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How you can live the VIP high life on a superyacht

Not everyone can afford a superyacht, but a new charter company founded on the Gold Coast is offering an entrée into that exclusive club, one cabin at a time.

Fiona Harper

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With the year we've had, an island escape has never looked more alluring. In particular, to the Whitsunday Islands, that long-favoured winter getaway of southern Australians.

However, the 74-island archipelago is best viewed from the deck of a yacht, which means the real dilemma is not which island but, rather, which vessel will best transport your pandemic-weary body to island enlightenment.



Phoenix One, chartered by Yospace, has a maximum of eight guests.

To resolve this dilemma, consider the humble lobster.

Are you more of a hunter-gatherer, happy to catch and cook your own? Or is twice-baked lobster souffle exquisitely crafted by a multi-hatted culinary team more your style? Perhaps lobster is not your thing at all?

These are not questions to be taken lightly. Unless you own a yacht or have good friends who do, there are essentially three options: an exclusive [superyacht \[https://www.afr.com/topic/super-yachts-lmsr\]](https://www.afr.com/topic/super-yachts-lmsr) charter (for the twice-baked lobster souffle lover, preferably with pockets deeper than the tourmaline waters of Whitsunday Passage); a [\[https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/travel/bareboating-on-the-whitsundays-paradise-and-freedom-for-minimal-cost-20210517-p57sp9\]](https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/travel/bareboating-on-the-whitsundays-paradise-and-freedom-for-minimal-cost-20210517-p57sp9) bareboat charter [\[https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/travel/bareboating-on-the-whitsundays-paradise-and-freedom-for-minimal-cost-](https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/travel/bareboating-on-the-whitsundays-paradise-and-freedom-for-minimal-cost-20210517-p57sp9)

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another gin and tonic.



Hill Inlet, Whitehaven, is just one of the spectacular places a charter yacht can visit. **Tourism Whitsundays**

With the privilege of exclusivity comes privacy, too, with a discreet, skilled crew on hand to pamper to your every whim.

Run out of champagne and require another case flown by seaplane to your anchorage? Consider it done. Need a daily massage or private yoga instruction? That can be arranged. Fancy freshly caught lobster for dinner? The divemaster will swim down to the reef (marine park zoning permitted) and rustle up a couple for the chef to prepare to your liking.

At the other end of the yachting scale comes the bareboat charter, where you take the helm of a power or sailing boat and rope in friends or family

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yachts fully equipped and a land-based support crew on hand if things go wrong, it's the perfect option for those with boating experience who enjoy being hands on.



Superyacht guests have more options than just sitting around and sipping sundowners. **Fiona Harper**

As for by-the-cabin charters, you'll lose the exclusivity of the other two options, but there is a significant coin to be saved hiring a cabin rather than an entire vessel. You'll have a crew of six to attend to all the pesky chores that come with safely navigating a vessel at sea, along with a chef, wait staff and deck crew to keep you fed, hydrated and entertained.

On the flip side, you'll have little say in the itinerary – or your travel companions.

While by-the-cabin charters have long been available in European and Caribbean maritime hubs, they are a fairly new concept to Australia at the superyacht level.

Leading the charge here is Yotspace, founded on the Gold Coast earlier this year by husband-and-wife team Nicholas Mason and Christina James, who

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The couple decided to launch [Yospace](https://www.yospace.com/) [https://www.yospace.com/] while in quarantine in a Brisbane hotel, having scarpered back to Australia from the Maldives as the COVID-19 outbreak closed international borders in March 2020.

“Yospace bridges the gap between the rarefied world of superyachts and the mainstream cruise ship market,” explains James. “For the first time in Australia, travellers who love luxury small ships can experience the VIP ambience of a superyacht for a lot less.”

Life & Leisure joined Yospace on its maiden sailing – six nights in the Whitsundays under the captainship of David Miller on board Phoenix One, a 35-metre superyacht designed by famed Italian yacht designers Benetti (with a Yospace maximum of eight guests).

Which may sound spacious but here’s a warning: unless you have persuaded friends or family to join you, a 35-metre yacht is a relatively small space to share with strangers, with only so many spots (like your cabin) to spend quiet moments alone. That means, as we discovered, there is always the risk of finding yourself ensnared with heavy-drinking fellow guests intent on draining the booze locker.



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definitely won't have to cook it yourself). However, coral trout, Cape Grim beef tenderloin and pan-fried duck breast are more than adequate substitutions.

Onboard Phoenix One, there's no denying the indulgence that comes from having a large, well-appointed vessel and a skilled crew at our disposal. We are greeted with a cool towel and chilled glass of champagne on arrival, a level of personal service that continues for the next seven days, and Captain Miller outlines our intended voyage around Hook and Whitsunday Islands as well as to the outer Great Barrier Reef, well beyond the horizon.

We're three days in before there's any mention of lobster.



Phoenix One provides all meals for the eight guests it accommodates. **Fiona Harper**

Snorkelling on the fringing reef near Black Island, first officer and

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prance across the reef day and night without fear of becoming dinner (for humans, at least).

Despite the lobsters' recalcitrance, there are plenty of other things to see, like a green turtle foraging and colourful schools of fish glinting in streaming shards of sunlight.

The flat-topped reef and vertical wall has sprouted an astonishing coral garden in the wake of damaging weather events over past summers.

“Soft corals have really bounced back since the cyclones and are looking really healthy,” Bertram explains. “This reef benefits from the constant flow passing through the passage between Hayman and Hook Islands and the corals are thriving.”

A coral gardening program was introduced in late 2018. Reef restoration activities include planting more than 2000 corals on nursery frames at Blue Pearl and Manta Ray Bays, which are maintaining an 80 per cent survival rate.

Later, anchored in Blue Pearl Bay, the crew drop me ashore, so I can stretch my legs on the hiking trail that leads from the beach and up over the ridge.

Keen to work off some of the exquisite meals that chef David Pulley has dished up, I break into a jog as a rotund wallaby bounds through the vegetation. Phoenix One bobs gently at anchor in the bay far below.



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features pan-fried wild coral trout served on garlic spinach and capsicum rosti topped with tiger prawns.

There's still no sign of lobster. But it matters not as I retreat to my cabin for a soak in the bathtub before canapés are served topside at dusk.

The writer travelled as a guest of [Yospace](https://www.yospace.com/) [https://www.yospace.com/].

NEED TO KNOW

Yospace is offering six-night sailings in the Whitsundays

[<https://www.yospace.com/tour/whitsundays-superyacht-voyage-reef-relax-6-nights/>]

on board the superyacht MY Triple888EIGHT between February 1 and December 1. From \$9600 a person, all inclusive.

It is also offering six-night cruises on the Hawkesbury River and in the Kimberley.

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