

Packing a P-15 for several nights of sleeping aboard.

The basic principle Kathryn and I have used for sleeping aboard and camping out on our P-15 "Eilidh" has evolved over quite some time.

I have not built a lot of special storage devices into our boat, shelves, hooks etc., in favor of using soft bags and movable clear hard plastic boxes that can be quickly re-arranged as needed, and easily cleaned and re-organized. Hooks, shelves, and hardware sticking out can gouge you rather easily in the pup tent sized interior of a P-15.

What has worked for us is really pretty simple: The basic principle is:

Daytime, and sailing... All stuff inside the cabin and pushed well forward. The Sleeping bags and pillows spread out flat, heads at rear of cabin, feet toward the bow, with pillows topping off the boat gear stored in the small spaces in back of the centerboard trunk. Boxes and bags slide easily forward and back on the slippery nylon of the sleeping bags for finding items, which makes packing and re-arranging less effort. We use three medium size clear plastic boxes with lids, about the size of a milk crate. One medium sized hard plastic ice chest, and about four canvas shopping bags. Contents are packed by categories and frequency of need. Stuff needed often or quickly, in the back to be reached quickly, heavier stuff forward as far as it will go to keep the boat balanced and in good trim for sailing.

Nighttime, tied at Dock...Everything out into the cockpit. During almost all of our overnighting we have tied up at a dock somewhere for the night. All boxes and bags moved out into the cockpit back toward the transom and covered with a small canvas tarp. By **moving all the stuff outside we regain the maximum room for sleeping comfort inside.** I seldom secure the tarp heavily, preferring to be able to get at the items in the footwell easily in the evening, as needed.

In the morning you can be sure that the boat's exterior will be wet from night mist and dew. The cockpit will be quite wet, except for the things you've protected under the tarp. We always keep an old dry towel and a sponge inside at night to wipe dry the seats, cockpit and cabin top when the sun comes up. Later in the day we will hang out the clean up towel to dry. I sleep in "gym clothes", shorts and T-shirt, with slip on shoes near by, so I can go out in the cockpit quickly or up on the dock as needed. We have P-Bottles so we don't have to go traipsing ashore to the bathrooms in the middle of cold or rainy night. We use small pocket flashlights for reading, and a small portable radio for entertainment while falling off to sleep. We have found some small pocket flashlights with fluorescent tubes that last ten hours or more on one set of 3 "AA" batteries.

We often have camped out on our P-15 with the two of us and Spike our

twenty pound Boston Terrier snoring blissfully in the foot of my Sleeping Bag. Spike is a great cabin heater, and likes wearing his bright yellow PFD. Even with the footwell almost filled with our bags and boxes out under the tarp, I always leave enough room to permit quickly getting under sail or motoring, if needed. We very rarely anchor out, but if so, it can be important to be able to get going if your anchor is dragging or another boat is swinging down on you.

Anchoring out is a special and sometimes beautiful experience, but I find I don't sleep very well then, as I wake up periodically to perform a quick check that everything is OK.. the famous "Anchor Watch". Tied up in a slip, or at dockside this is no longer an issue. When out in the cockpit and under way, Kathryn and I both wear waist belt inflatable PFD's which are comfortable and unobtrusive.

Ideal Containers:

I like clear plastic containers, about milk crate size, with waterproof lids. You can see what is inside them, grasp them easily for moving or stacking. A system that has worked for us is:

BOX NO.1 food, and only food that is very easily prepared or ready to eat. Cereals, Ramen type soup cups, canned stew, dehydrated meals etc,

BOX NO.2 "The mini-kitchen Box" with Pot, Pan, utensils, plastic garbage bags, mini stove, matches, plates, etc.. Thermos Bottle , condiments, spare batteries in plastic bag. (standardizing on AA's and devices that use them is a good idea. On the P-15, "small is better" in most cases. Plastic bag anything that might leak, or must absolutely stay dry.

BOX NO.3 Canned Beverages, Bottles of drinking Water, Instant Coffee, tea-bags, ready mix cocoa packets etc. Boxed juices.. I.e the box for beverages.

BOX NO. 4 is a small ice chest. Milk, eggs, or anything that needs to be cool, or is perishable goes in here,

2 CANVAS OR NYLON ZIP BAGS Dry clothes, warm clothes, rain gear (ponchos) for emergencies. Trip clothing is carried on board in these zippered soft bags, other types of clothing not needed for the boating portion of the trip are left ashore locked in the tow car.

Trip clothing , toiletries are carried aboard in the zip bags for easy carrying to Marina bathrooms in the morning. One of these for each of us.

CANVAS “shopping bags” We have a couple of these and reading matter, cell phones, handheld VHF, chart book, small portable radio and other items are carried in them. They hold anything we want rapid access to us and near our heads at night, (as well as a place for “favorite snacks” and water bottle) These go right and left of the hatch door by the port and starboard bulkheads, near the pillows and can be reached quickly from the cockpit. An extra canvas bag or two is very handy for laundry or any brief shopping trips ashore, especially if it is wet outside. They take up very little room when empty. Soft bags can be mashed into conforming shapes to wedge the hard boxes into place.

DRESSING: We have found that if we put clothes we have removed before going to bed, out flat on top our sleeping bags, to our surprise often they are not too awfully wrinkled in the morning. I know of no easy way to dress and or undress while lying down in the cabin of a P-15, but am sure we could get some very funny videos of us somehow managing to do it. I confess that I might have quickly shed or put on my clothes out in the cockpit when it seemed “private” enough.

KEEP IT SIMPLE: Keep the organization plan simple and the categories broad, and the number of boxes and bags limited to eight or ten items. This will make it easy to find things, re-arrange them and move them about.

TIE THINGS DOWN? AN IMPORTANT SAFETY QUESTION.

A disclaimer! The methods Kathryn and I have used have worked well in calm to only moderately rough sailing conditions, and we did not lash things down tight as Bill Teplow wisely did on his now famous voyage to Hawaii in “Chubby”. For anyone contemplating packing their boat and being ready for “anything”, they undoubtedly should secure things tightly so the bags and boxes cannot move in a knockdown or capsize. For that purpose it would be necessary to put fasteners in the hull liner walls, and secure things with nylon tie down straps across the tops of the bags and boxes.. which would also make packing an unpacking a more complicated process each evening. For a person planning to single hand a great deal, and stay out on the boat often, custom cabinets, fasteners, straps etc, and a higher degree of organization would probably work better. For a single hander, managing things might be a lot simpler, as he or she could sleep on one side of the centerboard and move all the “Stuff” to the other side at night. For the two of us, the methods I have described have worked quite well.