

Sail Connections

Worldwide Yacht Charter Specialists



The Essential Guide to Bareboat and Crewed Sailing Holiday Charters

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INTRODUCTION

Considering a sailing vacation? Wise choice, it really is the ultimate way to relax and have heaps of holiday fun. Charter a boat and get your accommodation, transport, dining and entertainment all rolled in together. There is no call for day tours, you are living one big excursion.

A yacht charter does demand some organising, and good planning is key to making sure your holiday will be enjoyable from start to finish. You want to have confidence in the boat and destination you have chosen, to know that when boarding time comes you feel completely at ease and the only surprises in store are nice ones. Just like the voyage itself, you want the whole planning process to be plain sailing all the way.

Our Charter Guide is intended to provide helpful tips on preparation, and to explain the process from pre-planning to casting off. Understanding how things work makes for better decisions all round. We trust the following is both interesting and useful as you prepare to set sail on the holiday of a lifetime.

In preparing this guide we draw on decades of sailboat experience in all parts of the world. That experience includes skippering charter yachts, sailing tuition, family cruising, racing and blue-water voyages. In declaring our interest in being of service to you as a charter brokerage, we can state that we have a passion for sailing and travel. Our aim is to share our sailing knowledge - helping you get the best impartial advice on boat choices, destination options and everything else associated with a sailboat vacation.

Take a look through this guide and make your informed chartering decisions. Should you choose to let us help you on your way, it will be our pleasure to assist you further.

This guide is primarily intended for people suitably experienced and qualified to charter on a full bareboat basis. In that context reference to "crew" means your group of family and friends. There is also a lot of information equally of interest to anyone considering a professionally-crewed boat charter. Relevant sections make reference to paid crew.

If you have any questions on charter options both bareboat and professionally crewed, we'd be pleased to answer them.

Robert Cross

Yachting Holidays Ltd, t/a Sail Connections



1. TYPES OF CHARTER

When you first start reading up about sailing exotic places with family or friends, different types of charter confront you. Bareboat is the common term and quite self-explanatory. But what is the difference between crewed bareboat and fully crewed? What are the advantages of joining a flotilla instead of sailing independently? What about cabin charters and what is regatta chartering?

FULL BAREBOAT CHARTER

When you charter full bareboat, you take the wheel on casting of and the boat becomes your responsibility for the duration of charter. It's just you and your group aboard, and except for local restrictions that may apply, you are free to travel where the wind will take you.

Most of what follows applies to this form of charter; required qualifications, responsibilities of skipper and mate, and operational aspects of getting boat and crew from and back to base. Naturally, full bareboat charters are for more experienced sailors.

PERMANENTLY CREWED BOAT CHARTER

If the idea of sailing holiday fun may be tempered by the responsibility of full bareboat, consider chartering a boat that comes with a permanent professional crew. In just about every destination we can put your party aboard a suitable boat with skipper and/or hostess, even a deckhand.

When you charter a permanently crewed boat your paid crew takes charge of all the operations above and below deck. But they don't have to do all the work. They'll encourage you to do as much or as little of the sailing and cooking as you wish. They have their own separate accommodation aboard, meaning permanently crewed charter boats are generally the larger catamarans and monohulls.

CREWED BAREBOAT CHARTER

Not a contradiction, but something between full bareboat and permanently crewed. Just about every boat available for charter, as long as it's big enough, is available with paid skipper and others you may wish to engage. These people are also professionals, but freelancers engaged for your booking and unattached to a particular boat.

We commonly arrange paid skippers to join charter groups, taking responsibility for the boat and proving great tour guides at the same time. But all the while, you are the contracted hirer and free to sail to your own schedule.

FLOTILLA SAILING

If you are confident and qualified to sail bareboat and would like to do so in the company of other boats, several charter operators conduct organised flotillas. These groups of boats sail to a pre-determined schedule, each crew doing so in their own time each day. Normally the only requirement is to all gather together in the same port or bay each evening, when social events are often organized. Flotillas provide a great means of sailing in company and sharing experiences with new sailing friends made along the way.

BY-THE-CABIN CHARTERS

For couples on honeymoon or other smaller groups who do not have a full crew complement, by-the-cabin charters are available in the more popular destinations. We can refer you to professional skippers and crews conducting by-the-cabin charters both crewed bareboat and fully crewed. This form of charter is a great way to make new friends while enjoying a sailing holiday without the big responsibilities.

REGATTA CHARTERS

When the timing is right, operators can sometimes include regatta participation in their charters. Racing may not be your idea of what makes a sailing holiday. But if you want to experience a world-famous regatta from right in its midst, explore the possibilities.

2. CHOOSING A DESTINATION



Selecting a destination is probably your hardest decision; there are so many fabulous places to go sailing. If you have previously chartered you know what you particularly enjoyed about the area you visited, and what it had to offer. That's a good place to start. Add new experiences your crew is looking for, and you're on your way.

What we find most enjoyable about our own sailing holidays, something backed up by feedback from clients, is the sense of adventure that comes with visiting a destination for the first time. Whether tying up to a busy quay in the Ionian Islands at the centre of the waterfront action, exploring the pristine marine parks and natural splendour of New Caledonia, buying fresh produce from local Turkish traders who supply the charter fleet from their floating convenience stores, experiencing the music and beach culture of the Caribbean or basking in the serenity of Southeast Asian waters: wherever you chose to sail, abundant riches await.

Sure, things happen and the weather is not always perfect. But here's a good rule to live by when travelling: what you get is how it was meant to be. So enjoy your sailing holiday for what it is. An unexpected treat is never far away, often one that becomes a trip highlight, even a life-changing experience.

Perhaps you have experienced enough variety for now, and the time's right to return to a favourite place. Alternatively your next holiday may be all about venturing where you have never been before, anticipating surprises in store.

When it comes to your booking arrangements however, there is no room for surprises. Having identified a country or region to charter, your choice of destination may have only just begun. The options are endless and can be confusing. So it pays to consult the experts.

You can do a lot of research on the internet, but keep in mind that most of what you read is written for land-based tourists. On charter, unconstrained by roads and well-travelled paths, you can set your own course and explore at will. But before setting out on the journey, seek advice from people in the sailing tourism industry. Get some help in sorting the alternatives and finding the one that suits you best. You won't regret it.

Online sailing itineraries offered by charter boat operators can be very useful. But keep in mind they are often written to optimise charters from specific locations. They can be ambitious, aiming to create expectations that may not offer the best options for your group as a whole. By booking your boat charter through a broker you are dealing with an independent specialist. A good charter broker maintains a comprehensive record of what's on offer in the marketplace. With our in-country partners to call on and valuable feedback from clients, we have access to the very latest local knowledge and can offer unbiased advice.

In all country and regional destinations offering boat charters, the local sailing conditions can change, and we're not just talking about the weather. Our recommendation will always be to err on the side of caution when assessing the environment into which you will sail. At all times, be mindful of crew comfort and tolerance levels for the conditions most likely to prevail.

Good brokers have client interest firmly and continually in mind, and we act as a 'sounding board' for everyone's concerns and expectations. Our recommendations aim to provide a holiday that is no more challenging than your group expects, one you can be confident will be enjoyed by all on board. Part of our service is to present historical data on the weather conditions likely at the time of year in the destinations you are considering. We cannot predict the weather, but we can give you a good idea of what to expect, and from there work out a suitable sailing program.

Build some flexibility into your itinerary. It should be a relatively loose plan, one that provides options based on weather and places of extra interest along the way. Take your time to explore and enjoy being there, rather than making an ambitious plan that could cause you to miss something of value, especially if the weather turns.

One-way charters have a particular way of catching out the unwary. When we discuss this charter option, we do so mindful of all potential issues. A one-way charter that forces you to keep sailing to meet a deadline - when you want to stay and enjoy a beautiful bay or fabulous coastal town just discovered - can leave you disappointed. Don't let your holiday simply become a boat delivery trip. Your broker can offer suggestions for dealing with that prospect, and alternatives to it.

3. CHOOSING A BOAT



Lagoon 400 - Marseille juin 2009 - Mention obligatoire / Mandatory credit: Photo Nicolas Claris

Attend any international boat show these days, or just go online, and be astounded by the advances in modern yacht design. But for all the technology, every model is a compromise between comfort, performance and layout. When it comes to the charter yacht fleets at your disposal, comfort usually wins out.

For the purist determined to sail efficiently to windward rather than use the motor, there is a boat available. So if performance is your thing, don't hesitate to enquire. But for a holiday with family or friends, we steer you towards a boat that maximizes crew comfort, at least as a starting point. Some destinations are more suited to certain layout configurations. For instance helm stations raised for visibility are good for spotting the many prawn pots in Thai waters. But they are not so important in Tahiti, where sailing performance serves well, enabling the best ocean passage journey between Islands.

Catamarans are increasingly replacing monohull yachts for their liveability aboard. They are even surpassing power boats in some charter markets. Some clients who charter catamarans are power boat people who never unfurl the sails. Their choice of craft is based on the extra accommodation and stability over that of a traditional power boat, or on cost compared to a modern power catamaran. The cat's large open plan living area makes it increasingly popular with charterers, especially when the family sees the stylish layouts of modern designs.

Catamarans are dearer to charter than monohulls, and when the wind is forward of the beam the anticipated sailing can quickly turn into a motoring experience. That is offset by living aboard

a floating home that includes separate quarters and large flowing entertaining spaces. For a vacationing crew of family and friends, that's all very hard to beat.

However in some destinations it is more practical to charter a monohull. For instance monohulls have an advantage where your trip involves a lot of tying up. Docking space for a catamaran can be expensive, and berths in crowded harbours can be tricky to get into and out of. We can talk to you about where and what time of year you are likely to encounter such challenges.

Monohulls will remain a popular and important segment of the charter market, appealing as they do in form and fashion. Modern monohulls have lines that follow trends set by racing yachts, particularly those designed to race around the globe with the prevailing winds. The result is a lightweight off-the-wind flyer with a very wide stern and surfboard-like underwater section. Fortunately this broad form transitions well to the cruising boat. The wide stern makes possible the large cockpit preferred by cruising sailors, with room for rear cabins that compare favourably with the traditional forward cabin.

Another form of charter boat is the gulet, a traditional Mediterranean craft that originated in Turkey and has now spread westwards in the Med. and to other destinations as well. In Italy this boat is the caicco, in Greece the caique or kaiki. The modern gulet, built to traditional design principles but with all the conveniences of a modern yacht of its considerable size, is a luxury charter yacht in every respect. Gulets are primarily motor-sailers, powered to get you places when the wind either doesn't blow or blows from the wrong direction, while providing the opportunity to experience travel under sail when conditions allow,

Having made your decision as to which type and size of boat suits your holiday needs, book early to get the best available late-model version. The list price may be a little higher, but that can be offset by an early-booking discount. Lock your boat in early, and you can plan your trip knowing you have the vessel that's right in every respect.

While a later-model boat is generally desirable, brand new has its pitfalls. In our experience the ideal boat has spent some time in charter to wear in and shake off any new-boat bugs.

A good broker will negotiate favourable cancellation terms for early bookings, so that if your plans change you are not unduly penalised. Make sure your travel insurance includes cover for unforeseen situations that could require cancellation closer to your charter period.



4. CHARTER PRICE GUIDE

Whenever chartering a boat, expect the final price to take account of many variables. Some of these are obvious, some not so. They may include:

- Size and type of boat
- Specified equipment supplied on board
- Age of boat
- Time of year
- Destination
- Early booking discounts
- Long term discounts
- Last minute discounts
- Promotional discounts in advance of season
- Promotional discounts during season for fleets with surplus capacity
- Repeat client discounts
- Cancellations
- Exchange rate
- Strategy of charter operator in that destination
- Volume of trade the broker places with charter operator

On top of the charter cost for the boat itself, your holiday budget also needs to consider:

- Cost of living while cruising
- Cost of travel to the destination
- Cost of mooring fees during your charter

SIZE OF BOAT AND NUMBER OF CABINS

Getting the right boat space and accommodation for your group is critical to charter holiday enjoyment. The overall space, interior layout and level of private facilities all affect the price you pay. Catamarans naturally offer a larger platform than monohulls of the same length, with the cockpit and main saloon on the same level, and private cabins with ensuite usually included. You pay more for a catamaran of the same length, but you will get more living space for your money.

EQUIPMENT ON THE BOAT

New boats are launching with increasingly impressive arrays of equipment. The larger the boat, the more appliances and accessories there are likely to be. Generators, fuel cells, water makers, air conditioning, larger dinghies and outboard motors are but a few of the extras packed onto the latest models. Boats with higher inventory specifications are likely to cost more to charter. Briefings take longer when there's more to explain, so it is important you have time on arrival.

AGE OF BOAT

Newer boats, better presented craft and those with bigger inventories tend to book out first, and there is a clear reason for this. Over time production boats have become progressively cheaper to buy, and that has helped keep down the cost of chartering. The charter price for a new boat is not necessarily more than that of an older model. Book early and increase your chances of securing a newer boat, quite possibly at a discounted price.

TIME OF YEAR

Charter companies naturally base their prices on the level of demand expected. However peak holiday periods when demand is highest are not necessarily the best times to go sailing. In many destinations shoulder seasons are at least as good, and savings can be made by booking even slightly off-peak.

DESTINATION

Charter prices of similar boats can vary by destination due to local taxes, direct competition and the costs of keeping boats in a certain location. The length of a destination's season also has an effect on market price. The Caribbean season for instance operates all year round, making it relatively cheap in the low season, which is still a good time to go sailing if you don't mind the heat.

The Mediterranean season is just six months long, and list prices are generally always higher there. However there are a lot of charter boats in the Med. and generous discounts can apply at times of surplus capacity.

Pacific destinations can at times be affected by flight availability. It is not unusual for total accommodation capacity to exceed the airlines' ability to get people to and from outer islands. Charter operators are always keen to get early bookings, with clients securing their flights early too. For that reason, attractive deals are often published well in advance.

Like the Caribbean, Southeast Asia is an easy place to sail with operations all year round. Peak season is expensive and busy. However sailing there recently in the off-season (September) we found prices very reasonable, everything open and no crowds. We didn't get much rain either, suggesting to us that September is a good time to travel to the region. Food is cheap, fresh and tasty, and the cost of charter in Thailand is good value all round.

The cost of chartering out of Indian Ocean bases such as the Seychelles is mostly about getting there. If you live in South Africa or parts of Europe with direct flights to Mahe Island, you are lucky. For others, regular flights via UAE and elsewhere make this beautiful and pristine sailing area well within reach.

World events can naturally affect destination market conditions. Good brokers keep abreast of market conditions and will share the latest information they have.

EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNTS

Operator policies on early booking discounts vary and discount offers can be as much as 15% in the Mediterranean. Charter operators like to fill their books early, to help them assess demand and allocate resources. The early booking discount provides a good reason to plan your holiday well in advance, as does the fact that new boats and catamarans book out first. The best advice we can give is book early, and get the best boat for the best price with the best operator.

LONG TERM DISCOUNTS

These also vary. As a general rule a 2-week charter attracts an extra 5% discount, 3 weeks 10%.

LAST-MINUTE DISCOUNTS

These are published monthly, and we keep a file of surplus short-term capacity. If you find yourself in an exotic part of the world stuck on the beach with time to do some bareboat sailing, you may be surprised at what we have on offer for immediate use.

By definition, last-minute discounts apply days or weeks out, rather than months. In the last few months before you plan to travel, discounts are rare. There's no guarantee of a last-minute deal at any time, but it is worth checking out.

PROMOTIONAL DISCOUNTS IN ADVANCE OF SEASON

As mentioned above, charter companies like their boats booked well in advance. This means they will sometimes issue promotional discounts for fleets that are slow to book. We stay informed of all current specials and can even anticipate them by monitoring the strength of bookings as they occur.

PROMOTIONAL DISCOUNTS DURING SEASON FOR FLEETS WITH SURPLUS CAPACITY

Boats lying idle in the season cost money and that's bad for business. In such cases of surplus capacity, special deals are bound to be on the way.

REPEAT CLIENT DISCOUNTS

By knowing who you have chartered with previously and the boat you have sailed, we have useful information for helping you get the most suitable boat at the best repeat-client discount price available. We are aware that some operators load extra margin before offering discounts, which can in fact make a deal with loyalty discount more expensive. We understand this and quote on alternative boats for comparison. We keep client records safe and secure on file.

CANCELLATIONS

While it does not happen often, in the event of a charter cancellation and a boat coming back onto the market, there is a good chance that it will be offered at a lower price.

CURRENCIES USED

Operator rate sheets are generally fixed periodically, which can be advantageous or not as exchange rates move constantly. European and Indian Ocean charters are sold in Euros. The Caribbean, Pacific and SE Asia deals in USD or Euros, depending on operator, with some giving the option of either currency.

STRATEGY OF THE CHARTER OPERATOR IN A PARTICULAR DESTINATION

A market sometimes has particular business dynamics that can artificially lower an operator's price. We work proactively to book boats offered at the best prices, always providing we are satisfied with the operator's standards of professionalism and customer service. Lower price must never be at the expense of poor service or inferior boat quality.

VOLUME OF TRADE SAIL CONNECTIONS PLACES WITH OPERATOR

Over time, good brokers develop solid relationships with their suppliers. As charter boat booking specialists for more than 30 years, we have excellent relationships with reputable operators of long-standing. They acknowledge our loyalty by helping make us competitive when quoting on their boats.

COST OF LIVING WHILE CRUISING

The price of your bareboat charter is only part of your total holiday cost. One great benefit of chartering is that the boat is your hotel and your transport. Not only that, it provides much of your adventure and entertainment. There is less need (and some days no opportunity) to spend money while on charter, where you can live like the locals do, buying supplies at the market and self catering.

When you do go ashore, some destinations are definitely cheaper than others. Southeast Asia for instance has a lower cost of living, low if any marina fees, and competitive flights in and out. In the Mediterranean, the rule of thumb is that the further east you go, the lower the cost of living and marina fees. In the Caribbean there are a lot more temptations to spend money ashore than say the Pacific, which is more about self-catering

YACHT CHARTER PRICING: A SAMPLING OF CHARTER BOOKINGS LATE 2022

The table below is a snapshot of some actual charter boat prices in the second half of 2022. It is intended as a guide only to provide approximate price expectations and to illustrate the variety of factors that can affect final cost.

All charters listed were for one week, and all prices exclude provisioning. The indicative prices are after various discounts were applied. Ages of boats vary. Different operators have different policies on mandatory extras. Prices varied according to season and may include some extras payable at Base.

Pricing is in Euros.

Boat	Destination	Charter Type	When chartered	Indicative charter cost
Hanse 675 (m)	Split, Croatia	Full crew of 2	August 2022	34,000
Lagoon 620 (c)	Tuamotus, French Polynesia	Full crew of 3	June 22	30,000
Sun Odyssey 519 (m)	Bay of Naples, Italy	Bareboat	July 22	5,200
Oceanis 45 (m)	Côte d'Azur, France	Bareboat	July 22	3,250
Oceanis 41.1 (m)	Bay of Naples, Italy	Bareboat	August 22	4,100
Bali 4.5 (c)	Antigua	Bareboat with skipper	Dec.22 (pre-Christmas)	10,750
Lagoon 40 (c)	Society Islands, French Polynesia	Bareboat	July 22	9,800
Bali 4.1 (c)	New Caledonia	Bareboat	Sept 22	7,150
Bavaria 45 (m)	Koh Samui, Thailand	Bareboat	August 22	3,900
Bali 4.3 (c)	Whitsundays, Australia	Bareboat	October 22	8,500
Island Spirit 380 (c)	Koh Samui, Thailand	Bareboat	November 22	5,300
Dufour 460 (m)	British Virgin Islands	Bareboat	January 23	7,500

m = monohull / c = catamaran

You can see from this information that there are many factors in finalising a boat charter cost. Talk to [your charter broker](#) about the best deals available.

5. CHARTERING WITH A GOOD OPERATOR



Increasingly, owners of suitable boats are putting them in charter management, meaning that new boats are regularly joining charter fleets. The best operators are always looking to keep their fleets fresh and up to date while providing owners with the highest standards of boat maintenance. Those are the companies we give preference to when arranging client charters.

That is not to say we disregard companies operating older boats, as long as we consider their maintenance and customer service to be of the highest standards.

A good broker always has a list of favoured operators known to take excellent care of boats and clients. You will in most likelihood only sail with a particular charter operator once. But when they deal with us as their broker, our existing relationship and the prospect of future business has an effect. When we book a boat with an operator, they are accountable to us for good performance. We take note of all client feedback, to ensure our operators constantly meet our required standards of service.

Good operators are passionate about sharing the sailing experience; their staff members are proud of their region and country and want to share it with you. They want you to return, or at least to speak highly of your experience when you get back home. Through existing relationships, your broker is the link to opportunities for the best possible chartering experiences. It costs no extra to book a boat through a broker, yet doing so empowers you to make a more qualified decision, with an assurance that you are looked after every step of the way.

6. EXTRA CHARGES AND INCLUSIONS

If you have found the boat you are looking for on an operator's website directly, it will most likely be advertised at the basic bareboat price. If you are quoted by a broker, they should already have discussed all your needs and expectations, including any mandatory and recommended optional extras. There can be quite a difference between the bareboat price and the full cost of charter.

Some important extras you may wish to consider:

Skipper and Crew: We can provide any level of crew you require. Whether it is a skipper just to help you sail the boat, or a hostess/cook to meet your domestic on-board needs, the crew is there to look after you as well as taking responsibility for the boat. These people are also your local guides, and ensure you get all the best inside knowledge about places to go and things to see. Crewed charters certainly offer a fuller, more relaxed sailing experience, and are well worth considering if your budget allows. Further details on this charter option are in the next section.

End Clean: Depending on your destination, this mandatory charge may be payable at the charter base or included in your quote and account. Either way the arrangement will be clear.

Local taxes: These vary and are normally payable at the base if not included in charter charges.

Paperwork: In some destinations, local port authority formalities may be at extra cost. There may also be pre-arranged fees for visiting national parks (eg. Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, La Maddalena in Sardinia). We may have to make a special application, if for instance your itinerary takes you across an international border, or you plan an excursion that is out of the ordinary.

Outboard motor for dinghy: In most destinations this incurs an extra charge, as well as the fuel.

Linen & towels: We will clarify whether these are included or to be charged as extra.

Refundable security bond: The charter base holds your credit card details to cover the excess portion of the boat's insurance. If any damage or loss occurs, the cost of repair or replacement is deducted from your security bond. This can be a considerable sum, so be aware and if you have any queries, please just ask.

Damage waiver or security bond insurance: Many operators offer damage waiver insurance as an extra cost that covers most of this risk. Others offer security bond insurance that is usually arranged directly with the insurance company. This is worth considering, as it reduces the security bond significantly, in some cases completely.

Fuel: The general rule is to fill fuel tanks at the end of charter. Some companies have a mandatory charge to cover this.

Provisioning: We supply full information on provisioning options. Many charterers arrange for provisioning on arrival while the skipper and mate are in the boat briefing. A convenient alternative is to use a local supermarket's on-line ordering service if available. This often comes with delivery to the boat, so you can arrange and pay for provisioning before you leave home.

Some operators offer a starter pack that contains basic consumables to get you on your way.

Transfers: Our quote can include cost of transfer between point of arrival/land accommodation and your charter base.

There are many other optional extras and services that we can arrange for your charter. Your broker will have a full list of local providers on file and can arrange activities in advance or provide you with information you need. The important message is: feel free to ask about anything that is unclear, no matter how minor it may seem.

7. CREWING YOUR BAREBOAT CHARTER

If you don't want to charter on a full bareboat basis, paid crew options are available. Here we are referring to a 'crewed bareboat', not to be confused with a permanently crewed boat charter. Even some of our most experienced bareboat clients choose to engage a skipper, enabling them to relax and fully enjoy the sailing and stopovers while someone else takes the responsibility.

Depending on availability in the destination concerned, paid crew members aboard your bareboat can range from day skipper to full charter skipper to cook, hostess, deckhand or engineer. Their respective roles are defined, and to be respected for what they are. But don't be surprised to find that the service and support exceeds expectations.

Skipper: The skipper is responsible for sailing, motoring and mooring the boat. They are assigned for the duration of the charter, and as with the boat are paid by the night.

Day Skipper: It is possible to hire a skipper by day who leaves the boat to return home at night. This service is practical where the sailing stays close to base. It can be a good arrangement if you would like a refresher course or short period of familiarisation before beginning your full bareboat charter.

Cook: It may be possible to hire a qualified chef if required. That person may do some housekeeping but as a general rule they are on board to feed you.

Hostess: The hostess (or host), often the skipper's partner, may prepare breakfast, lunch and snacks but generally not dinner. They will clean, but normally that is restricted to common areas of the boat – galley, saloon and cockpit – and does not include cabins and bathrooms.

In many places you will find it practical to eat ashore. Alternatively the hostess may agree to fetch takeaways. Some harbours even have 'Uber Eats' style deliveries.

Deckhand or engineer; Less common but occasionally requested, a deckhand not qualified as a skipper can be engaged to assist with boat handling. An engineer is not normally needed, although in Southeast Asia some charter boats require one as a mandatory extra. Their wages are low and you pay a minimal amount. Their practical contribution is more that of a deckhand as they can also operate the boat's systems.

When it comes to housekeeping, particularly for larger groups, there are limitations to what one person can be expected to do. It's a happy ship where all on board are willing to chip in a bit to assist.

With a skipper on board there always remains the opportunity to take the helm. At times it may even be expected for short, tranquil periods. A great chance to learn some sailing skills.

ARRIVING AT THE CHARTER BASE

Your skipper/crew is assigned by the operator, usually a couple of weeks out from charter. If you specify an age-range preference or have particular expectations, they attempt to meet your requests but no guarantees can be made. We get details of paid personnel in advance of charter and provide them to you.

If you have arranged for a member of crew to do the cooking aboard, prior discussion will take place on provisioning. As you would need to do on full bareboat, you may choose to provision the boat yourself on arrival at base. But keep the time constraints in mind. And if you are engaging an expert, take advantage of their knowledge.

Most operators offer a full provisioning service, whereby you tell us your preferences then leave the crew to buy supplies for the number of people on board. There is a cost to that, and a popular alternative is to shop for provisions in company with the cook or hostess. Just let us know in advance, and make the time available on arrival.

Your paid skipper meets you on arrival and acts as liaison with the base manager from that point onwards. A boat briefing will follow with your full involvement, as with any other charter. It is important that you understand the boat's workings just as on a full bareboat charter. One of your party is assigned on the ship's papers as first mate, an insurance policy requirement in many destinations.

The skipper takes formal delivery of the boat and is responsible for handover to the base manager at the end of charter. On the face of it the skipper is responsible only for getting the boat from A to B in a professional manner. Your charter agreement will likely state that "*....the charterer will in all events remain responsible for the boat and the behaviour and well-being of crew...*" In reality you can rely on your skipper to take a much wider role, adding value to your holiday well beyond what you pay them for.

Examples of extra value a skipper/crew is likely to provide on bareboat charter include:

- Sailing and boat handling tuition. Skippers like to share their knowledge and enjoy clients taking an interest in learning the workings of the boat. You are fully entitled to be as involved in boat handling as you wish, being mindful that your skipper is ultimately responsible. He takes charge if things get tricky, or if you just want to sit back and relax.
- Ferrying you to shore. Strictly speaking, this is outside the paid crew's area of responsibility. But as a basic understanding of small boat handling is necessary to safely transfer to and from shore, he can be expected to give any support and tuition required.
- Procuring fresh produce and provisions. They know the region you will be sailing in, and will have good advice on where to get the best stores. They may even have contacts with local fishers and market gardeners, and do some hunting and gathering for you.
- Local guide. This is a great advantage when exploring foreign territory. Your skipper and hostess know the area – it's their backyard. They will freely talk with you about places of interest and the best options for exploration. If they consider your itinerary too ambitious, they will tell you. Please respect their advice on matters of local navigation and making passage. But if you want to sail all day to get somewhere you are determined to visit, they will oblige, within the bounds of safety and comfort.
- Extra activities and excursions. If you want to engage in activities such as fishing and diving etc., your paid crew can make all the local arrangements.

- Organising disembarkation at a point other than the base. For instance if you want to travel to your next holiday destination on the last full day of charter, and have to leave the boat early. If a mate is required for insurance purposes, you may have no option but to remain with the boat. But it may be possible, for a fee, to finish your charter at another location on the normal charter end date. The boat then goes back to base with the paid crew.

When it comes to engaging a crew for your bareboat charter, all the reports we get back confirm that if the budget allows it is well worth the cost. The people our operators use are professionals, invariably helpful, willing and able to add value to your sailing holiday.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR CONTRACTED CREW

As charterer, you are responsible for accommodating and feeding your paid crew. This means provisioning the boat as discussed above, but it does not mean taking them out to dinner. It is usual to include the crew in any meals prepared aboard, but equally they will be happy to cater for themselves if you wish to be elsewhere.

Most larger charter boats have separate crew cabins, usually singles accessed from the deck hatch. But many don't have their own bathroom facilities so sharing may be required. Crew arrangements differ from place to place. In the Mediterranean, most skippers and hostesses are happy to share one double cabin, even if they are not a couple. Elsewhere that is not the case, so your boat will need separate crew cabins.

A forward single cabin showing on the boat layout plan is not necessarily suitable as crew quarters. It is often no more than a berth for young children separated from the forward double cabin by a removable panel.

Should a paid crew be part of your charter holiday plan, we will discuss all the accommodation issues with you and ensure you get a boat that is suitable for everyone on board.

Tipping crew at the end of charter is discretionary. Our advice is to tip the skipper when he has extended himself to meet all of your expectations, and more. 10% of the skipper's fee is often mentioned as the standard, but there is no fixed or recommended amount and the decision is completely yours.

8. THE CHARTER CONTRACT AND PAPERWORK

As with any contract, boat charter paperwork is important. If this is your first charter you may be surprised at the number of forms you need to complete. If you have chartered with us before, the information we hold on file makes it easier second time around. But with every charter, the following apply:

CHARTER TERMS

These are normally disclosed with your invoice for agreement prior to paying your deposit. A standard document providing agreement between you and the operator, it covers everything about your contract as advised by us in the quoting process.

CREW LIST

Some details of your group are required by maritime law and for insurance purposes. Our crew-list form asks a few extra questions, such as shoe size for the pre-fitting and supply of flippers. Increasingly, operators are now requiring completion of an on-line form, to which we provide a link.

SKIPPER'S RESUME

To gain approval for your full bareboat charter, we need to pass on to the charter operator your nominated skipper's and mate's sailing experience and qualifications. Experience is complemented by any sailing qualifications, yacht club membership or relevant references you have.

Charter operators want to see a certain level of experience and competence. Formal sailing qualifications are good to have, but not as important as experience, and not a guarantee that you can charter full bareboat (without a paid skipper). Having said that, in the Mediterranean and increasingly elsewhere, the RYC International Certificate of Competency or its USA equivalent is required for approval to skipper a charter boat.

Occasionally we hear of people arriving at base all set for their bareboat charter, only to be told they need to take a skipper. This has never happened to our clients. We present the charter operator with a clear representation of your level of competence to handle their boat. If in our evaluation we find your experience comes up short, we are open with you about it. We may suggest a suitable course to complete before confirming your charter. If that is not practical, we talk to you about your paid-skipper options.

As an added safeguard when booking a full-bareboat charter, we do not pass your deposit on until we have confirmation that your resume and required qualifications have been accepted by the operator.

Operators who take bookings directly are known to force a skipper on charterers as a means of gaining more revenue. We would challenge such action towards any client whose aptitude we have evaluated and passed for full-bareboat charter.

CHARTER VOUCHER

Your Charter Voucher signifies all is in order for your booking and serves as your official handover for you to deal directly with the operator's base staff. You receive your charter voucher following final payment of your account and once all charter arrangements are in place. It contains the operator and base contacts, boat details and booking period, extras ordered and any special arrangements made. A copy goes to the charter base so your operator knows to provide everything you have contracted for, and when to expect your arrival for briefing.

When you receive your charter voucher, please review it carefully to ensure all is as you expect. At this point there is still time to make any changes needed.

9. SAILING QUALIFICATIONS

Currently only European Union countries and Turkey require bareboat skippers to hold a formal sailing certificate. However with chartering's rise in popularity every year, we expect that to eventually apply in other destinations as well.

Elsewhere, the base-level qualification of your nationally-recognised marine training authority generally meets this need when accompanied by an acceptable sailing resume. On-line courses alone can be problematic if rules change, as they don't reflect the level of practical sailing experience. The key is to talk to us in plenty of time before your proposed charter.

In addition one of your party aboard must have a vhf licence. That is a maritime regulatory requirement in most regions.

Whatever certification is required, a local port authority may ask you to present evidence of sailing proficiency. Your original sailing qualification certificate must be carried with your boat papers while on charter.

In practice, when you talk to us about chartering there is generally still plenty of time to obtain any formal qualifications that may be needed. It is an issue we will discuss right up front. If you know enough about sailing to have considered a bareboat charter in the first place, you will find the process is not an onerous one.

10. WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU

For life below deck, charter boats are set up like a self-catering hotel room, with all cooking, dining, lounging and sleeping facilities. Your boat is also fully equipped for safety. Just be aware that life jackets supplied are for abandoning ship rather than comfort while sailing, and wet-weather gear will be lightweight at best. If you have your own better-quality gear, consider packing it. Your own well-fitting child life jackets are essential, as children may resist wearing the bulky ones supplied. You cannot fly with inflation canisters, but we can arrange for them to be available at base, or you may be happy with manual inflation.

Snorkels and masks are supplied. However many charterers prefer to use their own.

We strongly recommend travelling light with collapsible luggage. The cabins have furniture that allows you to unpack. A bag that stows under a bunk is a small thing that can make ship life in the company of others that little bit better.

Let's all play our part for the environment and 'leave only footprints, take only memories'. On charter we visit so many wonderful places because of their natural beauty, and we want them to still be there for us and our children to return to.

Black water is generally no problem on board. Nature can deal with our organic waste in normal concentrations, as long as we distribute it in open water and not in the bay.

Nature has much more trouble dealing with the harsh chemicals we use for cleaning: substances that don't break down readily and accumulate in the environment. When on charter you may

find available supplies limited to the cheaper, most convenient brands. Consider packing or buying on arrival good-quality, environmentally-friendly laundry and dishwashing liquid

Buying petro-chemical-free products supports socially-responsible manufacturers. Using them is better for you and your crew, knowing they naturally integrate back into the environment.

And finally in this section, when you arrive in town, purchase a cheap knife from the local market. There is every chance the galley's chopping knife is beyond re-sharpening. Nothing dulls a knife-edge more than the banging effect of storage with other cutlery on a moving boat. Even a new low-quality knife has a blade that's sharp enough to last the duration of your charter. Put a knife on your shopping list.

11. YOUR ARRIVAL AT BASE

Your charter voucher provides contact and location details of the base where you will collect your boat, your charter dates and embarking/disembarking times. The first day of your charter is mostly about processing onto the boat (as the last day is about processing off). Regardless of the stated time of boarding, we suggest you arrive early.

In the Mediterranean where all boats are turned around on a Saturday, operators have a monumental task to clean and refresh all their boats ready for charters to start at 5pm. By checking in early, you can let base staff know of your arrival, and you may get some priority. You should be able to leave your bags at the base office, and then go shopping with agreement to return and begin your skipper's briefing at a pre-arranged time. With luck and if everyone is well-organised, that may happen earlier than the stated boarding time.

Day one is a busy time and prior to your briefing there is a lot to do. It is quite normal to spend your first and last nights of charter in the base marina.

12. BEFORE YOU SET SAIL

Make the most of your skipper's briefing and time at the charter base. For reasons of space it is usually best to leave your luggage in the base office until you have been briefed. At the skipper's briefing you are shown the workings of the boat, followed by a chart briefing that informs you of local navigational considerations and points of interest.

An updated weather forecast is provided, and only then should you settle on an itinerary, one that takes account of expected conditions. While you will have diligently researched your preferred sailing routes, it is best to wait until you are ready to go before committing to a specific direction or distance, especially at the start of your charter.

Local knowledge is invaluable, so make sure you listen to what the operator's representatives have to say, and ask any questions you have.

The operator's intention is to inform and advise in such a way that you will enjoy your time afloat with minimal chance of issues arising. If you think they are being over-cautious and/or you feel the briefing suggests limits on what you plan to do, feel free to raise it. There are good reasons for

operator caution. Once aware of all the facts you are better placed to decide if your experience and ability can overcome any concerns they express.

While you are being briefed, your crew can be checking out the boat to ensure all is as expected. Count the cups, plates, towels and linen and any extras that you may have ordered or requested. Snorkel gear is supplied as per details on your crew list. Check it is all there as ordered, and everything looks in good working order.

The outboard is an important piece of equipment that you must be satisfied with before leaving dock. Start it up and take it for a run, retract it and generally put it through its paces until you are happy with its operation. Outboard motor issues are common, and most problems can be traced back to unfamiliarity with operation.

The key message here is: become as familiar with the boat as you can while at the base, when staff members are available to assist you. Requests are much more easily met and questions quickly answered before you set sail.

13. CASTING OFF

To get you safely on your way, your base staff should willingly pilot the boat out into open water. If they don't offer, feel free to ask. You will have travelled a long way and had a big day getting there and preparing for your charter. Treat the opportunity as a short hands-on tutorial, and ask all the questions you think of before your pilot's tender comes alongside to collect them.

For the best start possible, use the resources and services still at hand; there is time to get familiar with the boat in the following days.

14. COMMON THINGS TO AVOID

Most charter boat holidays are happily completed with few issues and little or no damage done. That is of course how you want it to be. Lost items and boat repairs are deducted from your security deposit, as well as potentially interfering with your holiday enjoyment. We are always impressed with how resourceful our clients generally are when confronted with the unexpected while on charter. Boating requires a certain level of practical ability, and it is best when you can deal with minor issues yourself rather than putting your holiday on hold waiting for a technician.

Ideally, you will have no problems at all. Here are some things to be aware of:

Running batteries too low

Keep an eye on the amp meter and maintain the battery charge above 60% at all times. If batteries run too flat there is a good chance they won't accept the charge from the alternator.

Overusing the air conditioning

Boat A/C units are recreational-vehicle standard and the technology is much lighter than your heat pump at home. If you run the aircon for an extended period with hatches and doors open, expect it to eventually fail.

Not securing the dinghy

The classic case of "I thought you were tying it up" when the dinghy is nowhere to be seen in the morning. A good rule to follow is for the first person out of the dinghy to take the painter, handing it to the skipper after he or she has unloaded.

Running the outboard up on the beach

Such treatment is sure to shear the propeller pin. An easy fix for an engineer, but meanwhile you are without a powered dinghy.

Power winches

These have the power to tear sails, rip fittings off the deck and damage whatever is hindering their progress. Make sure everything is clear to run, and observe the winch in operation as well as the job it is doing. The winch motor's sound changes as it loads up or slows down. When you hear a change in tone, take your finger off the power button and find out what is causing it.

Lazy jacks and furling mains

Raising and lowering the mainsail should not be done in haste. Make sure all the reefing lines run free. There may be retrieval lines holding the head of the main and halyard away from the mast that need to be released. Make sure the stack pack sail bag is not still zipped or clipped.

Battens inevitably get caught on lazy jacks on the sail's way up. Have one person on the main halyard to release it as it catches the lazy jacks. Holding the boat dead into a shifty wind is not always possible. Sometimes it helps to come down 10°, allowing the main to flop over and the battens to clear at the critical moment, then doing the reverse. If you continue the hoist with jammed battens, the stack bag will tear from the boom as it goes up with the sail.

If your charter boat has a furling mainsail, make sure the retrieval line is released and everything is clear to run. If you break this mechanism with overzealous use of the winch, you will be without a main for the trip. Or worse, you may be stuck with one you can't get down.

Fouling the propeller

When under motor keep watch on the dinghy painter and an eye out for any fishing nets or flotsam that may be near. If your prop picks something up, ideally the engine will stall and you can clear it manually. At worst, there is a mechanism in the prop drive designed to break before excess loads transfer to the gearbox.

Loose items on deck

Every sailor understands that the elements occasionally claim hats and other personal items. But you don't want to lose gear to light-fingered passers-by. Generally, security is not a big issue aboard, but precautions are still advised. Loose items like fishing rods left on deck are known to disappear overnight, just too big a temptation for some locals to ignore.

15. FURTHER INFORMATION

To learn more about chartering in general, the numerous pleasures and the rare pitfalls, please take a look at our website. Our [Blog pages](#) contain a host of useful information, while at [Destinations](#) we tell you about all the great places there are to go sailing, with links to all the best boats on which to experience the vacation of a lifetime.

On that note, do enjoy your charter holiday! And when it's over please get back in touch, as we would love to hear how it all went. If you want to know more about chartering a boat somewhere exciting, please [contact us directly](#). We always enjoy talking about sailing holidays!

