This article, which appeared in the Duch sailing magazine "Zeilen" in May 2026, has been translated by Carina Juhhova

SMART BUDGETING

SMALL BOAT, SMALL BUDGET, MAXIMUM JOY

With minimal cost but maximum joy, Christophe and Carina sail around the world. "We get by just fine on 500 euros a month." A conversation with two extraordinary sailors who have elevated low-budget sailing to a true art form.

Janneke Kuysters • Carina Juhhova Christophe Mora

As soon as Frenchman Christophe Mora (52) and Estonian Carina Juhhova (44) sail their L'Envol into an anchorage, they attract a lot of attention:

you don't see many 25-foot yachts on a world tour. The boat and its crew have already covered 60,000 miles. With such a distance, you would expect a wealthy couple or hidden family capital because travelling is not cheap.

"Our experience is that you can make it as expensive as you want. We manage well on a monthly budget of 500 euros. We don't need much. Living with little has become our lifestyle."

Coup de foudre

A minimalist lifestyle is not for everyone. "That makes it all the more special that we found each other. We calculated it once. The chance of us meeting was less than 1 in a million," laughs Christophe. Carina wraps her hands around a warm mug of tea and says, "We were both travelling, Christophe with his boat, and I was backpacking on land."

Christophe had earned his living as a mountain guide, ski instructor and teacher until, after a short introductory sailing course, he joined a crew on an ocean crossing. "That changed everything. I discovered that everything I needed for those eight months fit into one backpack. When I came home after those sailing trips, I gradually got rid of everything I didn't need." After four years, he bought a small, fast boat to sail around the world himself. That's how he ended up in Chile's southernmost city, Puerto Williams, in 2015.

"And there I was," Carina laughs. "I left home when I was 25. Hitchhiking, with a hundred dollars in my pocket. I wanted to find a new way of life, one that was not about money. Without a clock, without a job, and with income from chance encounters, kindness, and a little luck. I travelled around for five years, until I settled in Puerto Williams. There I found a job as a manager of the Cape Horn information office.

“In French, we call that *coup de foudre*," smiles Christophe - love at first sight. After their first meeting at the Cape Horn information office in Puerto Williams, things moved fast. Carina: "I had never sailed before, but I learned quickly. Soon I was living on board and became familiar with seasickness, living together in a small space and the beauty and cruelty of nature. We quickly connected sharing same values of a minimalist, low-budget lifestyle – with no time limit, our only destination became the journey itself. Our lives fit together seamlessly."

Weekend racer for a circumnavigation

Christophe helped build his own boat, a Django 770. "The boat is fast, but sensitive to excessive loading. The design was already fairly minimalist, but I still dropped quite a few things. For example, the toilet was replaced by a bucket, and you sit on the toolbox under the chart table. I refused the saloon table, as it was right where I wanted to store the ropes and jerry cans with water. There are no comfortable backrests nor cabinet doors, and no lighting with its wiring. A bright headlamp on the mast support does the job just fine."

There is no refrigerator, no shower and no heating. "We adapt to the weather. In Patagonia, we put on more clothes, in the tropics we open a hatch," says Christophe matter-of-factly. And, perhaps the most important decision, they only have an outboard motor. The two-stroke Tohatsu 9.8 is only used in emergencies or when sailing into a busy anchorage.

Living with little has become our lifestyle

Our boat is designed for coastal sailing. Here we are leaving Martinique.

BRUNO CEAN

All the electronics are within easy reach in the navigation corner.

At Micalvi Yacht Club (Chile), just past the Furious Fifties. As the smallest boat, we have to go to the back of the line.

Where a heavy diesel engine would normally be, there is now a 55-litre water tank. With another 150 litres of water in bottles and jerry cans, that's our total supply."

There is also no anchor winch. Christophe: "I pull up 40 metres of chain by hand; the counter is now at around 800 anchorages." In his philosophy, everything on board must have two uses. "We use the lee cloths to cover the jerry cans and mooring lines in the middle of the cabin, creating a comfortable mezzanine floor. The solar panel also collects rainwater, and we store clothes in the cushions, which saves storage space."
There is a small galley on the starboard side with a sink, tap and two-burner gas stove. One pan, a pressure cooker, a kettle, three plates, bowls, mugs and some cutlery is all the galley equipment there is.

Low costs

The navigation corner is on the port side, opposite the galley. The chart table has a Toughbook laptop with OpenCPN digital charts and SASPlanet for satellite images. A VHF radio, an AIS receiver, a barograph and a battery monitor are located on the instrument panel.

When sailing offshore, the weather reports are obtained using an Iridium satellite telephone and an SSB receiver. Two screens are mounted on a flexible support, one displaying information about wind, speed and depth, and the other is for the autopilot. There is one 100Ah lithium battery, which is powered by a 140-watt solar panel and a Watt&Sea hydro generator. The cockpit locker contains a 25-litre jerry can of petrol for the outboard engine, and one 13-kilo gas bottle is for the stove.

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Every centimetre is used to its best advantage.

→ “The Django 770 was European Yacht of the Year. It was a popular model, and therefore more expensive for a boat her size,” says Christophe. “That put quite a dent in my budget. At the same time, the running costs for maintenance are much lower than on a larger vessel. Small boat, small problems. We rarely have to wait for new parts, and we can do all the maintenance ourselves.” Thanks to the bilge keels, L’Envol can be easily beached: ideal for maintenance jobs on the underwater hull.

Carina: “Living space on a small boat is a challenge. We spend about 75 per cent of the time at anchor. Then the boat is our home and the two of us live in that small space. And yet, the only thing we actually miss is an ergonomic workspace. On the other hand: our interior space is comparable to that of a larger boat, because L’Envol is quite wide and has a long waterline.” Christophe adds: “Besides, we often spend most of the day outdoors, walking, climbing or exploring.”

Stay alert

For a light, fast boat even 5 knots of wind will be enough to sail. The engine is rarely needed. "Still, we notice that the weight of our gear reduces the ship's performance. It now weighs over three tonnes, a third more than its original weight. Yet we still cover 130 to 150 miles a day during long crossings. When we sail in sheltered areas, such as the Great Barrier Reef, L'Envol can easily reach 7 or 8 knots. And sometimes she surfs with the speed of up to ten knots," says Carina.

"A light, small boat is ideal for sailing around the world, but you do have to take a few things into account. It is less seaworthy in bad weather, especially on offshore passages. Waves will affect her more than a heavier boat. That's why we always pay close attention to the weather forecasts. On long crossings, there is no a choice, and we may opt for lying ahull in bad weather. A small boat is more vulnerable in breaking waves than a larger boat,"→ explains Christophe.

TIPS FOR SAILING ON A SHOESTRING

Boat

- Before you make the big decision to buy a boat, it’s a good idea to see if the lifestyle suits you. Join a crew a few times to get a feel for it.
- Invest in a boat which is "ready to go", even if it takes a big chunk out of your budget. Consider a boat that is less than 10 years old, or one that has just been refurbished. Or buy a boat from someone who is returning home. You will save money and time on the way as you will have less maintenance to do.
- Purchase the smallest boat you feel comfortable with. With every extra foot, maintenance and material costs increase exponentially. Do as much maintenance as possible yourself.
- Only take essential items for navigation and safety. Use free information sources for maintenance jobs or ask fellow sailors for advice.
- Carina and Christophe choose to travel without insurance. This certainly saves on monthly expenses, but results in higher costs if something goes wrong.
- Anchor as much as possible. Buy the best anchor you can find.
- Only use the engine when there is no other option. The wind is free, so make sure you have a boat that can sail well in 10 knots of wind.
- An outboard motor provides more storage space inside. The dinghy does not need an outboard motor: rowing is also an option. What's more, it makes it easier to lift the boat onto the beach.
- Do not use a chart plotter, but invest in a (second-hand) Toughbook laptop.

Lifestyle

- Only take what is strictly necessary. Everything on board must have at least two functions.
- Is something new coming on board? Then something else has to go.
- Prepare food on board, avoid restaurants.
- Invest in a pressure cooker to save gas.
- Stock up on supplies where they are cheap.
- Internet: use free Wi-Fi and local SIM cards as much as possible. At sea, use SSB radio for weather information. Only use the expensive satellite connection for longer distances.
- *Go small, go simple, but go now!* is a quote from Lin and Larry Pardy that has always inspired us. (See also the reading tip on p. 57, ed.)

Calm before the storm in Caleta Darde, Patagonia.

These waves and wind speeds of 50 knots were not forecast. L’Envol is braving the storm as she sails from the Gambier to the Tuamotu in the Pacific Ocean.

→ "A boat like L'Envol is best suited for coastal navigation. That's why we sail as much as possible in the right seasons.

Because she only draws 1.2 metres, we can get close to the coast and find well-sheltered spots or river mouths where no one else goes. Then we enjoy a four-star stay with priceless views."

Minimalists

If you take a quick look at the world of sailing, one thing immediately stands out: boats and budgets are getting bigger and bigger. Boats measuring 40 to 50 feet are the norm, with some even larger. Luxury seems to have become the standard. But L'Envol sails at the other end of the spectrum. Not only is the boat minimalist in design, but so is the sailing budget. The €500 per month covers daily living and maintenance costs. "The key is the lifestyle we love so much," says Carina. "We choose the most economical option in everything. So wind instead of fuel, anchoring instead of marinas, hitchhiking instead of renting a car, and picnicking in the park instead of eating in a restaurant. We never booked a plane ticket during our circumnavigation."

And it is that contact, that connection, in which we find the reward

Through their website (Intothewind.fr), they raised money via crowdfunding for two emergencies: a torn sail in New Caledonia and a serious injury Christophe sustained in Australia. Their followers also spontaneously sprang into action a few times when the couple faced major expenses. "That was fantastic. At the moments when you feel most vulnerable, support comes from readers, family, friends and sometimes even strangers," says Carina. "And when the ship's kitty was close to being empty, we worked as teachers or grape pickers."

Sometimes they worry about money, but it never becomes a major problem. Carina: "We don't need much to live on." She advises: "Young sailors shouldn't be afraid of the uncertainty of not having a steady income. Have faith that the journey will bring you ideas and solutions when you need them most."
Because a small sailing boat is virtually impossible to insure for such voyages, the couple sail around uninsured. They also have no health insurance. Christophe: "People sometimes ask us how much such a trip costs. We always say: it costs less than you think, but everything we have."

Wealth

“Of course, a minimalist lifestyle isn’t always easy. Sometimes we may feel marginal. At the same time, we feel rich. This way of life gives us the chance, well before we retire, not to be overly dependent on material or financial matters.” Christophe adds: “We’ve become very adept at finding good, free information about the weather, navigation, destinations as well as customs clearance procedures. This means that little is left to chance.”
Carina: “When we arrive somewhere, we sense the curiosity about us and our little boat. If you arrive in a larger yacht, the distance with the local population is . And it is that contact, that connection, in which we find the reward.”

Looking for the best route and anchorages along the east coast of Tasmania.

SELINA ROSS ABC NEWS

Everything on the boat has at least two functions. We also use the solar panel to collect rainwater.

PATRICK PAZACKERLEY

We take our time exploring the coves along Tasmania’s west coast.

They are proud of the fact that they have a very small environmental footprint: each year, they use as little fuel as two fill-ups for a car.

Still underway

The couple maintains a leisurely pace. "Many people sail through Patagonia in a few summer months, but it took us a year. We also took our time in the Pacific Ocean: in three years, we sailed from island to island, eventually ending up in Australia." The plan was to sail around Australia in a year, but due to the pandemic, it took three.
Last year, the couple sailed to Estonia so that Christophe could finally meet Carina's family. They did not take the direct route, but travelled via Western Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. At the time of this interview, they are already on their way to their winter harbour in south-west France. "We would love to spend the winter in the Netherlands. Sailing is great fun there," says Christophe. "But L'Envol does not have isolation, and some warmth this winter would be desirable. But we will definitely be back."

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FREE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Free apps with information about anchorages: Harbourmaps, Noforeignland, Navily
- Rules and clearance: Noonsite.com
- Charts: OpenCPN and SASPlanet
- Weather: free versions of Xygrib and Windy
- Blogs of other sailors translated with a free web tool
- Request fellow sailors for information at anchorages and in WhatsApp groups

Carina and Christophe.