

Nautical Quotes

Compiled by Michael Matthews

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Photo by Kate Beckett

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Hi, my name is Michael Matthews.

My wife Masha and I are the proud owners of ...

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I put this book of Nautical Quotes together for a couple of reasons.

The first reason has to do with a party that I attended a number of years ago for a group of boating people. I didn't know a soul and I felt rather out of place. A proverbial wall flower. As the night wore on, I talked to a few people but I was rather shy and not the best conversationalist. It wasn't the most fun evening I've ever had.

This was a monthly get together and the next month, when my friend reminded me about the party again, I was inclined to cancel. What was I going to talk about?

I happened to be going to the library the next day and by chance, I came across a book of nautical history. In this book was a page of quotes. It wasn't a long list of quotes, 10 or 12, so I wrote them down and slipped the piece of paper in my wallet.

Next time I went to the sailing party, I was ready. Shortly before the party, I looked at the piece of paper and memorized a couple of quotes. As I made my way around the room, I started a conversation with a couple. It didn't take long and I was able to put that quote to use. It was not only a great icebreaker but it started a great conversation and the rest of the night flew by.

The second reason is simply that there are so many great quotes about my (and yours I presume) favorite passion, all things nautical! It's wonderful to see how others, famous and not so famous have felt about the ocean and boats.

A simple quote is a terrific weapon in a lot of situations. Speeches, parties or just as part of good conversation, these are all great places to use a good quote.

So, thank you for your interest. Now, sit back and read the many quotes I have gathered for your pleasure. When you see one that strikes your fancy, memorize it. You just never know when that quote might break the ice or help you stick in someone's memory.

Most of all just enjoy the quotes.

Thanks again,

Michael Matthews

<http://www.nauticaldecorandmore.com>



And now, on to the quotes!

Nautical Quotes

A

"Without patience, a sailor I would never be".

Lee Allred

"I think the concept of the sea is very important."

Alejandro Amenabar

"Victory awaits those who have everything in order?"

- People call that luck.

Defeat is certain for those who have forgotten to take the necessary precautions in time ?

- That is called bad luck."

Ronald Amundson 14 December 1911

"At times our lives seem like that of a tranquil island in a sea of chaos. The battle is to keep this sea of chaos at bay and not let it wash us away into utter chaos."

Sanjeeva Ananthan

"The First Rule For Coastal Cruising: start early; finish early."

Anonymous

"Wind and sails were made for each other."

Anonymous

"Sailors work like horses at sea and spend their money like asses ashore."

Anonymous

"Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail,
Their voices were in all men's ears
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves."

Matthew Arnold

"Land was created to provide a place for boats to visit."

Brooks Atkinson

"Men go abroad to wonder the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering."

St. Augustine

"He began in a tone of great taste and feeling, to talk of the sea and the sea shore."

Jane Austen

B

"They are ill discoverers that think there is no land, when they can see nothing but sea."

Francis Bacon

"For me, my craft is sailing on,
Through mists to-day, clear seas anon.
Whate'er the final harbor be
'T is good to sail upon the sea!"

John Kendrick Bangs

"The dolphin wheels, the sea-cows snort,
And unseen mermaids pearly song
Comes bubbling up, the weeds among."

Thomas Lovell Beddoes

"I start from the premise that no object created by man is as satisfying to his body and soul as a proper sailing yacht."

Arthur Beiser 1978

The Proper Yacht

"The sea drives truth into a man like salt".

Hilaire Belloc

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep."

Bible, Psalms 107:23–24.

"Cruising has two pleasures. One is to go out in wider waters from a sheltered place. The other is to go into a sheltered place from wider waters".

Howard Bloomfield

"Travel by sea nearly approximates the bliss of babyhood. They feed you, rock you gently to sleep and when you wake up, they take care of you and feed you again."

Geoffrey Bocca

"For the truth is that I already know as much about my fate as I need to know. The day will come when I will die. So the only matter of consequence before me is what I will do with my allotted time. I can remain on shore, paralyzed with fear, or I can raise my sails and dip and soar in the breeze."

Richard Bode

First You Have to Row a Little Boat

"They that go down to the sea in ships; and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord; and His wonders in the deep"

Book of Common Prayer

"Never go into strange places on a falling tide without a pilot."

Thomas Gibson Bowles

"No one is fit to judge a book until he has rounded Cape Horn in a sailing vessel, until he has bumped into two or three icebergs, until he has been lost in the sands of the desert, until he has spent a few years in the House of the Dead."

Van Wyck Brooks

"The ocean has always been a salve to my soul...the best thing for a cut or abrasion was to go swimming in salt water. Later down the road of life, I made the discovery that salt water was also good for the mental abrasions one inevitably acquires on land".

Jimmy Buffett

"The ocean is an object of no small terror".

Edmund Burke

"One cannot look at the sea without wishing for the wings of a swallow."

Sir Richard Burton

C

"The thing I realized this last few days is that the earth is a big place".

Paul Cayard

"Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea, loves t' have his sails filled with a lusty wind."

George Chapman

"The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace."

Kate Chopin, The Awakening

"No more beautiful sight can be imagined than a morning at sea, with these magnificent vessels racing in mid-ocean, perhaps two or three of them in sight at one; the sun rising among golden clouds; the dark blue sea flecked with glistening white caps; long, low black hulls cleaving a pathway of sparkling foam; towering masts, and yards covered with snowy canvas which bellies to the crisp morning breeze as if sculptured in marble..."

Captain Arthur H. Clark

"If you don't love life you can't enjoy an oyster; there is a shock of freshness to it and intimations of the ages of man, some piercing intuition of the sea and all its weeds and breezes. They shiver you for a split second."

Eleanor Clark

"Some have affirm'd that what on earth we find, the sea can parallel in shape and kind; books, arts, and tongues were wanting, but in thee Neptune hath got a university."

John Cleveland

A shipowner was about to send to sea an emigrant ship. He knew that she was old, and not overwell built at the first; that she had seen many seas and climes, and often had needed repairs. Doubts had been suggested to him that possibly she was not seaworthy. These doubts preyed upon his mind, and made him unhappy; he thought that perhaps he ought to have her thoroughly overhauled and refitted, even though this should put him to great expense. Before the ship sailed, however, he succeeded in overcoming these melancholy reflections. He said to himself that she had gone safely through so many voyages and weathered so many storms, that it was idle to suppose that she would not come safely home from this trip also. He would put his trust in providence, which could hardly fail to protect all these unhappy families that were leaving their fatherland to seek for better times elsewhere. He would dismiss from his mind all ungenerous suspicions about the honesty of builders and contractors. In such ways he acquired a sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel was thoroughly safe and seaworthy; he watched her departure with a light heart, and benevolent wishes for the success of the exiles in their strange new home that was to be; and he got his insurance money when she went down in mid-ocean and told no tales. What shall we say of him? Surely this, that he was verily guilty of the death of those men. It is admitted that he did sincerely believe in the soundness of his ship; but the sincerity of his conviction can in nowise help him, because he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him. He had acquired his belief not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts...

William K. Clifford
The Ethics of Belief 1874

"Our voyage had commenced, and at last we were away, gliding through the clean water, past the reeds. Care was lifted from our shoulders, for we were free from advice, pessimism, officialism, heat and hot air."

K. Adlard Coles

"The true peace of God begins at any spot a thousand miles from the nearest land."

"Any fool can carry on, but a wise man knows how to shorten sail in time".

"The sea - this truth must be confessed - has no generosity. No display of manly qualities - courage, hardihood, endurance, faithfulness - has ever been known to touch its irresponsible consciousness of power."

Joseph Conrad

"A passage under sail brings out in the course of days whatever there may be of the sea love and sea sense in an individual whose soul is not indissolubly wedded to the pedestrian shore."

Joseph Conrad

"The humblest craft that floats makes its appeal to a seaman by the faithfulness of her life."

Joseph Conrad

"If you pinch the sea of its liberty, though it be walls of stone or brass, it will beat them down."

John Cotton

"Farming as we do it is hunting, and in the sea we act like barbarians."

Jacques Cousteau

"And biased by full sails, meridians reel,
Thy purpose -- still one shore beyond desire!
The sea's green crying towers a-sway, beyond."

Hart Crane

"For whatever we lose, (Like a you or a me), It's always ourselves we find in the sea".

E.E. Cummings

"While the hollow oak our palace is, Our heritage the sea."

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast."

Allan Cunningham A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea

D

"Ambition is a Dead Sea fruit, and the greatest peril to the soul is that one is likely to get precisely what he is seeking."

Edward Dahlberg

"There was a grandeur in everything around, which gave almost a solemnity to the scene; a silence and solitariness which affected everything. Not a human being but ourselves for miles; and no sound heard but the pulsations of the great pacific."

Richard Henry Dana

" A tourist remains an outsider throughout his visit; but a sailor is part of the local scene from the moment he arrives".

Anne Davison

"It is the weather, not work, that wears out sails."

Thomas Fleming Day

"And the voices in the waves are always whispering to Florence, in their ceaseless murmuring, of love - of love, eternal and illimitable, not bounded by the confines of this world, or by the end of time, but ranging still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away!"

Charles Dickens Dombey and Son

"The sea pronounces something, over and over, in a hoarse whisper; I cannot quite make it out."

Annie Dillard

"The cure for anything is salt water: sweat, tears or the sea."

Isak Dinesen

"It isn't that life ashore is distasteful to me. But life at sea is better."

Sir Francis Drake

"It's out there at sea that you are really yourself."

Vito Dumas

"No one likes an ugly boat, however cheap or fast."

Roger Duncan

E

"To me, the sea is like a person - like a child that I've known a long time. It sounds crazy, I know, but when I swim in the sea I talk to it. I never feel alone when I'm out there."

Gertrude Ederle

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

"Headwinds are sore vexations and the more passengers the sorer."

"The sea, washing the equator and the poles, offers its perilous aid, and the power and empire that follow it. . . . "Beware of me," it says, "but if you can hold me, I am the key to all the lands."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The god ship darts through the water all day; all night, like a fish, quivering with speed, gliding through liquid leagues, sliding from horizon to horizon."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

F

"Do they ask me what pleasure I find on the sea?"

- Why, absence from land is a pleasure to me:

A hamper of porter, and plenty of grog,

A friend, when too sleepy, to give me a jog,

A coop that will always some poultry afford,

Some bottles of gin, and no parson on board,

A crew that is brisk when it happens to blow,

One compass on deck and another below,

A girl, with more sense than the girl at the head,

To read me a novel, or make up me bed --

The man that has these, has a treasure in store

That millions possess not who live upon shore."

Philip Freneau

"He that will not sail till all dangers are over must never put to sea".
"Wine hath drowned more men than the sea."

Thomas Fuller

G

"It's remarkable how quickly a good and favorable wind can sweep away the maddening frustrations of shore living".

Ernest K. Gann

"Of course he doesn't (want to go).

It's easy to fight when you've got a lot of ships to work with. The real crunch comes when you're down to almost nothing. Then you either play it safe and you probably lose it all or you take a chance...

They didn't want to go.

They didn't want to get blown out of the sky and leave b5 defenses, and they sure as hell didn't want to die. But they did it because sheridan told them to do it and because it was right...

You don't follow an order because you know for sure that it's going to work out. You do what you're told because the C.O. has the moral authority that says you may not come back but the cause is just, and fair and necessary."

Mr. Garibaldi

"She had a voice of silver and lips of coral red. She climbed the dolphin-striker and kissed the figure-head."

Crosbie Garstin

"I wanted freedom, open air and adventure. I found it on the sea".

Alaine Gerbault

"When I forget how talented God is, I look to the sea".

Whoopi Goldberg

"O Mighty God,
Grant Weather, Wind and Tide,
Till On my Country Coast
Our Anchor Fall."

Barnabe Googe 1563

"There is nothing- absolutely nothing- half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." **Kenneth Grahame (Ratty said to Mole in The Wind in the Willows)**

H

"Being hove to in a long gale is the most boring way of being terrified I know"

Donald Hamilton

"Wind is to us what money is to life on shore".

Sterling Hayden

"Many emergencies involving the crew or vessel can be avoided by preliminary and on-going physical and mental preparation. Before embarking on an off-shore passage, you ought to be in good physical shape, properly garbed, and psychologically prepared."

Richard Henderson

Sea Sense

"Why do we love the sea? It is because it has some potent power to make us think things we like to think."

Robert Henri

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor."

Oliver Wendel Holmes

"It was with a happy heart that the good odysseus spread his sail to catch the wind and used his seamanship to keep his boat straight with the steering-oar"

Homer

"I shall go the way of the open sea, to the lands I knew before you came, and the cool ocean breezes shall blow from me the memory of your name."

Laurence Hope

"The mountains, the forest, and the sea, render men savage; they develop the fierce, but yet do not destroy the human."

Victor Hugo

I

"He who lets the sea lull him into a sense of security is in very grave danger."

Hammond Ines

J

"Timid men prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous sea of liberty."

Thomas Jefferson

"A small craft in an ocean is, or should be, a benevolent dictatorship".

"I can't wait for the oil wells to run dry, for the last gob of black, sticky muck to come oozing out of some remote well. Then the glory of sail will return."

Tristan Jones

K

"We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea, whether it is to sail or to watch - we are going back from whence we came."

John F. Kennedy

"Sailing is a good sport. You don't have to beat up the other guy like you do in boxing and football; you just try to outsmart him, and then you go out and have a beer with him."

John Kolius

L

"The pleasures of being becalmed became threadbare; there is a limit to untutored star gazing".

Charles Landery

"They say the sea is cold, but the sea contains the hottest blood of all, and the wildest, the most urgent."

D H Lawrence

"Confronting a storm is like fighting God. All the powers in the universe seem to be against you and, in an extraordinary way, your irrelevance is at the same time both humbling and exalting".

Franciose LeGrande

"The loneliness you get by the sea is personal and alive. It doesn't subdue you and make you feel abject. It's stimulating loneliness."

"The sea does not reward those who are too anxious, too greedy, or too impatient. One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach - waiting for a gift from the sea."

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

"Ships that pass in the night and speak each other in passing; Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness; So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another, Only a look and a voice; then darkness again and a silence."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"Would you learn the secret of the sea? Only those who brave its dangers, comprehend its mystery!"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

M

"The perfection of a yacht's beauty is that nothing should be there for only beauty's sake".

John MacGregor

"Power? It's like a Dead Sea fruit. When you achieve it, there is nothing there."

Harold Macmillan

"Off Cape Horn there are but two kinds of weather, neither one of them a pleasant kind".

John Masefield

"Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet.....I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can." **Herman Melville** Moby Dick

"I hate storms, but calms undermine my spirits".

Bernard Moitessier

"Sailors, with their built in sense of order, service and discipline, should really be running the world".

Nicholas Monsarrat

"Look at that sea, girls--all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen. We couldn't enjoy its loveliness any more if we had millions of dollars and ropes of diamonds."

Lucy Maud Montgomery Anne of Green Gables

"Never a ship sails out of a bay, but carries my heart as a stowaway".

Roselle Mercier Montgomery

O

"The sea hates a coward". **Eugene O'Neill**

"It's scary to have a 30 foot wave chasing you. If you are steering, you don't look back. The crew looks back for you, and you watch their faces. When they look straight up, then get ready!" **Magnus Olsson**

"We must free ourselves of the hope that the sea will ever rest. We must learn to sail in high winds." **Aristotle Onassis**

P

"I loved cruising the coast of Maine. For one thing, it helped me conquer my fear of fog. Not that I have learned to feel secure in the fog, but at least I have learned how to grope without panic".

Herb Payson

"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water. Don't let yourself indulge in vain wishes."

Laurence J. Peter

"On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale."

Alexander Pope Essay on Man

"Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm".
Syrus Publilius

R

"The desire to build a house is the tired wish of a man content thenceforward with a single anchorage. The desire to build a boat is the desire of youth, unwilling yet to accept the idea of a final resting place".
Arthur Ransome

"Ships are the nearest thing to dreams that hands have ever made."
Robert N. Rose

"The sea hath no king but God alone."
Dante Gabriel Rossetti The White Ship

S

"The sea speaks a language polite people never repeat. It is a colossal scavenger slang and has no respect."
Carl Sandburg

"If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable. "
Lucius Annaeus Seneca

"The sea is mother-death and she is a mighty female, the one who wins, the one who sucks us all up."
Anne Sexton

"One of the best temporary cures for pride and affection is seasickness".
Henry Wheeler Show

"Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than the power that crosses the white sea, driven by the stormy wind, making a path under surges that threaten to engulf him."
Sophocles

"To young men contemplating a voyage I'd say go."
"I once knew a writer who, after saying beautiful things about the sea, passed through a Pacific hurricane, and he became a changed man".
Joshua Slocum

"The sea finds out everything you did wrong".
Francis Stokes

T

"It was the Law of the Sea, they said. Civilization ends at the waterline. Beyond that, we all enter the food chain, and not always right at the top."
Hunter S. Thompson

"The sail, the play of its pulse so like our own lives: so thin and yet so full of life, so noiseless when it labors hardest, so noisy and impatient when least effective."

Henry David Thoreau

"Not all who wander are lost."

JRR Tolkien

"Most of us, I suppose, are a little nervous of the sea. No matter what its smiles may be, we doubt its friendship."

H.M. Tomlinson

"Waves are not measured in feet or inches, they are measured in increments of fear".

Buzzy Trent

"There was a great difference in boats, of course. For a long time I was on a boat that was so slow we used to forget what year it was we left port in."

"Twenty years from now you will be disappointed by the things that you didn't do than the ones that you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover."

Mark Twain

V

"The sea is everything. It covers seven tenths of the terrestrial globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense desert, where man is never lonely, for he feels life stirring on all sides."

Jules Verne 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea

"I don't know who named them swells. There's nothing swell about them. They should have named them awfuls".

Hugo Vihlen

"There is little man has made that approaches anything in nature, but a sailing ship does. There is not much man has made that calls to all the best in him, but a sailing ship does."

Allan Villiers

W

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails".

William Arthur Ward

"If a man is to be obsessed by something, I suppose a boat is as good as anything, perhaps a bit better than most".

E. B. White

"Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither."

William Wordsworth, Intimations of Immortality

Adages, Proverbs and Sayings

"Below 50 degrees south there is no law. Below 60 degrees south there is no God".

Old Sailors Adage

"Raise your sail one foot, and you get ten feet of wind".

Chinese Proverb

"There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes".

Old Norwegian Adage

"A strong nor'-wester 's blowing, Bill!

Hark! don't ye hear it roar now?

Lord help 'em, how I pities them

Unhappy folks on shore now!"

The Sailor's Consolation

"The meek shall inherit the earth. The brave shall get the oceans."

On the crew mess wall of M/Y Fortuna

"A sailing vessel is alive in a way that no ship with mechanical power ever be."

Aubrey de Selincourt

"You are not going to find the ideal boat. You are not even going to have it if you design it from scratch."

Carl Lane

"The acquisition of the knowledge of navigation has a strange effect on the minds of men."

Jack London

"The clink of an anchor - chain, the 'Yo-Ho!' of a well time crew, the flapping of huge sails - I love all these sounds."

John 'Rob Roy' MacGregor

"It was a strange and pleasant life for me all summer, sailing entirely alone by sea and river..."

John MacGregor 1867

The Voyage Alone in the Yawl Rob Roy

I must go down to the seas again,

To the lonely sea and the sky,

And all I ask is a tall ship

And a star to steer her by..."

John Masefield

"I must go down to the sea again

For the call of the running tide

It's a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied."

John Masefield

"We saw her first from the top of the cliff. she turned at her chains to every attack of wind, swaying, airy, and buoyant, as though cut of fragile porcelain on the sea below. She was a two-masted schooner..."

Richard Maury
The Saga of Cimba 1939

"Why is almost every robust, healthy boy with a robust, healthy soul in him, at some time or other, crazy to go to sea? Why, upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land?"

Herman Melville
Moby Dick

"Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp drizzly November in my soul... Whenever I find myself involuntarily passing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand on me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off -- then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can."

Herman Melville
Moby Dick

"There never was a great man yet who spent all his life inland."

Herman Melville

"There is a pleasure unknown to the landsman in reading at sea."

William McFee

"To insure safety at sea, the best that science can devise and that naval organization can provide must be regarded only as an aid, and never as a substitute for good seamanship, self-reliance, and sense of ultimate responsibility which are the first requisites in a seaman and naval officer."

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz

"On the day we lost the cereal account I finally decided to go to sea."

Eric Newby
The Last Grain Race

"The ocean... exemplifies the background against which, both at the start and at the finish, we see our lives as cast."

Charlton Ogburn, Jr.

"The expert and prudent navigator will act as his prudence dictates... One is more exposed to have misfortune in navigation than good fortune, due to [the channels'] narrowness and the lack of any way out, or places too difficult to pass, which is the case when within it with the cross winds."

Juan Pantoja Y Arriaga 1782
The Log of the Frigate Princesa

"Voyager upon life's sea;
To yourself be true,
And what'er your lot may be,
Paddle your own canoe."

Dr. Edward P. Philpots 1844

"A ship is different from anyplace on earth. it's dangerous at sea, as you've surely grasped by now. Dangerous, and separate. A captain has absolute power out there, extending -- and it still does -- to death. To trust a man with the lives of others is a grave thing. Only three principles make it work: authority; responsibility; accountability.

"Authority is the root of command. We delegate it only for a time, only in exercise of an office, only as defined by custom and law. Never as an individual, never for very long, never as if by right, never without bounds.

"Responsibility defines what a man is trusted with, with the ship, with the conn, whatever. So it's all clear, up front, and everybody understands his duty.

"To be accountable means to be subject to justice. To punishment, if you will. If you fail your trust -
- are derelict in your duty, misuse your power, make a professional error -- you will pay a price.

"In our profession, this accountability is absolute. When a naval officer accepts authority, he knows he will answer for the actions of his ship, whether or not he is directly and personally responsible in the way a civilian court would understand. For it is his responsibility to know and govern all that goes on aboard her, her flaws, her limitations, as well as her strengths.

"If error occurs, no matter whose, the fault is rightfully and inevitably his. Each commander knows this and accepts it as part of the job. No previous service, however meritorious, can make up for it."

David Poyer
The Circle

"No matter how important a man at sea may consider himself, unless he is fundamentally worthy the sea will someday find him out."

Felix Riesenberg

"No literature is richer than that of the sea. no story is more enthralling, no tradition is more secure."

Felix Riesenberg

"Ships are the nearest things to dreams that hands have ever made, for somewhere deep in their oaken hearts the soul of a song is laid."

Robert N. Rose

"And a sailor you must be if you're going to try ocean voyaging. You'll need a modicum of sailing aptitude, some grasp of mechanical concepts, and a willingness to pitch in and work. Most veteran world sailors fall into the classification of restless adventurers who are always looking at distant horizons."

Hal Roth
After 50,000 Miles

"Men who cannot enter into the mind of the sea, cannot for the same reason enter into the mind of ships."

John Ruskin

"...Yet still, even more now, my spirit within me
Drives me seaward to sail the deep,
To ride the long swell of the salt sea waves.
Never a day but my heart's desire
Would launch me forth on the long sea path..."
"The Seafarer" circa 1900's

"To know the laws that govern the winds, and to know that you know them, will give you an easy mind on your voyage round the world; otherwise, you may tremble at the appearance of every cloud."

Joshua Slocum
Sailing Alone Around the World

"Today; Yachtsmen all over the world are perpetuating the traditional skills of the romantic era of sail that are their rightful heritage."

Hervey Garrett Smith

"In splicing, practice makes perfect, and in the doing you will learn more than from reading any ten books on the subject."

Hervey Garrett Smith

"For will anyone dare to tell me that business is more entertaining than fooling among boats? He must have never seen a boat, or never seen an office, who says so."

Robert Louis Stevenson

"I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and Lover of Men, the Sea"
Swinburne

"...Every master and pilot prided himself on knowing exactly how much way his ship was making. He knew the ship, he considered the wind, he watched the sails, he watched the water. In fact, it was a matter which just could not be explained to the landsman. A good sailor knew his ship, and that was all."
E. G. R. Taylor

"Although it smacks of seamanlike efficiency; to say that we got our anchor and sailed out is not strictly accurate. It leaves much unsaid."
H. W. Tilman

"The sea's most powerful spell is romance."
H. W. Tilman

"There is something about a voyage you are barely aware of while you are making it."
H. M. Tomlinson

"The first lesson a yachtsman should learn is to join the ropes together, sailor fashion."
Vanderdecken

"Of all the things that man has made, no is so full of interest and charm, none possesses so distinct a life and character of its own, as a ship."
Henry Van Dyke

"Trawlermen have the heart of lions."
Alan Villiers

"Even now; with a thousand little voyages notched in my belt. i still feel a memorial chill on casting off."
E. B. White

"O Captain! My Captain ! Our fearful trip is done, the ship has weathered every rock, the prize we sought is won, the port is near, the bells i hear, the people all exulting."
Walt Whitman

"The sea's a rumbistcal place."
Bill Wigg

"How calm! How still! The only sound the dripping of the oar suspended."
William Wordsworth

"The charm of singlehanded cruising is not solitude, but independence."
Claud Worth

"It is as hard to describe the fascination of the sea as to explain the beauty of a woman, for, to each man, either it is self-evident, or no argument can help him see it."
Claud Worth 1926
Yacht Cruising, 3rd ed.



Photo by Glenn C. Matthews

Well, there you have it dear reader. I hope that you have enjoyed this collection of Nautical Quotes.

At this time in my life, I am what is known as a “landlubber”. There was a time when I would have thought I would need my head examined if I ever found myself in that situation. Maybe I do, but that’s another matter! Truth be told, I do miss the ocean and the sailing life. But I would not have found the true love of my life, my wife had I stayed living on the ocean.

So for that very reason, I am as happy as a clam. Perhaps someday, I will get back to my watery roots and one morning again wake up and go up the companionway stairs and poke my head out the hatch to survey our place at anchor in some out of the way little cove. Perhaps someday, I will be sitting in the cockpit in the deep deep black of night with the stars from horizon to horizon and watch the phosphorescence in the water as the anchor line stirs things up a bit. You just never know where this life will lead you.

For me, the guessing game that is this personal journey through time is an amazing thing. There’s another adventure waiting every time the sun comes up. I hope that you enjoy your daily adventure through life as much as you can. This may be our only shot at it and you might as well enjoy it!

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