
CRUISING IN A DAYSAILER

John Ries, Fleet 23

People everywhere have asked me, "John, what did you do to your boat to make it easier to cruise?" I hear the same question on the street daily. In fact, I even turned both Oprah and Sally down because my life is just too full to fit them in. So, I am giving this exclusive article to THE DAYSAILER, with the caveat that it might be plagiarized by THE TELLTALE, the newsletter of the Willamette Sailing Club.

When I first bought "Rieses Peeces," my plan was to have a boat that I could successfully cruise as well as race. With a family of seven, I never know for sure who will be on board when I set sail on a cruise - two sons and a friend, a daughter and a friend, the combinations are many. The Daysailer provides ample room for a six-year old to nap as we motor or sail along, ample room to store gear for a one or two night cruise, and plenty of workout for a semi-serious racer.

So, what did I do to make my DS easier to make the transition from racer to cruiser? My first purchase was a motor mount which, when removed, left only a very light bracket attached to the transom. I then got a Mercury 3.5 hp motor, which will handle all but the worst currents. My last major purchase was a sea stove which is gimballed to allow some cooking while underway. With these I can easily move from race to cruise and back; and the important thing is that I can get where I want to go, wind or not, and have something hot to eat if I want (which is unbelievably comforting if the weather is cold or wet).

I have always subscribed to the Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared"; so when I cruise overnight, if I can fit it aboard, it goes. The cuddy is packed solid with a tent, sleeping bags, clothing, foul weather gear, food, extra line, and some emergency spare parts. I even include an old set of sails which can be reefed in rough weather. Clothing is in sea bags, and these are packed on the forward shelf along with the sleeping bags; the idea here is that there is the best protection from moisture. Also, each person on board has one complete set of clothes as well as any valuables in his/her own rafter's type dry bag, so that even if we ship water or capsize, everyone can get dry quickly. I have an inflatable waterproof bag for my camera.

My motor fills from the top, so I can refill it on long runs with a foot-long hose which attaches to the extra gas tanks. I found that I can fit 1&1/2 gallon plastic cans under the transom deck of my Precision DS, allowing lighter lifting weight and protection in case of a leak from one can. This also protects food and clothing from gas fumes. You might think that this puts too much weight on the transom for the boat to sail well. You are correct. The only saving factor is all that weight ahead of the mast under the cuddy, which should compensate. I need to do more research on that subject myself.

We try to have food arranged so that breakfast and dinner are both hot meals, and hot drinks can be had at any time. That may mean filling a thermos with hot water after breakfast or just keeping the sea stove going after we set out on the day's passage. We try to pack extra noodles in the dry food box (a second cooler sans ice), so that with

some beef or chicken soup base a hot and filling soup can be made on the sea stove with minimal effort. The rest of the food packed will depend on the crew, but cold cereal and chips take up lots of room. We go for hearty, filling foods. These make us feel more comfortable in the outdoors.

We arranged things under the cuddy in such a way that food could be retrieved, while the least needed things like tent and sleeping bags were buried in the bow. In case of capsize, coolers and everything possible were tied into place, and we have two net bags for keeping foul weather gear and sweaters near but off out of the way. We've never capsized yet, but a wild jibe took one of our mug buoys, which was mounted on the stem cockpit combing, and launched it like a rocket 50 feet off to starboard. It's safe to say that no matter how well things were tied down, a cruising capsize would result in some loss of gear — thus, our dry bags are some of the best secured gear.

A few other allowances we have made include a small 6'X8' tarp for shade while motoring on hot days. Along with the first-aid kit there is bug repellent, ben-gay, and aloe vera for stings and sunburn. We also have earned a larger tarp for use as a boom tent in case of need for sleeping on board, along with seat pads which protect the rear during the day and act as a mattress at night. Currently, my wife is sewing me a boat cover which will double as a boom tent for cruising. Running lights may be necessary, too.

Cruising in a Daysailer is not like big boating. You cannot go below for drinks. You cannot go below to use the head. You can only go below to swim. Large yachts and sea going ships pound you in their wakes. BUT — the drinks can be just as good when sipped in the cockpit. The head is just beyond the nearest tree on shore. The swimming can be great in the summer (as can snorkeling). And those large yachts can only dream of putting in or pulling out of the places we can. Having made several one-day and three three-day cruises, I can make the statement that cruising in the Daysailer is truly an enjoyable, memorable experience. If you enjoy backpacking, you'll love it. If you can't get out of the motor home, however, just wave to us as we head out.