

AT HOME ON



THE WATER

Have you dreamed about cutting ties to land and living on a boat?
Meet three couples who took the bold step to make a new home onboard

BY GARY REICH



Dan Kirsch and Sandy Williamson, Outer Reef 610

Dan Kirsch has been on boats since he was 6 months old and remembers building an 18-foot cuddy cabin from a kit. Larger boats came later, including a 37-foot Silverton his father owned. Eventually, Dan and Sandy Williamson, who had their first date on a boat, would cruise that 37, and other boats. In 2017, they bought an Outer Reef 610 Motoryacht, *Sandana*. They've been living aboard and cruising ever since.

One of the misconceptions about living aboard, Dan explains, is that it's like camping out. "We're extremely self-sufficient on this boat, but it doesn't mean we rough it. When we decided on the Outer Reef 610, we incorporated features that enhance our comfort and independence aboard."

Sandana's electrical system is a good example. Dan says the boat only pulls 14 amps through an inverter and large battery bank with everything running. With three solar panels, the couple can go 24 to 48 hours without turning the generator on. "In the right weather, the panels cover all of the air conditioning draw," he says.



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CATE BROWN



*Left: Sandana, the couple's Outer Reef 610
Top: Sandy relaxes on the boat's expansive flybridge.
Bottom: Dan and Sandy maneuver their motoryacht into her slip for tie up.*



"We also have a watermaker than can produce 56 gallons of fresh water per hour. We have a beer cooler, food refrigerators and freezers. We shower aboard every day." Dan says these comfort features save money in the long run, because the couple frequently anchors out rather than stay in marinas.

The independence doesn't come without effort. "Provisioning can be a huge challenge," says Dan. "We engineered lots of stowage space into this boat, so when we have access to places like Costco, we can stock up with non-perishable goods that will last for months. We freeze other things for use later. We work very hard at getting what we need when it's easy and trying not to have to go to stores all the time. Trust me, it becomes a real pain trying to find eggs when you're in the middle of nowhere."

Sandy is now retired, but Dan does occasional sales consulting. For that reason, it's important for the couple to stay connected from their boat, whether they're tied up at their current homeport in Salem, Massachusetts, or out cruising. "We've got Wi-Fi and cellular signal boosters, so keeping up communications with the outside world has been relatively easy," Dan says. "We also use MyIslandWiFi.com. For \$75 a month we get unlimited cellular data and the use of a mobile router. It works great wherever we can pick up a cell tower. We maintain an Iridium GO satellite phone onboard, but that's mainly for safety when we're offshore."

The couple's Outer Reef 610 cruises between 9 and 18 knots and has maximum speeds of 13 to 23 knots. The lower helm and galley are just two steps from the main salon, which makes this deck a spacious area for everyday living. Belowdecks are three staterooms and two head/shower compartments, with a huge master situated amidships. The stand-up engine room was one of Dan's requirements.

Dan, who has a USCG captain's license, says that weather and safety are important. "The weather is an everyday part of our lives. When you're living aboard—tied up or not—you have to know what's happening. We've been from Florida to Maine and up to Nova Scotia, and I can count on one hand the number of times we've been in really rough seas." That's because this couple spends a lot of time planning, and when it comes to weather, they stay flexible with their plans. "Having deadlines is a good way to get in trouble," Dan says, "so we avoid making schedules. If we do get in trouble, we've got a liferaft, safety communications gear and a full complement of safety equipment."

Unlike some liveaboards, Dan and Sandy maintain a condo in Beverly, Massachusetts, although they rarely use it. "We decided to keep a property ashore in case we have medical issues. There are great hospitals in Massachusetts, so we like the security of having a home to go to if we really have to," Sandy says. They also wanted a place to celebrate Christmas. Sandy wasn't interested in hotel holidays, so keeping a condo made sense.

Dan and Sandy are advocates for the liveaboard lifestyle. Their favorite aspect is the opportunity to travel. "There are so many spectacular places in this country to see, and we just soak it up everywhere we go," Sandy says. "Whether it's the Bahamas or Nova Scotia, the beauty of our world makes it all worth it. We wouldn't trade it for anything."