

## Weather and Mediterranean mooring tips

### Weather forecasts

The most accurate weather forecasts in Greek waters can be obtained by the internet at local island cafes. Log on to the following websites:

[www.poseidon.ncmr.gr](http://www.poseidon.ncmr.gr) National Centre for Marine Research

[www.windfinder.com](http://www.windfinder.com) Worldwide wind surfer localized conditions

[www.noa.gr](http://www.noa.gr) National Observatory Athens

Weather forecasts can also be obtained on VHF channel 16 every 12 hours and from harbour Port Police offices at 08:00 but the web based forecasts are more accurate.

### Cruising guides

The Greek, Italian, Turkish Waters Pilot books by Rod Heikell are the best for the eastern Mediterranean area.

### Mediterranean mooring tips - be prepared before you enter harbours

#### Fenders

Should be securely tied on to the lifelines or stanchions the fender tops at gunwale level. A double clove hitch will ensure you do not lose fenders. Place more fenders towards the aft of the boat, as this is where you may contact other boats first. Fenders do not need to be forward of the mast. Adjust after you are securely tied up, making sure that there are numerous fenders between your yacht and the yacht beams on either side of you.

#### Stern lines

Must be prepared and ready to cast ashore or be stepped ashore by your crew. The lines must be free of rails, shrouds, antenna and other deck equipment. Prepare the line by putting a bowline loop in one end and then run that loop over the top or around your stern rails and down over a deck cleat. Coil the rest of the line up so when cast ashore the line goes directly from the stern cleat to the bollards or rings on shore. The windward stern line goes ashore and gets secured first, so note the flags ashore if you are uncertain of where the wind is. If lines are to be cast ashore they must be coiled loosely on the deck and only the bitter end and 3 or 4 coils need to be thrown - not the whole line as they are heavy. Wait until you are very close to the person on the wharf as there is no sense in casting lines into the water because of a tangle, too much of a heavy lines or because they were cast before the boat was close enough to the wharf. If lines are cast prematurely and go into the water be very careful not to foul the prop.

#### Helmsman and defensive anchoring technique

When you have stern lines, fenders and crew ready up at the anchor, on stern lines and the balance of crew ready to fend off with a mobile walking fender, choose your spot on the wharf. It is important that you do not cross anyone else's chain when dropping anchor. So it is a good idea to do a pass-by of other boats and see the angle their chains go into the water from their bow chain rollers. Always try to lay your chain parallel to other boat chains. Take preventative action by watching other boats mooring beside you. If they are crossing your chain sit at the bow with a whistle and get the other boat skipper's attention. Indicate to them where your chain and anchor lies using a straight-arm signal. Make sure they put out enough chain otherwise they may ask to tie to you if the wind comes up, which is not a good idea. These and other defensive anchoring techniques will go a long way in keeping your yacht and crew safe from anchor fouling and problems in harbours.

When you are ready to begin the backing procedure there are 3 steps which will make your Med. mooring anchor maneuver easier:

1. Overcoming propeller walk. Start backing up well out, so you have distance and time to overcome the propeller walk. Most charter boats walk towards port, so a good trick is to start your procedure with your stern pointing 45 degrees to starboard. This way once you engage your prop the boat will slowly walk into position and towards your chosen berth as it begins to go backwards.
2. Reduce throttle speed to stop the walk. Reduce the throttle to a minimum rpm keeping steerage way, otherwise the boat may continue walking in an arch across the harbour and you will be off course.
3. Hold the wheel with both hands firmly and steer facing the wharf. Once you reduce the throttle and are reversing very slowly backwards, the helm will be heavy and is very sensitive to course changes. It is very important to hold the wheel with both hands firmly and steer precisely with small incremental movements, as any big steering changes can put the boat off course when cutting through the water backwards. Never let go of the wheel as the rudder can turn madly if you are going too fast and you can damage your rudder mechanism. Make sure you proceed slowly and evenly and always face the pier while going backwards. You may decide to turn your whole body around to face the pier and steer from the other side of steering pedestal.

Helmsman should never slam the throttle back and forth, reverse forward reverse as this may break the cable or snap a cotter pin. Always place the throttle in neutral first, then forward or reverse slowly and surely. If the throttle cable does break the boat may end up locked in forward or reverse which is a very dangerous situation. In this emergency situation, switch the engine off by the key then have a crew member operate the throttle by hand down in the engine compartment, restart the engine and continue the manoeuvre by calling forward or reverse to the crew member in the engine compartment.

### **Helmsman and anchor team communication for dropping anchor**

The helmsman requires constant eye contact and uses simple hand signals to send clear directions from the helm to the anchorman or anchor team. This stops confusion and shouting on deck.

The anchor team can drop anchor using the electronic handset for ease of use, but electronic release is very slow. So if the anchor windlass can be operated manually, the anchor team should be familiar with the manual operation using the hand lever. When the vessel is in position reversing towards the wharf and the skipper is within the 3 – 4 boat lengths he should:

- Thumbs down. The helmsman must give a thumbs down signal to the anchor team so they immediately drop the anchor. The anchor team must be ready and poised to drop on the skippers command otherwise the whole procedure will have to start over again.
- The chain must run evenly and at the speed the yacht is traveling backwards. It must not free roll or slow the boat. It is vital to start far enough away from the pier to allow  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more of the chain to be used at every anchorage. 40-60 meters in most cases or 3-4 boat lengths. The anchor team should be monitoring how much is left in the chain locker as running to the bitter end can break the chain from its hold in the locker. It is best to have one anchor team member working the windlass and another signaling the captain and monitoring the remaining chain in the locker. In general in the Mediterranean, the anchor itself does not do the holding. It is the sheer weight and scope of the chain does all the holding. The consequences of not using all the chain are getting pushed back on the wharf by other boats or ferry and weather swell. Other boats may also hook and pick up your anchor when maneuvering and inadvertently move it closer before releasing it. In this scenario, if you have 60 meters of chain out you can afford to take in 5-10 meters, straighten out the chain and tighten up your hold.

- The helmsman should try to drive the boat in a straight line, so as not to snake the chain in a big arch or S, as this does not offer good holding and may cross other yacht chains. Also the anchor team must not pile the chain up on the bottom if the boat is stationary, by free rolling or simply paying out too fast for the depth. If the boat stops moving anchor teams should stop paying out chain and should monitor depth in advance on the port charts, depth sounder or look and see the bottom. Anchor teams must also anticipate problems like the chain being blocked or knotted and be ready to stop, take in chain, undo the problem, then continue paying out chain. If a big knot or blockage happens, it can result in swinging the boat off course. The helmsman should be notified if the anchor crew have a problem and must be ready to slow the throttle. One way to make sure the chain pays out well is to always have someone coiling it nicely when taking the chain up during departures. It is not necessary to drive backwards to sink the anchor in as there is little or no mud or sand to dig into on the bottom of silty or stone harbours. This is why the sheer weight of a straight chain is what does the most holding in Mediterranean waters.

### Helmsman and Anchor Team communication for stopping anchor payout and securing

Once you get close to the berth space reduce speed to a crawl, as long as the wind and weight of the chain is not effecting your progress backwards. Then steer the yacht straight into the space on the wharf.

- Get the yacht entirely into the space. Never stop the boat's slow progress until you are entirely into the space. Stopping the throttle too soon may leave you halfway into a space and susceptible to the wind or current pushing your beam on to the bow and chain of a neighbouring yacht.
- **Secure windward stern first.** This must be done quickly by having a crew member step or jump ashore with the stern line and simply cleat it off on a shore bollard. This same line can then be secured to the windward stern cleat aboard. As soon as the windward stern line is secure holding the boat against the wind you are safe, as the bow is held by the anchor and stern by the windward stern line.
- **Cut throat signal to stop dropping chain.** The anchor team should follow the helmsman's hand signals exactly and the chain should run out freely until the helmsman gives a cut throat signal. This is usually done when the stern is 2-3 meters from sea wall. If dropping chain using the electronic hand set, the anchor team must stop pressing the down bottom and prepare to press the up bottom on the signal of the helmsman. When operating the anchor windlass manually the cut throat signal means the anchor team must quickly tighten up the windlass barrel with the hand lever. It is imperative to fully tighten the windlass barrel, as a loose or free rolling windlass will not hold the boat off the wharf. Once fully tightened, the anchor team must remove the manual lever from the windlass and be prepared to press the up or down button on the electronic hand set, on the signal of the helmsman. The helmsman will need to fine tune the yacht's distance away from the wharf related to the length of the gangplank. Thumbs up and down signals are used to adjust this distance off the wharf.
- **Around and back stern line method.** Most often in the Med. your stern lines go around a bollard or ring on shore and come back on board your yacht to the stern cleats. This around and back method allows easy departure by releasing one end and pulling it through the ring or bollard and back aboard. It also allows you to adjust the distance you wish to be away from the pier corresponding with the length of your gang plank. It is wise to be 1.5 -2 meters away from the wharf at all times, as ferry swell can be severe.
- **Adjusting stern lines, cleat space and safety on stern cleats.** The skipper's thumbs up or down signals allow the boat to move closer or further from the wharf. Hand signals that can be used are 1,2 or 3 fingers followed by a thumbs up or down signal, indicating 1,2 or 3 metres of chain up or down for adjusting the distance off the wharf. To adjust and cleat off a stern line it must be under the back of the cleat fluke and pulled up or let out when adjusting. When the desired distance off the wharf is reached the stern line must make a 360° turn around the cleat which takes 50% of the load out of the line. Then a full figure eight around both flukes of the cleat is required followed by a single locking eight -a half eight twisted over one fluke of the cleat is sufficient.

- **Use engine rpms to tighten up on chain.** Once Stern lines are secured back aboard around the stern cleats, helmsman should take the throttle lever out of gear and rev the engine between 500-1000 rpm to allow lots of amperage up at the electric anchor windlass. The helmsman should then give the thumbs up signal to indicate to the anchor team to take up chain. Once the slack is taken out of the chain, it should be tightened gradually, a metre at a time, allowing the chain to straighten out underwater and the anchor tip to bite into something, stand up and dig in. It is not wise to simply press up on the hand set, as the anchor may be on its side on a sludgy or rocky harbour bottom and simply slide all the way back to the yacht. The last adjustment is to tighten up the chain until it is as tight as a tightrope. You should be able stand on the chain between the bow roller and the windlass and not be able to push it down. The last hand signal the anchor team can give is a fist, which means the anchor chain is now tight and secure. The anchor team can then safely stow the electronic hand set in dry a places, while the helmsman can turn of the engine.

Your access to shore is on wooden or aluminium gangplanks. Care must be given as the yacht may grind or crush your gangplank against the wharf with swell in the harbour. The planks may get lodged between the wharf and the stern of the vessel, smashing a hole into the transom of the yacht. To avoid damages, never leave gangplanks in place when not in use. Have wooden gangplanks aboard when you are aboard and leave them ashore when you go ashore. With fixed aluminium planks always pull them up at least 3 feet when not in use and have them raised a few inch above the rough surfaces of the ports when in use to avoid grinding the wheels in harbour swell. There are few modern marinas in Greece, most harbours offer rudimentary facilities and are often ancient municipal wharfs not modern docks.

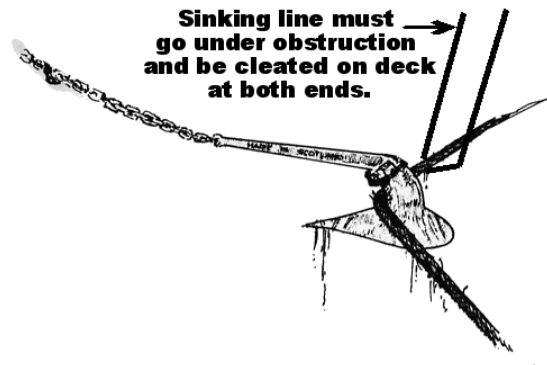
### Fouled anchor tips

Freeing a fouled anchor from chains, other anchors or debris is something that all boaters must be prepared for if they are sailing through the Greek islands. If you do get fouled on a chain or an obstruction try to free it by hand or by dropping your anchor again using the manual quick release of the windlass. This sometimes works. If you are really stuck bring the obstruction to the surface and work quickly to do the following:

- Have a sinking line and the boat hook ready at the bow. Put a bowline loop in one end of the line and lower the loop down into the water. Then with the boat hook pull the bowline loop under the fouling chain or object and back up on to the deck. Loop the bowline over a forward deck cleat then pull the slack out of the line and cleat off the other end also to a forward deck cleat. The fouling chain or object now has a line around it
- Use the down button on the anchor windlass hand set to lower the anchor and release the obstructing anchor or object's load onto your surrounding line. Once the load of the fouling object is being held by your line, use the boat hook and the up and down buttons to pull your anchor and chain away from the fouling anchor or obstruction. Sometimes signals must be given to the helmsman to advance or back up, to allow the anchor to be raised without re hooking the obstruction.
- Once your anchor is free, bring it all the way up with the windlass handset button.
- To release the obstructing anchor simply untie one end of your surrounding line. This allows the obstruction to slide down the line. Be careful as there is considerable load in the line. Pull the other end of the line to retrieve it. Sometimes it is considerate to drive the yacht and the fouling yachtsman's anchor further out in the harbour before releasing your surrounding line. \*Never use the boat hook to lift a fouling object as the aluminium and plastic hooks will break apart or you will loose them under the load of the obstructions.

Sometime chains are so tangled that a crew in a dinghy or in the water snorkelling is required to help undo obstructions. If you swim in harbours be very careful not to get arms or legs wrapped in chains or ropes. Also, make sure to clean yourself thoroughly and not to get water in your eyes as the water quality in some ports may be poor.

NOTE: It is essential that quick team work and good bow to helm communication occurs during the procedure so that fouls are resolved as soon as possible. Strong winds and small busy harbours can make for very tricky boat manoeuvring when you have an anchor foul. The helmsman must know where to drive the bow and when to remain stationary. Sometime it is best to drop chain continuously while the boat repositions if the wind has placed the boat in a precarious position. Divers in the water must work with extreme caution if the boat is manoeuvring.



### **Heavy weather anchoring and overnight security**

You never know when a wind shift or a gale will come up when you are anchored in a bay or harbour at night. A good plan is to have a nearby secondary bay or harbour established in advance which offers protection from opposing winds. The scope to depth ration of 5 to 1, or 7 to 1, is something that does not apply in the strong gales and the poor holding bays and ports of the Mediterranean. Always use most all of your chain. If you are moored in a bay or harbour overnight and the weather comes up strong, have the dinghy and the auxiliary anchor prepped and ready in case it is needed. A secondary anchor set towards the wind usually does the trick. If you are in a bay with strong winds, a line to shore or a secondary line around a solid rocks the bottom can give a good measure of security overnight. If you are concerned about heavy winds and poor holding in a bay overnight, crew members should take rotating night watches.