



Rupert Holmes

A popular summer destination: sheltered Studland Bay in Dorset

# Top tips for cruising

Bolster your summer cruising adventures with tips from Rupert Holmes and PBO readers

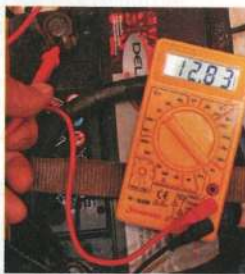
**T**here's much that can be done in the final weeks before a summer cruise that will make your time on board more enjoyable, better organised and more relaxed. Many boats may not have ventured far from sheltered waters since the previous summer. It therefore makes sense to check the boat over thoroughly in the two to four weeks before departure, when there's still time to attend to anything that's amiss.

## Lights and instruments

While looking at the boat's electrics it's worth checking everything actually works. That may sound trite, but if a boat has been mostly day-sailed for a few months it's easy for a failed light in the heads to go unnoticed. The same is true for navigation lights and other critical systems.

## Batteries

The extra use these get on a summer cruise can result in failure. The best way to check their condition varies depending on the boat's set up. If a battery monitor is fitted repeat the calibration procedure, as battery capacity declines with age. Alternatively, a battery load tester (DIY models cost well under £50) will give an idea of a battery's performance under load. An even more basic test is to switch a number of systems on and monitor the voltage drop over several hours.



Open circuit voltage is no guide to battery condition



## Examine the diesel tank

Sludge and other nasties at the bottom of the tank often goes unnoticed until it all gets disturbed on a rough trip – and blocks the fuel filters. Even if the tank has no drain valve, many boats have an access point above the lowest part of the tank. A small hand pump can be used to suck out water, bacteria (which grows on the water/diesel interface) and other crud that has collected at the bottom of the tank.

## Windscoop

On hot days these can be enormously effective in funnelling cool air through the accommodation, especially at anchor. You can buy them ready made, or stitch one up yourself in a few minutes.



Windscoops funnel cool air



Most sail damage starts to manifest itself near the leech

### Check the sails

Longer distances, stronger winds and bigger seas can put more wear and tear on sails in a couple of weeks than during the rest of the season. It's therefore worth spending 10 minutes checking each one for damage. Pay particular attention to the stitching, plus the cloth around the batten pocket ends and the region closest to the leech – these are the areas that fail first.

### Rigging checks

Breakages can seriously disrupt a summer trip, so a quick check will help to give peace of mind. If the rig has been properly inspected reasonably recently there may be no need to go aloft – much can be seen from deck level with binoculars or a powerful camera lens. Equally, the genoa halyard can be examined for chafe when the sail is dropped for inspection.

### Ground tackle

There are few things worse than missing out on sleep worrying the anchor might drag. Recent ultra high holding power models, including Rocna, Bugel, Spade and others, hold significantly better than their forebears and are well worth the extra investment. In addition, many boats are set up without sufficient rode for serious use, but this can often be rectified without big expense. For instance, a 30m length of chain can be extended with 20m of heavy nylon warp for occasional use.

### Navigation info

It's all too easy to find that a crucial chart is missing, or that it's hopelessly out of date. This applies equally to electronic charts – too many boats rely on data that's more than a decade old – and to pilot books, almanacs and other essential publications. Update Navionics and similar tablet and smartphone apps before leaving home.

### Wifi hoist

In good weather, lazy days at anchor are one of the joys of a summer cruise, but mobile data signals are dire along much of the UK's coast. A useful tip is to set up wireless tethering on a smartphone, put it in a dry bag and hoist it up the topping lift or backstay with a retrieval line. The extra height will often improve the signal.

### Clean the bottom

Even relatively small amounts of fouling extend passage times. It will also slow the boat disproportionately in light airs, so you'll miss out on some relaxing and gentle sailing and burn more diesel.

## TOP 10

### READER DIY SUMMER CRUISE IDEAS

Here are 10 of the best Practical Projects from PBO readers that we've published since summer 2017. They're simple to do and could really improve your summer cruise. Full details will be available for free on [www.pbo.co.uk/summerDIY](http://www.pbo.co.uk/summerDIY). Enjoy trying them out – and let us know if you come up with anything new!



**1** Turn a paper bag into a wasp deterrent: p89, December 2017.



**2** Build your own helmsman's backrests (see p95 this issue).



**3** Extra summer miles could mean wear patches are required on deck. Make your own out of a stainless steel pedal bin: p48, July 2017.

**4** Everything's stowed, but can you find what you need in your large cockpit locker? Simple organisers could help make all the difference: p27 June 2017.



**5** Make your top-loading fridge more easily accessible by using plastic bins: p48, July 2017.



**6** In a heatwave you'll be glad of this DIY selection of ventilated, flexible, companionway covers: p27, June 2017.



**7** Old leggings work for improvised fender socks: p85, October 2017.



**8** Make a storage bag for a fortress anchor: p81, February 2018.



**9** Organise lines with DIY halyard hangers: p85, March 2018.



**10** Add buoyancy using builder's foam in a dry-bag: p84, April 2018.