

***Panel Discussion:** Been invited on short sail or a boating trip? Even better, been invited to join friends or acquaintances on a longer, blue-water voyage? This evening's discussion will cover things you should know and questions you should ask before you leave the dock..*

Points for a successful charter from Jo Davies ...

When David and I charter we generally do so with two other couples, for a total of six.

Number of people on the boat? For some reason that we've not figured out, six people tend to work better than eight. Maybe too many different opinions; too difficult for each person to find a niche, \; not enough meaningful jobs to go round. Too much food to cook, too many dishes to wash, difficult to get tables in restaurants, etc.

Allocating responsibilities. After you've stowed your gear and had a review of the boat, it is a good idea for the captain to sit down with the crew and **allocate responsibilities**. This can be as simple as asking each if there are jobs aboard they like to do, and if there are jobs they don't want to even think about. We generally do this in a planning meeting before getting to the boat, but sometimes plans change after we see the boat. And of course the captain needs to be sure the person can execute the assigned responsibility.

As a crew member, be honest about what you know, what your physical limitations are, what you do well, what you'd like more practice at, what you just don't want to do at all.

Captains - Please cut us a little slack. You invited us along for a reason. Usually captains are looking for a crew that offers a mix of experience and enthusiasm. Even if a crew member's resume doesn't wow! you, if that person volunteers to do a job, **let them do it unless they demonstrate that they can't and don't want to learn**. It is perfectly ok to talk about competence and expectations, and no one wants to compromise safety. But trust me, there is nothing more demoralizing for a novice crew person than knowing that every knot, every fold, every whatever is going to be redone. If as captain you don't care for the way a job is done - talk about it, don't just redo it.

Checking out the captain. Even if you're well-acquainted with the skipper, if you have not have sailed as captain and crew together, *it is a good idea to "interview" the captain.* If it is a privately-owned boat, ask for a tour and use the tour to check the condition and equipment on the boat. Is the boat ship-Shape, well-maintained, or is it a Captain Ron boat? I don't mind being on a Captain Ron boat, but only with captains who are excellent sailors and mechanics.

Before you leave the dock, the captain should walk you through the basic minimum - how to stop and start the engine, how to use the radio, man over board? If the captain doesn't offer this intro, ask for the information.

A simple but very revealing question is "What's the weather forecast?"

Trust your instincts !!!! Especially if you're looking at a longer coastal sail.

If you don't feel good about either the boat or the captain, don't go. There will be other opportunities to sail.

Non-sailing components of a cruise

For a blue-water sail we suggest you establish ahead of time, how much time and where you'll be ashore vs. aboard. In the planning meeting we'll talk about who wants to do what. Everyone should have a least one shore trip or destination that is a priority for them and is known to the group.

Take a couple of walkie talkies to keep in touch. This avoids the dinghy disappearing for long periods, stranding half the group on the boat.

Set up a kitty with a purser to handle initial provisioning and communal expenses. Decide what are communal expenses - dock fees, transit fee etc. As far as provisioning, we usually share food for breakfast, lunch, snacks, etc. We like to have a preliminary shopping list before we go. Make sure your dietary and comfort food requirements are on the list just in case you're not in the shopping party.

Dinners - we have dinners ashore; depending on the trip we will often have one couple cook for one night. - First night ashore, last night and one other night. These come out of the kitty.

Don't buy too much, before you check the refrigeration;

Alcohol. We suggest leaving alcohol out of the kitty equation. First we never drink until boating is finished for the day. At that point we will open a bottle of wine, or make a mixed drink. Dave and I are very happy to share our wine and hors d' with our fellow sailor on the boat we're on as well as share with visitors who stop by. But we don't expect our fellow sailors to foot the bill. You'll know if we think we're being taken advantage of - you'll find us on the beach at a local bar instead of on the back of the boat.

Purser. And last but not least - don't hassle the purser. Don't expect a detailed expense report. We trust the purser and take his or her word for the accounts. If you want a cent by cent reckoning - then you need to step up and handle the kitty.

Most of all, be ready to have a good time, to learn new skills, to laugh, have fun ... and contribute to the best of your ability.