

Living the dream

Selling the house and sinking the proceeds into a boat, then casting off the docklines to sail away from the often dull routine of life ashore represents a lifelong dream for many a weekend sailor. But few ever make the leap. And for those who do, the realities of the liveaboard lifestyle often come as a shock. It ain't all stunning sunsets, potluck suppers on the beach or spreading sails to a balmy wind abaft the beam. Just ask Mark Nicholas. He tells it like it is in his book, **The Essentials of Living**

became clear to me that we all learn this way, and it is a true shame that the most prominent issues were not encapsulated in a meaningful, educational, and commonsensical way."

Thinking others might benefit from a practical look at what it's really like to live on a boat, Nicholas decided to write a how-to guide for the would-be wannabes out there nursing a dream that might well, without the right perspective and preparation, turn into an emotional, physical and financial nightmare.

Nicholas takes a fairly exhaustive approach, covering subjects ranging from choosing and buying a boat to safety and sanitation. He does go overboard in some respects, padding parts of the text with self-evident advice. However, he does address the issue of costs associated with living aboard head-on, and does a good job itemizing expenses to give readers

an idea of just what it takes to pursue life afloat.

It's important to note that Nicholas isn't directing his book at the world cruising segment of live-

THE ESSENTIALS OF
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The Definitive Guide for Liveaboards



aboards, but rather the more common dock rat type who use their boats primarily as floating homes at a slip. That's practical. Cruising the Intracoastal Waterway

Aboard A Boat: The Definitive Guide for Liveaboards.

In the introduction, Nicholas writes: "Though I'd studied books on sailing and seamanship, none provided me with any true insight into the practical subtleties of boating or living aboard. For me, this lifestyle was a true trial by fire—and in the beginning I was burned more often than I wasn't. It was easy for me to think I was alone, the only one learning the harsh lessons this way, but in talking to other liveaboards it

to Florida, thrashing off to the eastern Caribbean, then going back to a home on land isn't the same as living year-round, year after year, aboard a boat. A temporary flirtation with the lifestyle is one thing, fully committing to it is another, and that's the main point Nicholas makes in his book. Anyone considering the lifestyle should go into it with his or her eyes wide open. To paraphrase Nicholas: boats are small, they move, they're noisy, they smell, and they're damp much of the time.

"It would be easy to conclude that I am trying to scare you away from this lifestyle," Nicholas writes. "That couldn't be more wrong. This book is about preparation: trying to educate and prepare the future liveaboard for the challenges that this lifestyle will present." In this, Nicholas succeeds, and quite well indeed.

--David W. Shaw