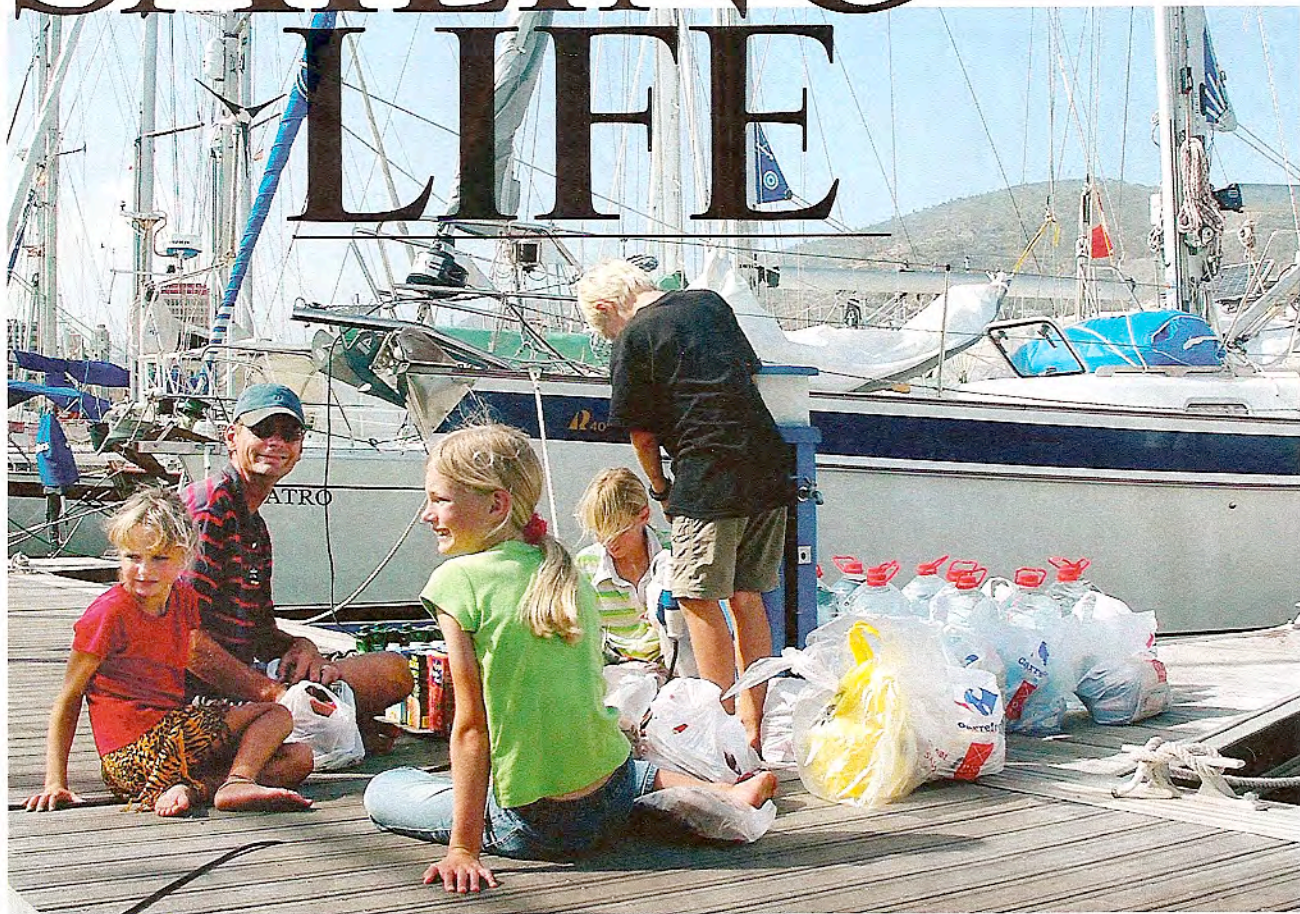


SAILING LIFE



Wilting in the Bed of Roses

UNDER WAY

When a skeptic calls for clarification, this sailor paints a warts-and-all portrait of the cruising lifestyle. BY LEON SCHULZ

THE APPEAL CAME FROM my sister, Jenny, who called me on my cell-phone while my family and I strolled along the beautiful waterfront. "But Leon, come on!" she said. "Tell us the truth!" It was late in the evening, and the entire Portuguese town seemed to

be out dining and enjoying the warmth. I was in shorts and a T-shirt, and I hadn't worn socks since Ireland.

What could my dear sister mean?

"I've been following you on your website. It's fun to read, but tell me, I know it isn't always as picturesque and romantic as you write. I've read the entries in your guest book. You must be more truthful! You can't just give a glamorous picture about cruising. You must add all the negative parts, too."

It's good to have a sister who says what she thinks. A critical reader is essential. But the truth? I really love our new lifestyle and don't want to exchange it for any price, especially if it means being

buckled into an office chair again.

Having said that, I must explain that cruising isn't a bed of roses; *no* lifestyle is. But I want to honor my sister's request, so here goes: the true, unvarnished story of what it's like to sail off from Sweden with two pre-teen children and your wife aboard a 40-footer.

First of all, I must mention that my wife and I are happily married. If a couple doesn't share such connubial bliss, then all this voyaging stuff could easily turn a cruise into a divorce. Bad

partnerships don't get any better at sea. My advice? Be nice to your spouse, especially if you dream about cruising, since getting along well is the best way

Proof that cruising isn't all fun and games lies in the grocery bags that Regina's crew must scan for cockroaches.

to ensure a positive attitude on board. Make no mistake, positive attitudes and appreciation for each other grow in direct proportion. And to ensure harmony, everyone should jump in and hand wash the dirty laundry while under way, as marinas are often already crowded with cruisers who find the washing machines before you do.

Stowage is a never-ending challenge. Compared to houses, boats are more or

less cramped, so you must judge whether or not items you want to bring aboard are needed. If they pass this test, you must next figure where to stow them. Face it—all stowage space is either difficult or more difficult to access. Then we often change where we put things, having not yet found the ultimate stowing system. Moving things around

It's nice to shower under steady water, but don't forget to bring all the clothes that need laundering.



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INTREPID

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lends extra spice to the game of finding them again, despite all of the computerized stowing lists you might create.

We all get seasick. It's not pleasant, but it doesn't prevent us from cruising. As the saying goes, seasickness comes in two stages: Stage One is when you're afraid you'll die, and Stage Two is when you're afraid you won't die. The cure is easy—as soon as you reach land, you're fine. The trick is to survive in the meantime.

Here's what helps us: plenty of sleep, warm meals, snacks, and drinking at least two quarts of water a day. Avoid smells from cooking, engine oils, the bilge, diesel, and the holding tank. We also stay away from alcohol, coffee, and rich or fatty foods during a passage. We use medication when needed. When we do succumb, we rely on a little bucket because leaning overboard feels too dangerous.

Luckily, it isn't always this bad. Picking a good weather window for the start of a long leg is a good idea. Getting used to the sea during two or three nice days helps, and with a bit of luck, one can avoid seasickness totally by casting off in good weather.

Grocery shopping after making landfall is often a full day's project. It takes a while until you find your way to a good supermarket in a new place—and once you find one, it may not be as "super" as the promotion made it sound.

Brands, labels, and products vary from country to country, and sometimes it can become a sport to find out what's actually inside a can or box. If you're unsure of something, buy a small sample and taste it. If you like it, buy more.

Our produce choices have changed

dramatically. Instead of wonderfully ripe red tomatoes, we hunt for nice green ones. The bananas should be green, too. They keep longer on the boat and become very tasty after awhile.

We always get lost in a new town, but that may turn the shopping day into an afternoon of pleasant detours, such as meeting the locals at sidewalk cafés. People are sitting in the shade drinking beer and eating charcoal-grilled sardines. The

scene is inviting, so why shouldn't we join them? When we finally do find the supermarket, we leave there looking like backpackers, all our provisions weighing us down as we make the long walk home to the boat in the heat.

One more thing about shopping: cockroaches. Did you know they can fly? We were unaware that we had one huge specimen in the dinghy with us late one night on our way back to *Regina*, our Hallberg-

Rassy 40. This nearly resulted in the four of us jumping into the water, with only the cockroach left in the dinghy. Check everything, especially cardboard, which is a haven for cockroach eggs; never take it on board.

Lacking a steady income, we have to look at our expenses all the time. A surprisingly high cost on our voyage is harbor fees, which vary wildly depending on the port but not necessarily according to the service. Also, the occasional luxury of eating out, which varies significantly from country to country, matters. Nevertheless, a good bottle of wine always finds its way under the floorboards, a space we call our wine cellar. But why is it always the best bottle that breaks in a heavy roll?

Regina has her own budget; line items, such as \$1,400 for new batteries or the cost of hauling out for antifouling paint, aren't discussed. Period. They're needed—but ouch! You can live inexpensively, for sure, but you're just asking for trouble if you set off on your travels with a budget that's been overoptimistically calculated.

No, we don't miss a car. We don't even think of it. It's become so natural for us to walk everywhere.

In port, we spend a lot of time shopping, but not at the expense of boat maintenance. We perform preventive work and repairs constantly. A clogged head or a watermaker making anything but water are frequent issues for yachties; so too are a malfunctioning diesel generator or communication device. They all give you gray hair and many hours of frustration. I don't know if you ever get used to the fact that so much gear needs to be looked after, and guess what? You're the only repairman around. So you learn new things all the time and grow to understand how your boat systems work—and sometimes don't work.

The daily tasks on a boat do take time. Some claim I don't work anymore; I say that I now have several jobs: I'm an electrician, a carpenter, a plumber, a rigger, a mechanic, and, let's not forget, a teacher in *Regina's* onboard school. I never find time to play my guitar.

Is the cruising lifestyle for you? It's a big question. You probably can't definitively answer it until you try it on for size. That's what we've done. And we definitely don't want to return to the lives we left. We love our new ones.

You can keep track of *Regina* and her crew at the Schulz family's website (www.reginasailing.com).

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