

# ANCHORS AWAY

## THE LOWDOWN ON CHARTERING A LUXURY YACHT

BY FIONA HARPER



**Chartering a yacht is the ultimate in travel indulgence.** A luxurious liberation from the urban world, yacht charter is travel at its most pleasurable.

Offering unforgettable memories, there is barely a more delightful way to experience luxurious freedom in stunning destinations globally than from the deck of a yacht. Unlike any other travel journey, chartering a yacht is an indulgent escape offering a private enclave with an ever-changing destination. Indeed, posed that perennial travellers question, “Is it better to travel or arrive?” A sailor will always choose the former. But you don’t actually need to be a sailor to enjoy the yachting lifestyle. Charter yachts come with a professional

crew at hand to take care of all of the pesky details including navigation, sailing and provisioning. As a charter guest, the hardest decision you need to make comes when choosing your cruising waters. Uninhabited tropical isles? Or perhaps charismatic Mediterranean docks buzzing with an early morning vibe. Colourful Caribbean islands rocking to rhythmic reggae tunes drifting across a busy anchorage. Tropical or cool climate, it’s your choice.

Once you’ve decided on your cruising destination, there are a few more important questions to be addressed before you sail off into the sunset. Charter yachts come in a vast range of sizes, styles and locations. So, how to decide which is

the right yacht? Fully crewed or bareboat (or in other words, skipper yourself)? Motor or sail?

Crewed yachts are chartered at a weekly base rate, either all-inclusive (common in the British Virgin Islands) or non-inclusive. All-inclusive generally means standard food and beverages, ship’s fuel, along with the crew are included in the base rate. Non-inclusive means additional costs for provisioning, fuel, docking, crew gratuities, taxes, cruising permits, amongst others are additional. Your actual charter expense will be determined by your intended use of the yacht. As a guide, add a further five to 15 per cent onto an all-inclusive rate and around 25 per cent for a non-



inclusive rate. There's also a significant difference in base rates between charters in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean; the Mediterranean being more expensive due to higher demand.

Chartering a yacht is a uniquely intimate experience, both in the planning stage as well as while you're on-board, so it pays to take your time to ensure every last detail is addressed. From the exotic destinations visited, to catering for onboard entertainment through to the skills of the crew who will tend to the yacht, planning a charter allows you to personalize the experience to your specific needs.

A yacht charter broker is your essential link to making the right choices,

smoothing the way for a seamless voyage. Any broker worth his or her salt will have a range of yacht options at their fingertips to address your needs and budget.

Once you've found a broker you feel comfortable with, choosing your yacht and cruising location is where the real fun begins. Many yachts move between the popular cruising grounds of the Mediterranean and the Caribbean to suit the seasons. From November to May, the Caribbean is the place to be, while from June to October the Mediterranean is the cruising ground of choice. North of the Mediterranean, destinations such as Norway, Sweden and the British Isles offer yacht charter away from the crowds during the northern hemisphere summer.

Some yachts relocate to South Pacific islands like Fiji, New Caledonia, Tonga and Tahiti, as well as Australia and New Zealand during the southern summer. Some yachts are available as a relocation charter – a tantalizing opportunity for sailors keen to experience blue water sailing. Though be warned, if you're even slightly prone to seasickness, blue water sailing should be avoided. In Asia, Thai and Malaysian waters east and west of the Malay Peninsula are perennial favourite cruising grounds.

When deciding on a yacht, you'll soon discover that the choice is almost overwhelming. Super yachts like Kokomo, built by New Zealand's Alloy Yachts, stand out in a highly credentialed fleet.







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*Sails billow gently overhead  
as your yacht slips gracefully  
between dreamy tropical isles.*

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At 58m of performance-oriented sailing perfection, sleek Kokomo turns heads whether docked in a marina or powered up and under sail. Red Dragon is another drop dead gorgeous yacht on the charter scene. At 52m, the design brief was for a world-class luxury cruising yacht capable of staying at sea for long periods of time. Being entirely self-sufficient, Red Dragon is able to avoid crowded harbours, allowing her to cruise to remote island archipelagos, anchoring in seclusion far from civilization.

If you have the sailing skills and would prefer to “skipper” your own charter yacht, bareboating is another option. Charter operators, such as Moorings, have modern fleets in major cruising destinations, though choices are somewhat limited at the luxury end. Look for brands such as Lagoon, Jeanneau or Dufour for superior catamarans and yachts in the 15m plus range. You’ll also need to prove your competence, either with a certified recreational certificate or by demonstrated experience.

Sitting somewhere between full luxury charter and bareboating is a crewed charter where you’ll share the yacht with other guests. Using opulent spacious catamarans around 15m in length for their premium space and comfort, fully crewed charters come with a skipper and chef, and guests can be as hands-on as they like. Helping to sail the yacht and taking turns at the helm is also optional. So too, doing nothing. With someone special by your side, gin and tonic in hand, sails billow gently overhead as your yacht slips gracefully between dreamy tropical isles. For diehard sailors with a penchant for traditional sailing, an increasing number of replica tall ships are cruising the globe. Berths are available for those who relish the opportunity to experience the raw thrill of sailing beyond a bobbing blue horizon.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, using his nom de plume Mark Twain, put it succinctly when he said, “Throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails.” A prolific author and former river boat captain who passed away in 1910, his words are as relevant today as they were when he penned them over a century ago.

For many, this is what yacht charter is really all about. The opportunity to explore. To dream. To discover. 📌

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