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The Private Yacht Charter: 5 Yacht Booking Tips You Need to Know



Photo courtesy Rascal Voyages

Traveling by private yacht charter is one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to reach off-the-beaten path destinations. Charters also make it possible to cover a lot of ground in areas that are hard to navigate by car or train. An added bonus: They provide a built in “travel bubble,” making them an ideal group trip in the Age of Covid. Ideal for a memorable family vacation, a romantic retreat or an escape from the everyday, they can be specifically tailored to meet your needs and offer experiences that can’t be found anywhere else, including exclusive access to otherwise crowded locales like the [South of France](#) and the [Italian Riviera](#). Whether you’re looking to cruise the Mediterranean in style or plan a future adventure in the [Indonesian archipelago](#), these are our five essential guidelines that you need to know to ensure smooth sailing.

Contact [Indagare](#) or your Trip Designer to start planning a safe, responsible and meaningful private yacht charter trip—this year and beyond. Our team can match you with the right vessel, provide information on [coronavirus travel](#)

safety and policies and arrange everything from sailboats or catamarans to luxurious staffed yachts, as well as plan land touring, adventure activities and meals on board or at top restaurants.

Yacht Booking Tips

1. Plan in advance...



Whether you want to sail through Alaska, the Mediterranean or the Pacific, it is essential to consult your charter's route well in advance.

Yachts operate on a seven-day schedule that usually runs from Saturday to Saturday. This seven-night minimum is rarely negotiable (and it can go up to 10 nights during the winter holidays), so you should plan to allocate this much time for your trip. Additionally, sailing schedules are sometimes set up to a year in advance, so it is important to talk to your trip designer as soon as you start thinking about a charter in order to plan around where the boats will be docked. While early notice is preferred, it is still possible to book charters within a closer window to the departure date; however, due to pent-up demand and a rising popularity of this style of travel, boats tend to get booked quickly—so if you find the right charter for you, confirm it!

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2. ...But be flexible with your itinerary



Charter itineraries can include stays at resorts like Soneva Jani in the Maldives. Photo courtesy Soneva Jani.

Yacht charters allow you to visit lots of destinations with ease in a shorter period of time and can include touring on land as well as activities on the water. This offers wonderful freedom and creativity to craft robust itineraries; however, travelers must always remember that *everything is dependent on the weather*. Routing is never guaranteed and can change at any moment, depending on the conditions, so avoid booking non-refundable hotel and restaurant reservations or activities. No matter how well an itinerary is put together by your trip designer, it is more likely than not that it will change at some point. Your captain and crew are equipped to adjust and will discuss the day's plan with you each morning, based on the weather and your group's desires.

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3. Know your numbers



The size of your group will determine the size of the yacht that you book.

The vast majority of yachts have a non-negotiable capacity of 12 guests maximum on board, although some can accommodate a larger party of up to 30 guests. It is important to confirm the number of travelers on your charter at the beginning of the planning process, as the size of the yacht you'll need to book will determine its stability (important for those who struggle with seasickness), the types of special amenities offered (like jet skis, diving boards, water slides and inflatables) and your budget.

No matter the size, the total price of booking a charter is composed of the following: the charter fee, which is determined by the yacht's owners; the APA (Advance Provisioning Allowance), an onboard account amounting to approximately 30 percent of the charter fee, which you must pay in advance in order to cover expenses for fuel, food and beverages, transportation on shore and dockage fees; the VAT (Value Added Tax) incurred when disembarking from European and some Caribbean ports; and the crew's gratuity (which is often covered in part by any remainder from the APA). Your Indagare trip designer can help you determine which yacht is right for your needs and plot an itinerary that maximizes your budget.

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4. Ask for what you want



Private yacht charters can be equipped with deck chairs, live DJs, water toys and more. Photo by Dominick Walker.

Your private yacht should feel like your “home away from home,” and a great connection to the captain and crew can transform your charter into a once-in-a-lifetime trip. In order to prepare the best selection of meals, activities and amenities for your group, your trip designer will ask you to fill out a detailed “Preference Sheet” to share with the captain and chef several months prior to your departure. Don’t be shy in sharing your tastes and hopes for the trip (as well as your dislikes, fears and pet peeves)—the more your trip designer and captain know, the better they can cater to them. The options are endless: yachts can be child-friendly or equipped for mobility issues; they can have high-speed Internet, or no Internet at all; they can include a health spa and a masseuse, a water ski instructor or a DJ. You can spend every evening dining out on shore, or you can stay on the boat to enjoy laid-back meals (or extravagant tastings set to fireworks). Just ask.

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5. Follow proper yacht etiquette



Before docking on shore, be sure to discuss your plans with your captain.

Just like any foreign country, yachts encompass a unique social environment with certain behavioral rules that should be followed. In addition to treating the yacht and its crew with full respect, you should always remember these **Do's and Dont's**:

- **Do** use soft-sided luggage for packing, as storage space can be limited.
- **Don't** wear high- or hard-heeled shoes; they are prohibited by crews because they can damage decks. While on board, you'll have to stick to soft-soled shoes or bare feet.
- **Do** talk to your captain about any questions, concerns or complaints as soon as they arise. The crew is there to make the charter as seamless as possible.
- **Don't** bring unexpected guests aboard. The yacht is equipped with a specific stock of food and beverages that is calculated for your group alone. If you're planning to pick up friends or family for a visit during the trip, let the captain know in advance.
- **Do** expect to pay a crew gratuity amounting to 10 to 15 percent of the charter fee. This cost will be taken from the remainder of the APA. If the remainder does not cover the full amount, you can decide how to handle the balance with

the captain directly.

- **Do** keep in mind that all charter payments must be made in advance by wire, so there is no need to have credit cards or cash on hand while you're on board. On the last day of your journey, you will review the invoice with the captain. Upon your return home, you can wire any outstanding payments.

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- Elizabeth Harvey on January 18, 2022

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