



The idea of selling up and sailing into the sunset is something most sailors dream of. Jenevora Swann explains how she did it



Dare to dream

It was Valentine's Day and my husband Fergus and I were spending our first night on board, *Two Drifters*, a second-hand Lagoon 440 catamaran we had just purchased in Toulon in France.

But it was a far cry from the romantic dream I had envisaged.

We couldn't get the heating to work, it was pouring with rain and the hatches were leaking, there was no gas to light the stove, the bilge alarm kept going off and we had just one sleeping bag and a pillow

between us to keep warm. This was the start of our liveaboard life and I had never felt so disheartened. Our dream of sailing around the world suddenly didn't seem quite so appealing.

For many years, we discussed selling the business and the house, buying a yacht and sailing off into the sunset. I thought it was a pipe dream, but then one day everything fell into place and it all came together very quickly - although not entirely smoothly!

ABOVE
Anchored off the San Blas islands with dream having become reality

A troubled start

When planning to leave the UK to start this new life, we had already suffered a set-back as the self-drive van which we had hired one-way to transport our worldly goods to France had fatally broken down just 48 hours before we were due to leave the country.

With no replacement van available, no refund given and new owners moving into our house, we were left to our own devices to resolve the issue. In my former day



job as MD of a PR agency, I was well-versed to dealing with crisis management, but when this happened to us, I was so stressed out that I totally lost the plot.

Stepping into action, Fergus arranged for our boxes to be transported to France by courier,

but the earliest they could get them to us was the following week. Thankfully, we had left selling our small sports car till last minute. So, we piled the car full to the gunwales and with Molly, our cocker spaniel, on the parcel shelf, we left Hampshire and headed for the



ABOVE
Fergus at the helm, Jenevora on the winch as *Two Drifters* heads off on her adventure

Eurotunnel.

Arriving in Toulon, with a mixture of anticipation and anxiety, we boarded the boat. This was the first time I'd seen it. While I'd been on a Lagoon 440 before, I hadn't been able to take the time away from the business to view this actual boat, so I trusted Fergus to make the decision it was the one for us when he took a fleeting day trip to France with a broker to view it two month's previously.

A few days later, when the courier arrived with our belongings, he was greeted like a long-lost friend. Now it was time to make this boat my home.

My next dilemma was space. When you pack up your house with a view to fitting it on to a boat; you cut down to the absolute minimum. Except, my minimum was still way too much and I had to perfect the art of shoehorning items into various cupboards, lockers, cubby holes and the bilges. →





Out-Of-My-Depth

For six weeks, we waited out the worst of the winter weather and strong north-westerly Mistral winds in Leucate, southern France, while also carrying out some essential maintenance and improvements to the boat.

My initiation into liveaboard life had begun as normal everyday tasks involved a great deal more effort and planning.

Buying a local SIM card to put in our MiFi device meant we could link our phones, tablet and computer to the internet at the same time; but we had to keep a close eye on data usage. We soon became quite adept at finding local cafes, bars and libraries that had the best wifi for Skype calls and downloads.

Shopping was tackled by googling the nearest large supermarket to our location and taking the bus or walking there. A shopping trolley, which we would have never used in the UK, soon became the best investment we'd ever made.

Every part of my daily life had dramatically changed and I was out-of-my-depth. At times, to keep my sanity, my mantra was to cope with 'a challenge a day'.

The challenges faced in our initial few weeks ranged from running out of gas while cooking dinner to the water-maker and one of the toilets breaking just as our first guests arrived. We even had to deal with an unscheduled night passage when an anchorage became untenable as the wind changed direction and a large swell came in.



ABOVE
Fergus re-stringing the trampolines

BELOW
Two Drifters in action

Learning the ropes

Then there was the very small matter of learning how to sail. For while we had enjoyed holidays travelling around the south coast in our motor boat, we had never actually sailed a boat together by ourselves. Fergus was an accomplished RYA Yachtmaster, but I was about to endure a complete baptism by fire. In hindsight, taking a sailing course before we left the UK, would have been a good idea.

Getting the mainsail up and sailing the boat for the first time was fast, frantic and more than a tad unnerving; my lack of experience had me at a great disadvantage. My saving grace was the Reeds Crew Handbook, which I quickly read from cover-to-cover to familiarise myself with the terminology.

As a novice sailor, my incompetence with lines, knots and mooring buoys resulted in their fair

Two Drifters

Lagoon 440 Catamaran
Owners Version 2008
LOA: 13.61m (44.65ft)
Beam: 7.70m (25.26ft)
Draught: 1.30m (4.27ft)





share of tears and tantrums. It wasn't until we reached Greece, six months later, that I felt more at ease on the boat and began working as a team with Fergus.

I realised instinct plays a huge part in sailing, such as knowing when to reef before the afternoon winds set in or judging the best place drop the anchor. I mastered the art of long-lining from a tree or rocks ashore to keep it from swinging – essential when anchoring in tight spaces or deep water.

And then there's the issue of Med-Mooring, especially when you're reliant on someone standing on the pontoon or quay to take your line, secure it and throw it back to you. Or, in my case, with the first time I did it there was no one around to help and I had to jump off the back of our catamaran and do it myself. It isn't the first time I have wished I had longer legs!

After three years exploring Europe, I reluctantly agreed to sail

Two Drifters across the Atlantic, from Tenerife to Barbados, which I couldn't have done without the support of four friends who joined us on the crossing.

Arriving in Barbados after just under three weeks at sea was such an amazing feeling of accomplishment. I didn't agree

ABOVE
At anchor in
Kioni, Ithaca

BELOW
Paddleboarding
in the Bahamas

lightly to sailing across the Atlantic, but to have done it and enjoyed it really took me by surprise.

I thought it would be difficult being at sea for so long, but I just loved everything about it, aside from the occasional squall that is.

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Highs & Lows

We are now seven years into our sailing adventure and I wouldn't have changed it for the world. Every day brings a different view, new places to explore, local foods to enjoy and new friends to meet.

We have savoured so many amazing highs as well as endured some stupendous lows.

We've sailed with dolphins, whales, seals, sharks and turtles; seen sensational sunrises, jaw-dropping sunsets and anchored alone off deserted islands.

Catching fish for supper such as grouper, wahoo, mahi mahi or tuna is our way of life while at sea; and it's free food. Fergus is a dab-hand with the fishing rod as well as a spear gun and he's even conjured up a lobster or two!

Each day we create so many amazing memories. We enjoy integrating with locals across the miles and special moments have included joining an extended family in Lefkas celebrating Greek orthodox Easter; dining with indigenous tribespeople in Colombia and helping Guna Indians translate their laws into English on the island of Caledonia in San Blas.

On the flip side, we've navigated bad weather and found ourselves dealing with more than our fair share of ferocious storms. We've battened down the hatches while negotiating regional winds, from the Meltemi, Bora and Levante in Europe, to the North Atlantic's nor'easters, Christmas trade winds in the Caribbean as well as having

ABOVE (clockwise from left); sunset in the Grenadines; Colombian street market; bartering in the San Blas islands

BELOW LEFT Swimming with turtles in the Caribbean

BELOW RIGHT Fergus with a freshly caught Mahi-Mahi

to dodge out of the path of hurricanes.

I'm amazed at the amount of times we've come out unscathed when sailing in foul weather, especially when lightning is flashing all around, rain is crashing down hard enough to hurt and the thunder so loud it's almost deafening. Having to move quickly at night when a storm unexpectedly comes in pushing us towards a lee shore is my worst nightmare.

When something essential breaks, it's down to Fergus to work out how best to fix it. Getting new parts for the water-maker or the windlass to remote destinations isn't easy, especially when you don't have a static address. And something is normally guaranteed to break just before guests arrive, →



Cruising ~ Sell up and sail

which raises the stress levels to an unquestionable level.

That said, our family and friends, who think they may be coming out for a free sailing holiday, will often find themselves laden up like a pack horse bringing a suitcase bulging with cruising guides, boat parts and tea bags.

Our biggest low was just last year. While exploring the Central America, Molly our dog, now 11-years-old, fell ill with tick fever and went downhill very quickly. Despite the help of some very kind vets in Panama and Roatan, she didn't make it and we had to say goodbye to her.

It was heart-breaking. She had been part of our family since she was a year old; transitioning well to a salty sea dog and loving the ever-changing beaches, swims and walks. It's hard for anyone to lose a pet, but she had been a constant companion on this adventure with us and without her around, we suddenly found it very quiet on board.

New Challenges

After the devastating loss of Molly, we had to decide what to do next and did it still involve the same lifestyle? As the quarantine rules for taking dogs into French Polynesia and New Zealand were so complex, crossing the Pacific had never been on our radar. Until now. We were still in Central America and well-positioned for a jump across the Pacific Ocean.

Relishing a new challenge, we recently transited the Panama



ABOVE
Beach walks
with Molly

BELOW
(left to right); Molly
takes the helm;
anchored off a desert
island in Panama

Canal, and are now waiting for a weather window to sail to French Polynesia and then on to New Zealand for the America's Cup.

I'm surprised I'm not more fazed by the prospect of spending a month at sea, just the two of us. Time will tell, but at the moment I'm relaxed and looking forward to the adventure of crossing another ocean and exploring a new continent.

Sailing The Dream

If the liveaboard life sounds appealing, I would recommend reading as much as you can on a cruisers' life before you set off. From the many sailing guides and autobiographies found online to blogs written by those who have sailed the same routes that you're hoping to do.

Also, tap into people who have already done it. There are so many people, like us, with a Facebook page, who are more than happy to offer advice and to pass on their knowledge and experience.



Jenevora Swann and her husband Fergus Dunipace have been liveaboards on their catamaran *Two Drifters* since 2014. They sailed around Europe before crossing the Atlantic to explore the Caribbean, USA, South and Central America. They are now heading to the South Pacific. www.Facebook.com/TwoDriftersTravel

Register with the multitude of Facebook cruiser pages, normally listed by locality, which will help with any queries for that area from check-in and visa requirements to restaurants and recommended suppliers in the area that you're visiting.

Boat owners' forums help with the complexities of maintenance and upkeep on your boat.

If you're thinking of crossing an ocean, the Ocean Cruising Club (oceanclub.org) is a great source of support, suggestions and information. Its members are a diverse group of offshore sailors that have a shared aim of adventure and helping each other out at sea.

Would I recommend stepping off the treadmill and taking the plunge on a life at sea? Most definitely! Sailing the dream comes with a multitude of challenges but each day is an opportunity to make a new memory and have an adventure of a lifetime.

