



Mooring the Mediterranean way

Julia Gavin/Alamy

Mooring in the Med

Gilbert Park shares some top tips and hard won experience for Mediterranean moorings

Mediterranean mooring means mooring stern-to (occasionally bows-to) with one mooring line going from the bow out into the marina and two lines going from the stern to the quay or pontoon. There's usually another boat to port and starboard of yours.

The line going forward (lazy or slime line) usually has three parts to it: a relatively light line attached to the quay, followed by a heavier line that is used to secure the boat and then a length of heavy chain. The heavy chain is itself connected to a very heavy chain that lies parallel to the quay and to which all the boats are connected.

It is the weight of the various chains that keeps the boat off the quay wall.

The system works because, with minimal tidal range, the various lines don't need adjusting as the depth hardly changes.

However, wind and wash from other boats can push the boats towards the quay. It's therefore essential to keep the boat about 1m away from the quayside to allow this movement. Unless you are an exceptional long-jumper a gangplank (aka passerelle) is needed to get from the boat to the quayside.

This needn't be anything elaborate and they range from literally planks of wood through to ones made of carbon fibre.

There are also hydraulically operated ones. On our boat we have a 2m folding, aluminum passerelle.

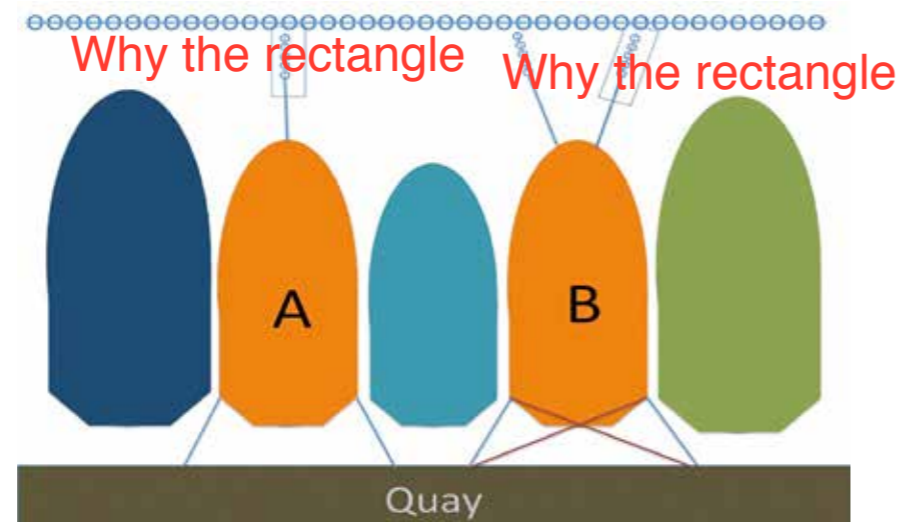
Getting your boat in

While entering the marina put fenders out on both sides at a height that will fend off other boats. We also put large round

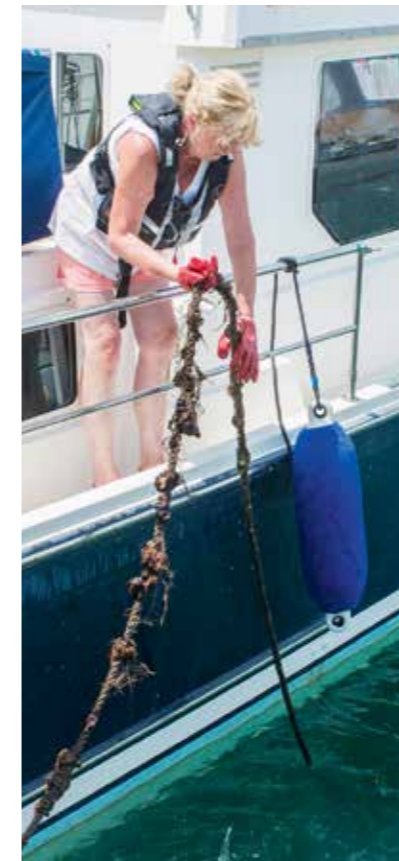
fenders on both quarters as far aft as possible because this is the area where you're most likely to hit something. Also put large fenders at the stern of the boat in case you need to temporarily put it next to the quay. Fix two ropes to the stern cleats and have gloves and a boat hook ready for the lazy line. As you approach the allocated mooring work out an escape plan, just in case.

Typically there is no current to worry about, as there is no tide, so you only need take account of the wind.

If the wind is blowing directly on or off



Boat A shows a common set up with two stern and one bow line. Boat B shows another common set up at the bow with two lines. B also shows spring lines in place that should be set for high winds or if you are leaving the boat for some time. Note all the boats are away from the quay, usually necessitating a gang plank (passerelle).



Gloves are essential to protect your hands against marine growth on the lazy line



Using a rope loop (covered in plastic tubing) to pull the lazy line forward. This enables you to use the rope loop to tie off the lazy line temporarily. Note there is only one hand loop spliced into the loop so the hand can't get trapped



The blunt gaff on the end of a boat hook we prefer for routinely pulling the line forward



The bowline from each boat is connected to a chain. This in turn is connected to a bigger chain that runs parallel to the dock. The big chain is secured at either end to the dock or a large lump of concrete

Photos: Gilbert Park



A powerboat moored bows-in. Notice the passerelle is neatly fixed to the anchor. The lazy line will be fixed to a stern cleat



Here spring lines are stopping the boat from moving around too much. Notice that the further boat has swung around while the nearer boat hasn't. Part of the reason for that is that bow and stern lines may be tighter on the nearer boat limiting its movement. Fendering between boats remains important even when moored up

BELOW This is what happens without springs and with loose bow and stern lines!

the quay, you can use the engine to counter it. Nearly always for us it seems to be blowing across the mooring.

In a crosswind, start off upwind and allow for the whole boat to be blown downwind as you reverse. Allow for the bow to be blown off course more quickly than the stern. This means that, in anything but the gentlest of breezes, the boat will be aimed diagonally at the space, with the bow upwind.

You need to be positive when reversing. Too slow and you'll be blown all over the place, too fast and you can damage your

boat and the ones around you if you get it wrong.

The bow (especially in motorboats) is very susceptible to being blown off the direction you want to go. Be prepared with the bow thruster and if that doesn't work nudge the boat forward to straighten the bow up.

In many marinas the marina team will be there to help you (in some you have to ask) and don't be afraid to use them. They will control the bow with their RIB until you are safely secured. However, if it all goes wrong (and it does for all of us sooner or

later) don't be afraid to use your escape plan and try again. Better dented pride than dented boat(s).

Once the stern of the boat has started to enter the gap between neighbouring boats life gets a lot easier, as there is only the bow to contend with and that should be well fendered.

Handling lines

If there is someone ashore to help you as you approach the quay, throw them the upwind stern line. Ask them to slip it through the cleat or ring and pass the



Our heavy duty stern lines can be used in a variety of ways in high winds. The chain goes around a bollard or cleat to prevent chafing



Hooks may be useful both for ease of attachment and to prevent chafing

end back to you to cleat it off. For this reason we have eyes spliced in all our ropes so only one end needs cleating off. If there's no one to help, you need to put a person ashore or lasso the cleat.

The next line should be the slime line. It's called this for good reason! Especially at the beginning of the season there will be barnacles and other sealife living on it, so gloves are a must. To take the line from the quay to the bow you can either use a boat hook (we use one with a blunt gaff hook) or a rope made into a loop slid along the line.

Don't try and pull the boat forward on the slime line if you have back problems. Remember, you'll also be lifting a heavy chain at the same time and probably bending forward – a recipe for problems, and I speak from experience. Use the engine to move the boat forward.

Put on the second stern line if it has not already been done. Adjust all the lines as necessary to ensure the boat is off the quay and won't get blown back onto it.

If a high wind is expected put on spring lines. Unfortunately these usually don't sit well on most boats and if you are mooring up this way frequently consider installing additional cleats.



The relatively high quayside at this port could make passerelle/gangplank walking interesting...

Other tips and tricks

In some marinas you may need to drop the anchor three or four boat lengths away from the quay. Although this makes life a bit more complicated it does mean the boat is better controlled because you can stop it being blown off.

With motorboats, especially if there is a high quay wall, the passerelle may be too steep to use. In that case bows-in mooring works well. Indeed, if you are at all nervous about stern-to because of the wind this makes a good option. Remember to carry a step or small ladder so you can get on and off easily.

A few other things may make life easier. Some crew become disorientated when going backwards, especially if they have difficulty with port and starboard. The answer is to put red and green tape on the guard rails and elsewhere in key spots. If you have twin engines label the throttles and gear levers. Another label saying forward and reverse is useful too.

Only refer to the colours when on board. If a crew member is red/green colour blind than use red and the green and yellow striped earthing wire to make it clearer.

Never shout – it only ups the stress levels. We've found small walkie talkies to be invaluable: using ear pieces and microphones, we switch the unit to 'Vox' (voice activated) so we can talk easily to each other.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gilbert Park has been sailing for 40 years, starting first with a Mirror dinghy on the River Tamar and then graduating through various Drascombes. When arthritis made handling ropes difficult he moved on to power boats, first a RIB then a Seaward followed by a variety of larger boats. He and his wife, Maire, have kept a boat in the Mediterranean for the past four years and still remember the trepidation of the early days of mooring up.



The ultimate in colour coding a boat to avoid confusion over sides



Coloured tape on a pushpit rail to avoid confusion over sides



Colour coding also used to identify throttles on a twin engine boat

You may also find that mooring hooks work for the stern lines when you first start as they can clip onto cleats and rings leaving you to adjust the length of the warps from the boat. You can even clip on using one on a boat hook. Just be careful if throwing them ashore as you might hurt somebody. The hooked lines will probably need to be changed for a threaded line when leaving.

The best tip I can pass on for beginners is to try and avoid the windy part of the day. The afternoons often have a Force 4-5 thermal wind blowing. Either enjoy lunch and a siesta in the marina or anchor up for the evening meal and come in to the quay afterwards.