

PRACTICAL SEAMANSHIP

Chris Beeson is an Offshore Yachtmaster with over 35,000 miles logged on dozens of yachts, both cruising and racing



Tender dos and don'ts

Are you kitted out for tender travel? Chris Beeson reminds you what you need and why

Trips in the tender are usually brief and uneventful, but some are longer. If you decide to pack a lunch and explore upriver, you may want extra kit, like the grapnel anchor and short chain and warp we see in the bow of the tender opposite, but most are short ferry trips. That being the case, it's easy to become blasé about them but if, for whatever reason, something goes wrong, you'll need a Plan B. This is just a quick reminder about what you need to do to ensure you arrive safely.

3 Dip the fuel tank

You've spent too long shopping, the ebb's started and you've got to get half a mile upriver. You fire up the outboard, zip off and the engine dies, leaving you with an energy-sapping row back to the boat. Check the tank and it could save you a back-breaking hour.



Check your fuel level before you leave

1 Fit a long painter

Dinghy docks can get very busy. A long painter allows you to tie up your tender and let it drift out so others can do the same. It's also handy, as seen opposite, for securing the tender's bow and stern, which makes it safer to board or disembark via the transom.



A long painter leaves space for others

2 Check your tube pressure

Pump up the tender to the correct pressure, as recommended by the manufacturer. Few tenders are sold with a pressure gauge included but you can buy one in the chandler's. Don't forget to take the pump with you too, just in case.



An in-line pressure gauge costs less than £20

4 Use an outboard lanyard

When transferring the outboard from boat to tender, and vice versa, the person not holding the engine grabs the lanyard. That way, if someone drops the outboard, you can stop it sinking. When it's on the tender's transom, tie the bitter end to a strongpoint.



A lanyard could save your outboard

5 Tighten the clamps

Once the outboard's in position, twirl up the clamps tight. Check them now and then during the trip to make sure the engine's vibration hasn't loosened them. Outboard theft isn't uncommon, so, if you're leaving her for a while, padlock the clamps together.



Spin them up tight to make sure it stays put

Check your elbow room

I can't be the only one who's yanked the pullcord and knocked someone clean off the tube and into the drink. Not a popular move. Have a quick glance behind and make sure you've room to swing the cat.



Your crew won't thank you for a black eye

Don't wear your backpack

What happens if you encounter a steep wake and end up in the oggin? The backpack will float at first, pushing your head under, then it'll flood and take you down. Buy a waterproof one and put it on the sole.



Fall in and it's Davey Jones's locker for you

Don't overload the tender

Labouring across an anchorage with an inch of freeboard is likely to end both damply and unhappily. Make two trips: safer, simpler, probably quicker too. With a rigid tender that can be swamped, it's properly dangerous.



It's tempting, but don't. Make a second trip

PHOTO: COLIN WORKYIM

Bring a few essentials on every tender trip and you'll be ready for anything



6 Bring the oars

Whether it's the mercurial nature of outboards, or just a peaceful evening in an anchorage that you don't want to spoil, a good pair of oars is essential. If you can't row a fair distance with the ones that came with your tender, buy a decent pair.

7 Rig the killcord

No-one needs reminding why this is absolutely essential. This wriggly bit of plastic with a clip at either end is an unlikely looking lifesaver, but that's exactly what it is. Don't go anywhere without it. Stow it away from UV when not in use, it will last longer.

8 Bring spare fuel

You'll be glad of it if you've got a long chug ahead. It's also easier to take the humble jerrycan to the petrol station. Tie it to the thwart with a bit of gash line so it won't bounce out if you hit a wave, and fill the tank in gulps. Don't pour fuel or it could overflow.

PHOTO: GRAHAM SNOOKYIM



You can row your way out of most scrapes

PHOTO: GRAHAM SNOOKYIM



It takes seconds to fit. Don't forget it

PHOTO: COLIN WORKYIM



Bring spare fuel and secure the can

9 Wear a lifejacket

If you've never tried scrambling from the water into an inflatable tender, worse still a rigid tender, you should give it a go. See how you get on. Perhaps then you won't need convincing to wear a lifejacket for every tender trip, no matter how short.

10 Take a torch

As well as allowing you to do at night all the things you do during the day, from checking your footing to rigging the killcord or finding your elusive yacht in an anchorage, a torch also acts as an emergency nav light, which means you can see and be seen, too.

11 Bring a handheld VHF Radio

Maybe you've fallen overboard, maybe you're lost and need talking in, maybe you're in a shop standing before a bewildering array of baked goods with 'bread' on your shopping list? Whatever the reason, a VHF, or a mobile phone in a waterproof case, will get you heard.

PHOTO: GRAHAM SNOOKYIM



It's a simple enough rule, don't break it

PHOTO: GRAHAM SNOOKYIM



Head torch or hand, it's a must-have at night

PHOTO: GRAHAM SNOOKYIM



Always have some means of two-way comms