



Port side or starboard

Chloe Collet of YPI Crew looks at why it might be a good idea to get your head around some basic nautical terms before walking the quays

The Mediterranean summer cruising season is upon us. From Turkey to Gibraltar, all the ports are packed and the bays are full of luxurious yachts of all shapes and sizes. Following the ease up of Covid 19 travel regulations, yacht crew from far and wide have also returned to the shores of France, Italy and Spain amongst others to seek work. Crew search and placement services have been extremely busy since the early spring of 2022 with not only new comers to the industry but also experienced candidates eager to secure a new position.

As experienced and specialised recruiters we are often called upon to give expert advice to junior or entry level crew on how to succeed in their job search. Advice that we offer can be on many subjects and very often during a face-to-face interview in our office.

There are indeed multiple sources of information and a large array of pages on social media with helpful hints and suggestions on how to secure a position onboard. These pages may deal with the presentation of a CV and how to prepare for an interview for example. One useful element of advice, not often recommended to junior crew is to become familiar with nautical terms. This may not appear fundamental but the maritime world has its own set of vocabulary and yachting is no different. As a candidate seeking a position in a new industry, researching and understanding a new set of terms can be vital in securing and building a successful onboard career. Of these terms there are two basic navigational terms that each "yachtie" should be aware of, notably port side and starboard side.

Where did these terms originate from and what do they mean? The origin of port and starboard sides date back to the 16th century and comes from the old English usage for their respective purposes. They are essentially used to indicate the left and right side of a vessel. Port and starboard are non-interchangeable

terms referring to two halves of the vessel. Why not just use left and right? Well the left and right side may differ depending on the location of the observer, commander or deck crew whilst under navigation.

So in order to avoid a collision, when looking forward, toward the bow or fore of a ship, port and starboard refer to the left and right sides, respectively. The stern or aft is the rear portion. In the early days of maritime navigation, before vessels had rudders on their centrelines, boats were controlled using a steering oar. Most sailors were right-handed, so the steering oar was placed over or through the right side of the stern.

These steering oars functioned as the rudders of the craft and had to be expertly manoeuvred. This led to the right half that the sailor sat on being called the steerboard. The word steerboard was later converted into starboard which is a combination of two Old English words: stéor (meaning "steer") and bord (meaning "the side of a boat").

As the size of boats grew, so did the steering oar, so they would tie the boat up to a dock on the side opposite the oar. Subsequently this side became known as larboard, or "the loading side." Nevertheless, over time and due to the confusion under sail of the two terms, larboard and starboard, larboard was subsequently replaced with port. This was after all the side that faced the port, allowing supplies to be ported aboard by porters.

In addition to the terms port and starboard, and especially used as an aid in night manoeuvres, colour coding was also introduced. Red is the international convention for the port side, whilst green is the colour for the starboard side.

So, do a little research and widen your knowledge base to be well prepared for a new job in an exciting industry.

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