FORUM FEAR:
IT'S EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK!
Simon Currin, Moderator, OCC Forum

The OCC Forum is now five years old and, thanks to the enthusiastic and informed posts of our members, has become a treasure trove of information. There's a vast and growing amount of pilotage and technical information in there, all of which can be searched using the search tab within the Forum.

This spring a new group of users were tempted to post for the first time when the Forum was used to host the election platform for our two candidates for Commodore. Some needed a little hand-holding as they were nervous about making their first post, but they very soon got the hang of things and it was great to convert self-confessed technophobes into confident contributors. Their hesitancy has prompted this brief introduction to the Forum in the hope that we can tempt more users to contribute their knowledge and experience to the many discussions within it. For it is the abundance of experience within our ranks that makes the Forum such a valuable resource.

Some people condemn the Forum as Facebook's poor imitation. It is, in fact, a very different animal, designed to complement Facebook and not compete with it. The Forum provides a permanent and searchable record of discussions, whereas Facebook lives in the present and, however interesting the thread, it gets lost in time. Also, the Forum has some basic architecture which makes it possible to navigate to information nuggets, whereas Facebook is delightfully random. Both have their place, and both are invaluable resources for our members.

Here are some facts and hints to help you join in the discussions:

1. Have no fear. There is nothing that you can do to screw it all up. In case of doubt just drop me a line at simon@medex.org.uk and I can move, edit or delete your post. I really am very keen to help!

2. Choose a topic or discussion you would like to contribute to. If you want to start a new topic then e-mail me and I'll add it.

3. The Forum is fully integrated with the rest of the OCC website so you can browse your way to it using the navigation menus on the Club's Homepage, www.oceancruisingclub.org. Click on **OCC Forum** in the list on the left.

4. Use the tabs to navigate and search. At the top of the Forum there are self-explanatory tabs – for instance, the **Recent Topics** tab will bring up the most recent discussions (spelling errors and all!) – see screen-grabs opposite. Other tabs will display the structure of the Forum.

5. Enter your website log-in details. Most of the Forum can be read without logging in, but some crucial bits require it, and to make a post you must be logged in. If you don't have a username or password then e-mail Club Secretary Rachelle Turk on secretary@oceancruisingclub.org for assistance. The log-in details you need are the same as those required to access the rest of the website – see opposite.

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6. Drill down. Within each topic you can, by clicking, drill down to read the discussions within it.

7. Post away without a care. Once you have found a discussion you would like to contribute to then just hit the **Reply** button at bottom right. A new window will

open, into which you can type your reply. There are all manner of formatting buttons within that window, but save these for when you are an enthusiast! Alternatively create your post in your normal text program and then paste it into the window.

8. Save what you have done. At the bottom of the window you will see the all-important **Submit** button. Hit that and you have made your first post.

9. Start a new discussion. If you have some nugget you want to share, or a question to which you want an answer, but you can't find where to put it, then hit the **New Topic** discussion and away you go. Don't be alarmed if I move it later to a more appropriate place to fit it within the overall structure.

10. **Attachments and pictures**: When creating your post you will see the **Add File** button which enables you to insert attachments. The size of each attachment is limited to 10MB, and documents should be in PDF format. One of the commonest queries I get arises from people trying to attach a Word or Excel document. These formats are not allowed as they can be edited.

11. Read the full discussion. The number of posts displayed at any one time is limited, so use the **Page** button at bottom right to browse through a topic with scores of responses.

12. The sky's the limit. There are many functions within the Forum that you will never need to use, but don't hesitate to ask if you are struggling.

13. **Housekeeping:** Keeping the content fresh is the hardest task, and I need your help with this. Send me a link when you find something that needs to be deleted and I will do the deed. For instance, if you've advertised something as **For Sale**, please let me know when it is sold.

The Forum really is very easy to use and every new post adds to the archive of useful information at our finger tips, so please take the plunge and get posting. Every corner of the OCC world is in there, whether it's sharing information about a favourite anchorage, selling your superyacht, solving a technical problem, or a visa issue in Vanuatu. Please add your experience to the mix for everyone's benefit. Thank you, and welcome to the OCC Forum!

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