

Little things—massive difference

DON'T COMPROMISE WHEN PURCHASING ITEMS FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH, BUT YOU CAN GO CHEAP ON OTHER USEFUL THINGS

BY DINI MARTINEZ

THE famous boat acronym for 'bring on another thousand' is true for many invaluable items such as a good sized bimini, reliable outboard, handheld VHF and possibly even proper binoculars. However, there are many items which do not cost a fortune and you would not want to live without on a boat.

For us, a family of four, after living on board for a year this includes the following items which can all be found for \$100 or less.

PLENTY OF FENDERS

Unlike the Pacific islands, Mediterranean cruising will often put you in situations where you have to moor your boat in unknown harbours and busy quays, sometimes under challenging conditions. We have seen several accidents happen between charter boats with a slight good swell in tightly packed harbours which could have been easily avoided by simply adding enough good sized fenders between them. Eight should be the minimum for a 40 footer.

Aft fenders have also allowed for better night's sleeps more than once and saved several neighbouring boats from a hole in their stern with strong headwinds blowing them against a quay or sturdy pontoon.

If your cruising area and style involves more side-on, getting a few of the flat swimming floatable type fenders might make sense.

For river cruising a fenderboard should be considered.

If storage is an issue, it might be worth investigating inflatable fenders.

Approximate cost per fender, varying according to size, brand and style: \$20 to \$90.



\$20-\$90



\$35

HEAD TORCH

Whether you need to check that tricky angle in the engine compartment, make yourself visible in the dinghy, inspect something on the bow during a night sail or just want to read a book in the cockpit after dusk, head torches are likely to get used every day/night. The rechargeable batteries our Colemans use last several weeks, if not months, as red-light and different brightness settings allow adjustment to optimum light levels. Over the long run it works out less expensive to invest in a good brand, ideally a waterproof model, rather than having to replace cheaper versions every year.

Approximate cost: \$35.



\$2.50

BICARBONATE OF SODA

This is the most effective and natural way to get rid of stains on the hull, scummy waterlines, dirty sinks and filthy corners. Bicarb soda also removes odd smells from cupboards and fridges without polluting the sensitive aquatic environment. It can even be used for personal hygiene as soap, shampoo and toothpaste, plus as a baking powder substitute. Moreover, this white powder is cheap and readily available almost anywhere in the world.

While stocking up your cleaning cabinet, do not hold back on lime juice and vinegar which can work wonders on rust stains and stainless, head maintenance and general disinfectant and all-purpose cleaning duties.

Approximate cost: 500g for \$2.50.



\$50

WIND SCOOPS

A small triangular piece of sail cloth rigged above the main hatch(es) scoops the wind into the boat. It provides the best natural and free air conditioning in the world and should be a no-brainer for cruising in warmer climates.

Approximate cost: \$50.



\$100

QUALITY DRY BAGS

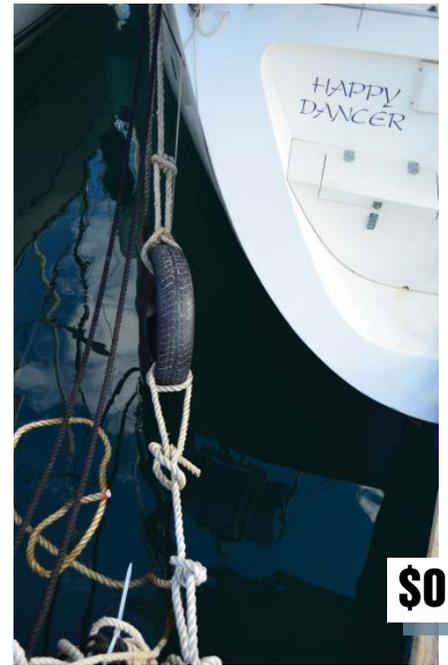
It is best to get several sizes to keep your camera and wallet safe, provisioning bags from soaking and laundry dry on wet dinghy rides. We opted for the cheapest version but soon regretted not having invested in better quality dry bags.

Cost: approximately \$30 for 30 litre.

GOOD SNORKEL GEAR

Not only for the fun of discovering the underwater world but also useful to check/clean the propeller, give your bottom a scrub, check your underwater through-hulls or anchor and dive up things that have fallen overboard when on the hook.

Cost: While you can get a snorkel, goggles and a pair of fins for around \$30, it will pay off before too long to spend closer to \$100 to make your gear last longer, keep a clear vision, enough air and a strong stroke under water.



\$0

ADEQUATE DOCK LINES

Sell themselves! Length and width and the proper material is what you are after. As a general rule, two thirds of your boat length should be used for bow and stern lines and a full boat length for your spring lines. Most 40' cruisers go for a 3/4" diameter and Nylon is the most popular material due to its strength, resistance to sun and stretch characteristics. The latter will not only protect your lines from breaking but also reduce the shock loads on cleats. Additionally, we have started using car tyres as a buffer when tied up for longer. They seem to work much better than any of the fancy and expensive springs for sale.

While you are in the chandlery, stock up on various length and strength of quality ropes, including different sizes of Dyneema. They always come in handy, whether a sheet needs replacement, the dinghy tying down, a tangled anchor retrieving, someone to tow or long shorelines tied to a rock in the Mediterranean, 50 metres nylon recommended. Always keep an eye on chafing and protect your ropes from this silent enemy. Some old hosepipe cut along its length and secured in place with some light line is a good and inexpensive chafe guard.

Cost for stern lines: Around \$5/m although prices vary hugely depending on your location, material and quality of rope. Sometimes ropes are sold by the kilo, but mostly by length.

Cost for tyre-buffers: Zero.

Pick them up at your local garage.

GOOD SPONGES

Good sized sponges with high soaking capacity are useful for cleaning the bilge, sucking any leakages out of the remote engine bay, keeping the dinghy dry, catching spill-overs when changing the water maker filters, cleaning the floorboards, wiping the stern, giving the cockpit a better look and much more. Do not hold back on numbers as you do not want to be stuck with your greasy bilge sponge for other duties.

Cost per sponge: around \$3.



\$3

WALKIE TALKIES

Communicating with one another when one is ashore and the other one on board or elsewhere is incredibly useful. Mobile phones can do the job but charges, especially with international roaming, are often prohibitive and lack of connectivity in remote areas a common issue. Communicating onshore for private leisure purposes via handheld VHF is illegal and can be overheard by all sailors in the area. Walkie talkies operate on a different frequency and allow you to communicate for free within an approximate five mile radius. This is another item which gets used almost daily on *Happy Dancer*, but might be due to the fact that we have little children and generally take turns with boat work and kids entertainment.
Cost: \$50.

\$50



LEATHERMAN

Mine has become a constant companion on my belt. It combines plier, pocket knife, screwdriver, tin opener and more when a screw needs a quick tightening, a corroded shackle opening or some sail ties cutting. The latter are another item which you cannot have enough of on board.
Cost: anywhere from far below to far beyond the \$100 mark, depending on brand and model.

TRIP LINE

Also referred to as anchor float, this is a thin, but strong, line of around ten metres tied to your anchor with a small fender or buoy attached to the other end, useful for all but remote sandy anchorages. The length of your trip line is adjusted to the depth you drop your anchor in. Most anchors come with a trip line hole on top. Its foremost purpose is to help retrieve an anchor stuck in rocky grounds. However, it is also extraordinarily useful having the buoy indicating your anchor's location at all times. It keeps other boats from dropping their hook right on top of yours, is a visual aid when checking whether you have good holding, helps untangle your anchor if it gets stuck on other ropes and makes finding your anchor to check on it anytime you feel the need much easier. It is recommendable to mark your fender buoy with an anchor sign and your boat name to avoid confusion.
Approximate cost of ten metres of rope and one small fender as buoy: \$35.

\$35



BICYCLES

Admittedly a bit of a pain to store on most boats, but worth all the effort. While a good-sized, rigid-bottom dinghy with a reliable outboard gets you ashore, bicycles take you the extra mile. Not only do they keep you fit, but bikes also get you to places no tourists get to. Allowing yourself to get lost on a bike ride can reveal some of the most unexpected highlights of your trip like the most peaceful monastery, some remote and ancient ruins or an unforgettable, authentic and cheap local tavern. Likewise, while other cruisers are confined to the promenade mile around the marina or bay, bikes get you to the local's hinterland supermarkets where prices are often considerably lower. **Cost: \$100 – \$1,000.**

\$100-1,000



Have you got a small, inexpensive item on board which improves your daily life tenfold?



DINI MARTINEZ

Dini lives on her Moody 425 along with her husband and two little boys. They left settled life in Sydney in 2013 to cruise the Med and make their way back to Australia.