



➤ **Above** The author's boat, *Nesika*, tied up and anchored in a small nook at the southern tip of Jedidiah Island.

BY PETER A. ROBSON

CRUISING WITH A BUDDY

Sometimes it's better to go cruising with an enthusiastic friend than a reluctant partner



FOR MOST BOATING couples, heading out cruising is an experience enjoyed equally by both partners. However, as much as that is the ideal, it isn't always the case. My wife and I are a case in point.

I'm a lifelong boater and have sailed all

over the world. In contrast, my partner, Sage, who I met up with later in life, is a novice and despite proving an able crew, she just can't seem to gain confidence, which means she is always nervous. She also has knee problems, which limit her ability to climb around and on and off the boat. As a result, when we do go cruising together, I'm careful to avoid doing

things that might challenge her beyond her abilities. I'm reluctant to head out in rough weather because she doesn't feel comfortable heeling or being at the helm. I avoid anchorages where stern tying is necessary or docks where she might need to jump off the boat quickly. Simply put, all these reasons have combined to make her a reluctant boater. She simply doesn't



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get the same amount of pleasure from cruising as I do, and I spend more time trying to make the experience better for her than relaxing and enjoying the place and time. Although it is disappointing, I can't fault her for it.

I know I'm not alone in this situation. When one half of a partnership isn't having a good time, it shows, especially when watching others anchor or tie up. It is also the reason many singlehanders, mostly men, cruise alone.

Having a reluctant partner is certainly no reason for me to give up boating, but I have given up on pressuring her to come with me. Instead, for the past couple of years I've done my

cruising with buddies while my partner does the things she really enjoys. Once I accepted this, the cruising experience was transformed and I found I was getting twice the enjoyment out of boating.

■ **THE RELATIONSHIP ANGLE** An obvious difference between cruising with a partner and cruising with a buddy is the personal relationship. In the normal day-to-day routine of living with my partner, there are few dramatic situations. We have learned how to get along well, we know each other's likes and dislikes, and we share responsibilities. Cruising on our boat changes all that because my partner feels unqualified and therefore unequal, and this leads to frustration, emotional stress and not having a good time. With a buddy, we don't live together and there aren't the same deep emotional

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ties. We're together for a week or two—a finite period of time—and whatever his level of experience there is only one simple goal, having fun. At the end of it all, any tensions are forgotten and we go our separate ways, remembering only the good times and the adventure.

■ **THE RIGHT BUDDY** The key for any potential crew is their enthusiasm. My first choice is always someone who's excited about boating and ready for any kind of adventure. So far, experience, or the lack of, hasn't made the slightest bit of difference. The gung-ho mentality is key. Last summer, I spent 10 days sailing with my brother-in-law, Jack. He was like an excited kid, brimming over with anticipation and ready to go wherever the wind took us. This enthusiasm was contagious. He was really into it. He dove into every task, whether getting the sails up and down, anchoring, or steering, something he was content to do all day. Not to fault my partner, but she just didn't have that same desire.

■ **A DIFFERENT ADVENTURE** One advantage of sailing with a buddy, especially someone nimble, is that I take chances I wouldn't ordinarily take with

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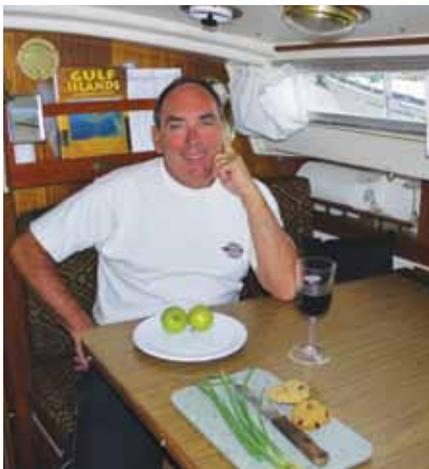
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my partner. Beating into a 25-knot westerly, for example, was just another part of the adventure. Jack reveled in keeping the boat in the slot and driving to weather. I thrilled too, at having the chance to just sit back and enjoy while he took the helm. If I'd been with my partner, I'd have to constantly reassure her that we weren't going to tip over and I'd have to be at the helm because she simply doesn't have the strength to fight the tiller.

During that same trip, Jack and I both wanted to check out Jedediah Island. We knew there were several recognized places to anchor, but we wanted to find a spot away from the crowds. At the island's very south tip, we discovered a tiny nook in the rocks protected from the prevailing westerly winds, but open to the south. We decided to investigate and spent about half an hour idling around, poking our nose in and out, circling, and trying to figure if there was enough room to tie up. The nook was certainly too small (about 100 feet wide) to swing at anchor, but there was a pinnacle of sharp rock above the high tide line at the entrance with a bit of old poly line wrapped around it. After planning a strategy, we decided to go for it. We nosed to the very head, dropped the anchor and backed down. While I used the throttle and steering to keep us in the middle of the cut, Jack hopped into the dinghy and took a stern line ashore, scaled the rock, and tied us off. We later shifted the lines around and took the anchor ashore so we were better centred while swinging between two shore tie-ups. What a treat that one-boat anchorage proved to be! We spent two days just hanging out, poking around ashore, hiking (unsuccessfully to the old homestead), watching the sheep on the rocks, reading, relaxing and eating. This



↑ **Above** The author's buddy, Jack, pretending that they ate healthy meals on their cruise.

memorable spot was definitely a place my partner would never have attempted.

After Jedediah, I wanted to show Jack Smuggler Cove so we meandered over to the marine park, trying our hand at trolling for salmon along the way (unsuccessfully, though we did lose a fair bit of gear to something). Luckily there were lots of tie-up spots available at Smuggler. We discussed how we were going to anchor and get the stern line ashore. Fortunately, all went well, though we changed tie-up rings ashore a couple of times until we had it right. Again, this may have turned into a disaster if my partner and I were together, as she wasn't good at clamoring ▶

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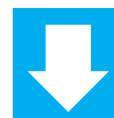
↑ **Above** Scrambling around on rocks just isn't an option for many reluctant partners, but a buddy might be willing to give it a go.

ashore or handling the helm.

On our second day at Smuggler, the wind picked up from the south. I wasn't comfortable with the amount of scope we had out and felt we were dragging anchor a bit. Fortunately, we simply slipped the stern line, motored forward, dropped the hook further out and retied the stern line. Again, it all went smoothly. If I'd been with my wife, I may have left the anchor as it was and worried all night about how close we were to the rocks. However, with Jack, re-anchoring and re-tying the stern line was actually fun.

ONE LOOK AROUND ANY anchorage shows that most boats are crewed by couples, and it appears that both are equally skilled and derive equal enjoyment out of cruising together. For them, all this is moot and doing the buddy thing doesn't offer any advantages to when or where they cruise.

However, not everyone is that lucky and there are many others out there who, like me, have reluctant partners. In that case, it is selfish and dangerous for the relationship to force our partners into doing something that they really don't want to do. In the end, doing so will simply take away from the reason we're out on the water—relaxation, fun and adventure. ☺



THE RELUCTANT PARTNER SPEAKS OUT



My husband has a good point when speaking of reluctant partners such as myself when it comes to sailing. I don't begrudge him his time with another fellow adventurer who enjoys himself. In fact, truth be known, I'd rather not be in a situation I am not comfortable with. I'm glad that he can go off with a buddy and have a good time and leave me safely at home. If we owned a larger trawler (which I've always dreamed of owning) instead of a sailboat, the situation would likely be completely different, but that simply isn't in the budget.

—Sage Robson

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