

TROUBLE-FREE HAUL-OUT?

It can happen



“Haul-outs vary widely around the world—so what basic principles can you rely on wherever you go?”

Anthony Gates – Surveyor/Loadmaster

For coastal sailors, haul-outs are usually straightforward. Most take place at a familiar yard in a home port, making the process predictable and manageable.

Even cruising sailors along the coast typically rely on personal experience or recommendations when selecting a yard. However, once you venture further afield, you'll encounter a wide range of facilities—some highly professional, others far less so.

To help ensure a smooth and trouble-free haul-out wherever you cruise, marine surveyor and experienced sailor Anthony Gates of Andaman Maritime Services in Phuket shares practical advice. His guide draws on years of working with different vessels and boatyards—and learning from avoidable mistakes.

➞ Preparation

Preparation for your next haul-out should begin during the previous one.

Keep detailed maintenance records, including:

- The type of antifouling used
- How it was applied
- The number of coats

Don't rely on memory—important details are easily forgotten.

Also record all maintenance work completed, such as:

- Replacing anodes
- Servicing or replacing seacocks
- Repainting the boot top

Unfinished tasks naturally become the starting point for your next haul-out plan.

Practical planning is just as important:

- Who will carry out the work?
- Are materials available locally, or should they be brought in?
- Will you stay onboard or need alternative accommodation?

➞ Timing

Choosing the right time is critical.

Hauling out during wet, humid conditions is far from ideal for painting or repairs such as osmosis treatment. If you must haul out in such conditions, you may need to use protective covers like tents or tarpaulins.



➞ Choosing a Boatyard

Don't base your decision on cost alone. Ask the right questions first.

Access and Conditions

- Is the yard affected by tides? Limited lift windows can cause delays
- Can you safely enter and exit without risking damage?



➞ Insurance Considerations

Insurance requirements are often overlooked.

Many policies require out-of-water inspections for boats over ten years old. It's not uncommon for owners to relaunch, only to discover a survey is required before their policy can be renewed—forcing them to haul out again.

Additionally:

- Some policies exclude hot work unless approved in advance
- Major repair or refit work may require notification

Always clarify requirements with your insurer before proceeding.

Lift Requirements

- Will you need to approach bow or stern first?
- Must any rigging be removed for the lift?

Hardstand Surface

- Dirt or gravel may be cheaper, but dust can affect finishing work

Support System

- Boats must be supported at structural strong points
- Stands and supports must be secure and properly positioned

If the setup looks inadequate, it probably is.

➞ Other Important Factors

Consider:

- Sea and tidal conditions during lifting/launching
- Hull material and construction
- Hull shape compatibility with lifting equipment
- Bulkhead locations and weight distribution
- Drive systems and underwater appendages
- Hull windows, which must not bear lifting loads
- Contractor availability
- Payment conditions

➞ Preventing Damage

Before lifting:

- Provide photos of previous haul-outs and manufacturer guidelines
- Clearly mark lifting points
- Identify bulkhead locations
- Lighten the vessel where possible

Check carefully for:

- Propellers, shafts, and saildrives
- Transducers and through-hulls
- Stabilizers and appendages

Also:

- Turn off seacocks
- Protect the hull with padding at sling contact points
- Secure sails and reduce windage
- Document the process with photos or video



➞ Challenging Boats

Some vessels require extra care, including:

- Deep fin keel yachts
- Multihulls with complex layouts
- Custom or unusual designs
- Overloaded boats

Catamarans in particular may have structural arrangements that complicate support placement, making proper planning essential.

➞ Haul-Out Methods

Different methods suit different boats:

- Travel lift – versatile, but sling positioning is critical
- Hydraulic trailer – ideal for multihulls, if used correctly
- Forklift – quick for small vessels
- Slipway trolley – effective for keel-supported boats
- Crane – useful in remote locations, but requires care
- Custom Trailer – Limited but sometimes all that is available

Careening – cost-effective but limited and sometimes restricted





➞ Blocking Ashore

Once out of the water, proper support is essential:

- Block under structural points such as bulkheads
- Ensure even keel support
- Use stands for stability, not weight-bearing
- Secure stands together

After blocking:

- Check doors and hatches
- Inspect bilges and structure
- Confirm safe access

➞ Before Relaunch

Before going back in the water:

- Ensure antifouling has been completed under support points
- Replace all drain plugs and bungs

➞ After Launch

Immediately check:

- Seacocks
- Through-hulls and hoses
- Shaft seals
- Bilges

Also bleed and check engines and onboard systems.

➞ Final Thoughts

A trouble-free haul-out is entirely achievable with the right approach.

Key takeaways:

- Plan ahead and keep detailed records
- Understand your vessel
- Choose your yard carefully
- Confirm insurance requirements
- Never compromise on safety and support

With careful preparation and attention to detail, you can confidently handle haul-outs wherever your cruising takes you.



Anthony Gates
Surveyor/Loadmaster

Tel/Whatsapp: +66 81 893 9985
Email: anthony@ams-sea.com
www.ams-sea.com

