

Trailersailing

Know-how

MASTERING THE LAUNCH AND RETRIEVAL

Getting your trailersailer on and off the trailer doesn't have to be complicated or disorderly. First

The conversion of a trailersailer from land vehicle to watercraft (and back again)—and the art of launching and retrieving it—are elements unique to this kind of sailboat. When we are on multiple-lake family sailing expeditions, my wife and I use a well-rehearsed and methodical system to rig, launch, and

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do anything else. How will you position the trailer on the ramp? Are there any overhead hazards like tree branches or powerlines? Where and how will you beach or dock the boat? Will you motor off the trailer or use warps? Is the ramp long enough? How deep is the water? Can you see the ramp under the water? (Some ramps have a high concrete lip at the outer end that can damage a trailer.) Check for the effects of wind and current. If possible, watch other boats launch.

■ Choose a rigging site

Before raising the mast, park on a clean, level spot. If the boat isn't level, the mast can swing out to one side during raising, twisting the maststep. Don't park too close to anything that will obstruct the mast, and make sure it won't cross the path of traffic as it's brought aft before stepping. Position the boat/trailer with the wind behind you to help the mast-raising process.

■ Rig and prepare the boat

Take your time, and discuss your game plan with your rigging partner. Chock the trailer wheels, and make sure the jack wheel at the forward end of the trailer is firmly planted on firm ground. Check that the trailer is attached to the tow vehicle and that the vehicle's emergency brake is on. Calm communication and common sense during mast-raising are important. Don't overstrain yourself; consider purchasing a mast-raising device (see figures, page 34).

■ Mast-raising tips

- Clear the deck and cockpit of tools and loose gear that could trip someone
- To facilitate moving around during mast-raising, consider placing a wooden plank across the cockpit seats. Close the main hatch
- Attach the masthead wind indicator before raising the mast
- Keep a lookout for snagged rigging and twisted halyards, and make sure the backstay runs free
- Use the spinnaker halyard, rather than the forestay, to raise the mast; it's easier on



develop a complete checklist for all procedures, then follow it exactly

retrieve our trailersailer, a Catalina 22. By following a few simple guidelines, you can transport and launch your trailersailer with confidence and avoid frustration, personal injury, and boat damage.

■ Survey the launch ramp

I once raised my Catalina 22's mast and prepared the boat for launching, only to discover that there wasn't enough water at the launch ramp to float the boat off the trailer. Inspect the launch area before you