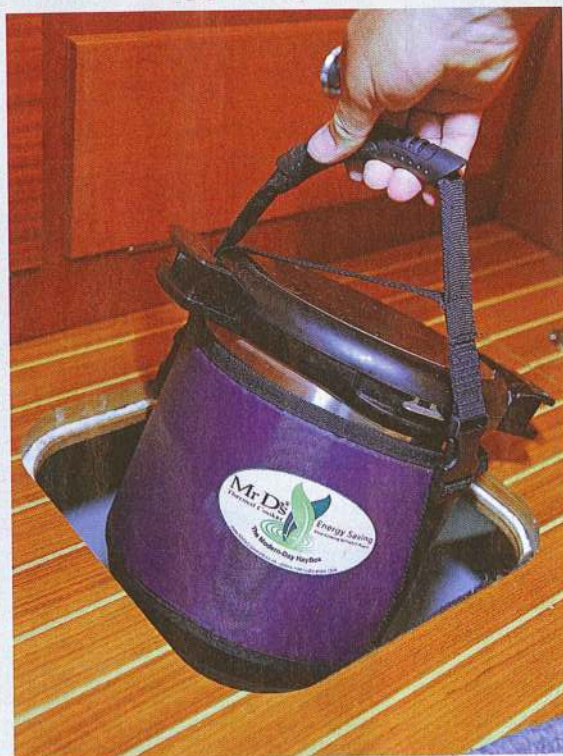
Whether it's just a line to take the running backstays forward out of the way when not required, or lines for a boom brake, extra blocks for storm sails or a moveable, temporary fairlead for mooring with a midships spring, genoa track slides with eyes give you lots of handy padeye options at very little cost.

Save gas with low-energy 'hay box' cooking

If you do a lot of longer passages and want a hot meal with minimum fuss, you should consider a thermal cooker.

It's like a slow cooker, but using a traditional hay box method, whereby the stew, casserole or curry is boiled in a pan, left to simmer for 10 minutes or so, then put into an insulated outer pan and sealed.

The thermal cooker uses no power and will not only keep its contents warm, but will continue to cook them for up to seven power-free hours.



RIGHT: A thermal cooker slow-cooks while you sail

Make sure you monitor your water intake

It's all too easy to get dehydrated on board while enjoying the summer sunshine. A water bottle will help you to keep up with your required water consumption.

Look for a one-litre bottle, then you know you should be aiming to drink at least two of these a day, more if sailing in warmer waters.

Get different coloured bottles for your crew to avoid confusion.

Stay hydrated to sail safely and efficiently



7 tips for offshore cruising

The safe way to rig a preventer

If you're going to be sailing downwind for more than a short period, it's advisable to rig a preventer to avoid crash gybes. One way is to rig a permanent line from the end of the boom to the mast, which can be clipped and unclipped without leaning over the side.

The preventer line can then be led to the bow (the bow cleats are a good place to attach turning blocks), then back to the cockpit.

If you're going to the effort of rigging one, you could add another to the other side of the mainsheet and vang attachment, as shown here, to save re-reeving the preventer from one side to the other.



Make the preventer accessible from the deck, not the outboard boom end



A portable generator could resolve frugal power needs

Don't want to fit a fixed generator? Take a portable one

It's nice to be self-sufficient, but not everyone wants or needs the expense and complexity of installing a fixed generator.

If you can be a bit more frugal with your power needs, you may find a small

petrol generator could fulfil them. If you need to use it at sea, you may want to fashion a gimballed mount for it, like this one, and make sure it's forward of the companionway when sailing downwind.

Taming a self-tacking jib

Many yachts take advantage of self-tacking jibs, but for all their ease of handling while sailing upwind, they are free to travel from one end of the track to the other, so you can't heave to with your headsail aback.

Also, anyone who has tried sailing dead downwind with a self-tacker will know the 'swoosh-bang! swoosh-bang!' as the headsail flops from side to side followed by the car.

A simple length of line with a clip on one end is all that's needed to help the



Fixing a self tacking jib-car in one position can bring peace

boat heave to, and it can also prevent the regular cacophony of the car racing back and forth.

Be medically self-sufficient

Sailing offshore means you can't get yourself to A&E in the event of injury so you should expand your first aid capability accordingly.

Keeping all your first aid kit in one place is a great way of finding what you need when you need it.

A better trick is to

separate all the remedies you're likely to need and keep similar items together, and label everything clearly.

There's no need to root through bandages and Bisodol looking for painkillers aboard this yacht with all its first aid supplies arranged in one locker.



Keep medical supplies sorted and well labelled, so they can be found easily

An easy way to take control of the contents of your shelving

Sailing offshore means you're more likely to encounter rough weather, and not all stowage on yachts, modern or otherwise, is practical for such conditions.

The addition of simple

netting, sold in most chandlers, can make the stowage far more secure and keep things where you left them, while still making them visible and accessible if enough room is left at the top for access.



Making the most of the stowage on board



Two halyards are better than one, so use a spare too

Add a second safety halyard

Unless you're keen enough to peel one spinnaker for another, you'll usually have a spare halyard available.

If you are planning to fly a spinnaker or asymmetric for a long period, consider attaching two halyards to the head of the sail, so if the one under load breaks you

won't lose the spinnaker into the water, and it will give you enough time to get the sail down without damaging it.

OK, you'll still need a trip up the mast, but you won't have sailed over your spinnaker and possibly ruined it in the process.

Easy-to-spot tins and clean bilges? Use a permanent pen

When tins are stowed in lockers, one tin top looks much like another. One way to save time rummaging through provisions is to label the tops of tins and keep similar items together.

If all you want is a tin of vegetables, peas, potatoes or sweetcorn would be preferable to peaches or rice pudding.

It's also worth removing the labels. Any contact with water turns them into pulp that effortlessly blocks limber holes and bilge pump strum boxes.



Most tins tend to look the same from above, making it hard to work out what's what. Labelling them takes the guesswork away

7 tips for blue water cruisers

Inspect your kit every day

It might sound obvious but kit that is great for coastal and offshore sailing sometimes isn't the best solution for crossing oceans.

Many crews on the 2016 ARC found that, while their telescopic whisker poles had given years of faultless service in their regular cruising grounds, crossing an ocean put more strain on the fittings.

In many cases they only realised that it was too much for them when it was too late.

Despite multiple repairs, the stresses of this downwind crossing were still too much for this pole

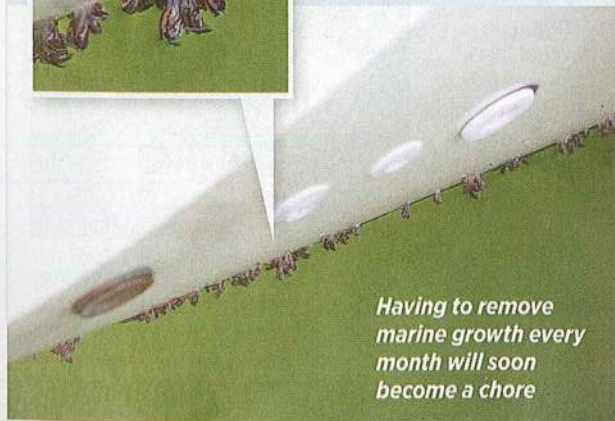


With extra kit and warm water, it's time to raise your waterline

If you're sailing off on a long-distance cruise, such as a transatlantic crossing, it's worth moving your antifouled waterline up, or adding a hefty boot top.

As you load more equipment, provisions and tools on board, your

yacht's waterline will be lower. While this might not matter much in a calm marina, exposing sections of unprotected hull to the water for 20 days or more is enough for marine-based nasties to attach themselves onto your hull. At best they will slow you down, at worst they can damage your yacht's gelcoat — or you could in your regular attempts to remove them.



Having to remove marine growth every month will soon become a chore



No uninvited guests, especially if they're rodents

No welcome mat for vermin

Roaches and rodents are always keen to find a new abode, and your boat is as good a place as any. One way to prevent crawling bugs and rodents getting on board is to raise your passerelle or boarding plank

when it's not in use.

A simple and easy way to do this is to use a length of bungee on the halyard used to support the plank. Step on the plank and it lowers, step aboard and the bungee lifts the plank clear again.

Slip on an extra jacket to beat chafe

Chafe: murderer of sheets, guys and halyards. One way to delay the onset of this inevitable killer is to add an extra jacket over the working end of your existing lines. A short length of outer jacket can be replaced many times while leaving the rope underneath unscathed, saving you splices and money every time.



Save the cost of replacing sheets by recycling sleeves of old ropes



Replacing a sock every few years is much cheaper than replacing a sail

Save sails by pulling your socks up

Warm-weather cruising has its downsides and the effect on your sails of stronger ultraviolet light is one. Sacrificial UV strips won't last as long.

One way to extend the life of your genoa is to hoist a sock over it when it's not in use. You won't be sailing every

day, so it makes a lot of sense to protect your sails when they're not being used. Not only does it protect the sail's fabric, it also protects the knots on the clew, webbing and leather on the sail too. It's also a lot cheaper and easier to replace a sock than a headsail.

21st century baggywrinkles help to keep sails chafe-free

Going downwind for weeks on end can take its toll on sails, especially where the mainsail rubs against the spreaders. If your spreaders are swept back, the problem of chafe is worse.

You can of course choose a sail configuration that does away with the mainsail. Another way is to reinforce the mainsail where the spreaders will rub, but this will need to be done for

a full mainsail, and one with one, two or more reefs.

An easier method is to put protection on the trailing edge of the spreaders. Various materials, from tea towels to pool 'noodles' can be seen adorning the spreaders of ARC yachts, but the most popular solution is closed-cell foam pipe insulation, available from any DIY shop or plumber's merchant.

Foam pipe lagging is split and taped over the aft edge of spreaders to reduce chafe on the main



Securing spare fuel and water needs some thought

Need more fuel and water? Make sure you keep control of the cans

Few yachts have the fuel or water capacity to cross an ocean with a full crew. Taking fewer crew is one solution, but carrying jerry cans of extra fuel and water is another.

Some skippers fasten wooden battens to their stanchions and lash the

cans to them, but above is a rather sturdier arrangement, complete with UV covers for the cans. If you do this, make sure you can remove just one container at a time without unleashing the others; the last thing you want is cans of diesel skating around on deck.