

Your first charter, *explained.*

Everything you need to know before you charter a superyacht. Yacht sizes drawn to scale, what each level actually buys, the real all-in cost, and the answers to every question my clients ask before their first week aboard.

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01 Start here

Five things that reframe everything else on this page.

i The week is the unit

A charter is seven nights, and in the Mediterranean it usually runs Saturday to Saturday. Shorter is possible, rarely cheaper per day, and hardest to get in peak season.

ii Twelve guests is the ceiling, at any length

Maritime regulation caps a private yacht at twelve overnight guests, whether she is 50 metres or 110. So a larger yacht does not mean a larger party. It means more space per person, more crew per person, and capability the smaller yacht simply does not carry.

iii The advertised rate is not the total

Expect the base rate plus roughly 30% for running costs, plus tax if you are in European waters, plus gratuity. Section 05 shows the whole number on a real example.

iv You are not booking a hotel

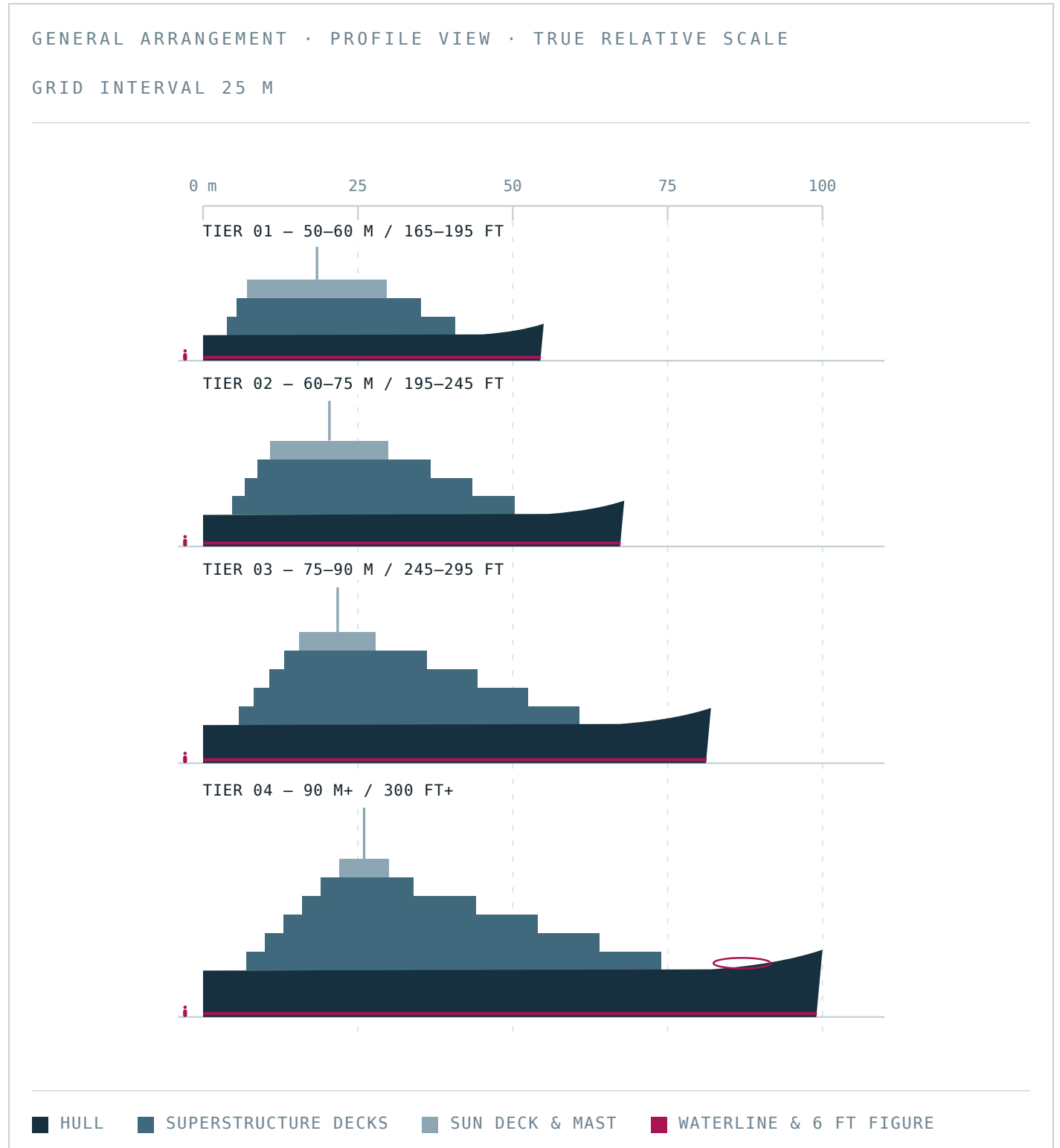
You are chartering a private vessel and her professional crew for a week. Nothing is on a schedule but yours. There are no other guests, no set dining hours, and no line for anything.

v Ask for it anyway

Six friends flying in for one night. A birthday cake at two in the morning. A chef who cooks only what you brought back from the market. The answer is almost always yes. The only person who says no is the captain, and only for safety or weather.

02 The scale

Photographs flatten size. Every yacht looks enormous alone against the water. Here are the four tiers drawn to a single scale, with a six-foot person standing at each stern.



Why the drawing matters more than the photograph

A 100-metre yacht is not twice the yacht a 50-metre is. Volume climbs faster than length, so she carries roughly six to eight times the interior space, four times the crew, and a whole category of things the smaller boat cannot physically hold: a certified helideck, a submersible, a proper spa, a second galley. That is what you are buying when you move up a tier. Not more rooms. More capability.

03 What each level actually buys

Rates are typical weekly base fees for a high-season Mediterranean or Caribbean charter, before running costs and tax. Every yacht is priced individually and rates move with season, itinerary and demand.

TIER 01

50–60 m / 165–195 ft

\$300K – \$500K / week

GUESTS	10–12
CREW	13–18
CREW PER GUEST	≈ 1.3
CABINS	5–6
TENDERS	2

- **Full-beam master suite** on the main deck, four to five guest cabins below, most with a convertible twin for children.
- **One chef and one sous chef.** Excellent food, cooked to your preference sheet, with a menu discussed the evening before.
- **A beach club** at the stern, jacuzzi on the sun deck, and the full toy locker: seabobs, e-foil, jet skis, paddleboards, inflatables, snorkel gear.
- **A crew member trained in massage** rather than a dedicated therapist, and a gym that is a well-equipped corner rather than a room.
- **Full seasonal range.** She will take you anywhere in the Med or the Caribbean without limitation.

The honest trade-off: everything is excellent, but there is one of each.

One chef, so a formal dinner for twelve means a simpler lunch. Two tenders, so if one is running guests ashore the other is on standby, not on a dive trip. Nothing is missing. There is just no redundancy.

TIER 02

60–75 m / 195–245 ft

\$500K – \$900K / week

GUESTS	12
CREW	18–26
CREW PER GUEST	≈ 1.8
CABINS	6–7
TENDERS	3–4

Where most first charters should land. This is the point where the yacht stops feeling like a very good boat and starts feeling like a private resort that happens to move. If your week involves a mixed group, children, or people arriving on different days, the extra crew is what you are actually paying for.

- **Two chefs**, one of them usually a dedicated pastry chef, and a chief stewardess running a service team large enough that a group can split up all day and every group is still looked after.
- **A real spa**: treatment room, hammam or sauna, a full gym with a view, and a therapist aboard for the week.
- **A cinema** or a proper media room, and an upper-deck saloon that means twelve people are never in the same room unless they choose to be.
- **Enough tenders that you are never waiting.** One limousine tender for going ashore in the evening, one open tender for the beach, one dedicated to watersports.
- **A touch-and-go helideck** on many yachts in this range, so guests can join or leave mid-charter without repositioning the yacht.

TIER 03

75–90 m / 245–295 ft

\$900K – \$1.6M / week

GUESTS	12
CREW	26–40
CREW PER GUEST	≈ 2.5
CABINS	7–9
TENDERS	4–6

The submersible tier. Private submarines, full dive operations, four-tender fleets and a purser whose entire job is your week ashore start being standard rather than exceptional here.

- **An executive chef with a starred kitchen behind him**, a dedicated pastry chef, and often a sommelier managing a cellar built to your list before you arrive.
- **Better than two crew per guest.** In practice this means someone appears the moment you want something and is invisible the rest of the time. It is the single most noticeable difference between this tier and the one below it.
- **Sea terraces and a full beach club** that folds the hull open at three sides, a pool large enough to swim in rather than sit in, and on many yachts a certified dive centre with a compressor and an instructor aboard.
- **A certified helideck**, and on a number of yachts the ability to carry the helicopter rather than only receive it.
- **Shoreside access that comes with the yacht.** Captains and pursers at this level hold standing relationships with the ports, the beach clubs and the restaurants that are otherwise fully booked in August. A table at Club 55 or Il Riccio is a phone call, not a hope.

TIER 04

90 m+ / 300 ft+

\$1.6M – \$3.5M+ / week

GUESTS	12–18*
CREW	40–70
CREW PER GUEST	≈ 3.5+
CABINS	9–12
TENDERS	6+

- **The only yachts that can legally exceed twelve guests.** A small number are built and certified to passenger-ship standard, which is the only way to sleep more than twelve aboard. If your family is fifteen people, this tier is not a preference. It is the requirement.
- **Two helicopters** on the largest, with hangar storage rather than a landing pad, so aircraft stay aboard for the week and the yacht keeps moving.
- **A medical officer**, often a security detail, and a guest-experience manager whose only role is the twelve to eighteen of you.
- **Owner's-standard everything.** These are private homes that charter a handful of weeks a year to offset running costs. Nothing aboard was specified for the charter market.
- **Expedition capability** on a growing share of them: ice-classed hulls, a month of range, and a helicopter to scout the anchorage. Antarctica, Greenland and the Northwest Passage become itineraries rather than expeditions.

***The twelve-guest exception.** There are fewer than twenty charter yachts in the world certified for more than twelve overnight guests, and they book eighteen to twenty-four months out. If that is your requirement, the conversation starts with availability and works backwards to everything else.

04 How a booking actually works

Seven steps from the first call to the moment you step aboard. The whole sequence takes as little as three weeks and is comfortable at three months.

DAY 1

01 The conversation

Dates, region, how many of you, ages, and what a great week looks like. Whether you want to move every day or sit at anchor for four of them. Whether this is a celebration, a reset or a business week. Twenty minutes here is what makes the shortlist right.

DAYS 2–4

02 The shortlist

Three to five yachts, not thirty, each with a reason she is on the list and an honest note on what she is not. I check real availability and crew standing before anything reaches you, so nothing on your list is already gone.

DAYS 4–7

03 Hold and offer

Once you have a favourite I place a hold on your dates, usually good for 24 to 72 hours, and negotiate the rate and terms with the central agent. Rates move. Delivery fees, included fuel, extra nights and one-way charges are all negotiable, and that negotiation is my job, not yours.

SIGNATURE

04 The contract

The MYBA Charter Agreement, the industry-standard contract used worldwide. You pay 50% on signature and the balance 30 days before embarkation, with the running-cost advance due alongside it. Funds go to a client escrow account, not to the yacht.

6–4 WEEKS
OUT

05 The preference sheet

The document that turns a beautiful yacht into your week. Everyone aboard by name, how they take their coffee, what they drink, what they will not eat, allergies, pillow firmness, music, birthdays, activity level, and how much you want to see the crew. It goes to the chief stewardess and the chef, and it is why the right rosé is cold in your cabin on day one.

4–3 WEEKS
OUT

06 The captain's call

You speak with the captain directly. He has already drafted an itinerary from your preference sheet and knows those waters in that month. This is where the plan becomes real: which anchorages, which nights ashore, where the tender drops you, what to do if the mistral arrives on Wednesday.

EMBARKATION

07 Boarding day

Boarding is generally from noon, with the yacht cleared and provisioned before you arrive. Passports go to the purser for port clearance, the crew is lined up on the aft deck to meet you, and lunch is served underway. Disembarkation is by 9 a.m. on the final morning, and most guests sleep aboard the last night rather than leaving the evening before.

05 What it really costs

A worked example: a 68-metre yacht at a \$600,000 weekly base rate, one week in the western Mediterranean in July, twelve guests.

BASE FEE

APA

VAT

TIP

LINE	WHAT IT IS	AMOUNT
■ Base fee	The yacht and her crew for seven nights. Includes all crew salaries, insurance, the tenders, every water toy aboard, all onboard amenities, and the yacht's own maintenance.	\$600,000
■ APA · 30%	The Advance Provisioning Allowance. A running-cost float you place with the captain before you board, not a fee. It pays for fuel, food, wine and spirits, dockage, port and canal fees, laundry, fresh flowers and anything ordered ashore. You get a full accounting at the end of the week and the unspent balance is returned to you . Typically 25–35% of the base rate; a fast-cruising, hard-partying week can exceed it and be topped up mid-charter.	\$180,000
■ VAT · est. 11%	European value-added tax on the charter fee, charged where the charter begins. The rate is set by the country, not by the yacht's price, and it ranges from zero to 22% depending on where you start and what licence the yacht holds. The table below shows the real numbers. Your offer states the exact figure before you sign anything. The Caribbean has no VAT at all.	\$66,000
■ Gratuity	Discretionary, given to the captain in a single sum on the last evening and distributed across the crew. The MYBA convention is 5–15% of the base fee; 10% is the common landing point for excellent service, and it is entirely yours to set.	\$60,000
All in	Before the APA refund, and before flights and hotels either side.	\$906,000

The same yacht in the Caribbean: \$840,000, because there is no VAT. And most clients see a meaningful share of the APA come back. Region moves your total more than almost any other choice you make.

Charter tax, country by country

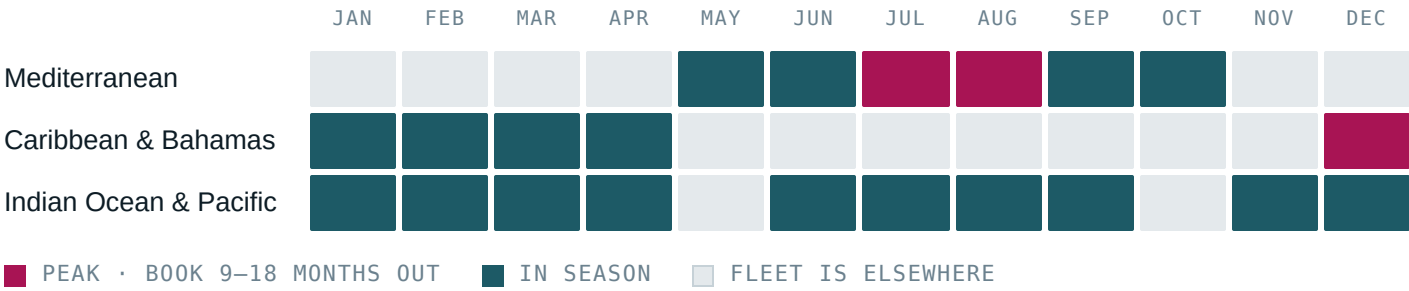
Rates current for the 2026 season. Every one of these is confirmed in writing in your offer before you commit.

WHERE THE CHARTER STARTS	HOW IT WORKS	RATE
France & Monaco	Reducible pro rata for time verifiably spent outside EU waters, with proper documentation.	20%
Italy	Same principle. The final figure depends on the itinerary and documented time in non-EU waters.	22%
Spain	Flat, no international-waters reduction. Requires a Spanish charter licence. The Canaries use IGIC instead.	21%
Croatia	Qualifying multi-day charters with a Croatian licence.	13%
Greece	Depends on the licence the yacht carries , not on her price. The statutory rate is 13% for a crewed charter over 48 hours, but a yacht holding the right certification is invoiced on a reduced taxable value. 2026 rate sheets commonly show 5.2%, 6.5%, 7.8% or 12%. This is why two identical-looking yachts in the same Greek harbour can carry very different tax.	5.2–13%
Montenegro	No charter VAT in Montenegrin waters. Croatian VAT applies for any time spent in Croatia.	0%
Turkey	General rate, with local treatment varying by arrangement.	20%
Caribbean	BVI, USVI, St Barths, Antigua and St Martin apply no charter VAT. Cruising permits and port fees still apply and come out of the APA.	0%
Bahamas	A consolidated charter tax on foreign-flagged yachts in Bahamian waters.	14%

Why this is worth ten minutes of your attention: on a \$600,000 week, the difference between starting in Italy and starting in Greece on a well-certificated yacht is over \$100,000 in tax alone. Same yacht, same crew, same sea. Tell me your budget and I will build the itinerary around the tax rather than discovering it afterwards.

Where to be, and when

The fleet migrates. Chasing a yacht outside her season means paying to reposition her.



06 Every question, answered

These are the questions my clients actually ask. Read the ones you care about, ignore the rest, and bring me whatever is left.

THE MONEY

What exactly is APA, and do I get it back?

The Advance Provisioning Allowance is a running-cost float, normally 25–35% of the base fee, that you transfer before you board. It is **your money held by the captain**, not a fee to the yacht. It pays for fuel, all food and drink, dockage, port fees, laundry, flowers, and anything the crew arranges ashore on your behalf.

You receive a full itemised accounting at the end of the week and any unspent balance is returned. If you cruise hard, drink well or take a lot of marina berths, the captain will tell you mid-week that a top-up is needed. He will never spend past it without asking.

What is included in the base charter fee?

The yacht, her full crew and their salaries, the yacht's insurance and maintenance, all tenders and water toys, every piece of onboard equipment, linens, and the use of everything aboard from the spa to the gym to the cinema.

What is not included is anything consumed: fuel, food, beverages, dockage, port and pilot fees, communications, shoreside arrangements, tax and gratuity. Those all come out of the APA.

When do I pay, and to whom?

50% on signing the MYBA agreement, and the remaining 50% plus the full APA due 30 days before embarkation. Payment goes to a regulated client escrow account held by the brokerage, not directly to the yacht owner. The funds are released to the owner only once the charter begins.

What is VAT, and will I have to pay it?

Value-added tax applies to charters that begin in European Union waters, and it is charged on the base fee. The rate is set by the country you start in, and it ranges from 0% in Montenegro to 22% in Italy. France, Italy and Greece all allow the taxable amount to be reduced for documented time outside EU waters; Spain does not.

Greece is the one to understand properly. The rate there depends on the licence and certification the individual yacht carries, not on her size or price. The statutory rate is 13% for a crewed charter over 48 hours, but a correctly certificated yacht is invoiced on a reduced taxable value, and 2026 rate sheets commonly show 5.2%, 6.5%, 7.8% or 12%. Two yachts sitting side by side in the same harbour can carry very different tax.

There is no VAT in the Caribbean. The full country table is in section 05, and your formal offer states the exact figure before you commit to anything.

Can the itinerary be planned to reduce the tax?

Legitimately, yes, and it is one of the more valuable things a broker does. Where the charter starts determines which country's rate applies, so a week that begins in Montenegro or on a well-certificated Greek yacht rather than in Italy can change the total by six figures on a large charter.

Time spent outside EU waters can also reduce the taxable amount in France, Italy and Greece, provided the navigation is properly documented by the captain. This is planning, not avoidance, and it happens before you sign rather than after.

How much should I tip, and how do I give it?

The MYBA convention is 5–15% of the base charter fee, with 10% the usual figure for a week where the crew were excellent. It is entirely discretionary.

You give it to the captain in one sum on the final evening, by wire or in cash, and he distributes it across the crew by an established formula. You do not tip individually, and you should never feel you need to tip during the week.

Is the advertised rate negotiable?

Often, yes, and rarely on the headline number alone. What moves is the package: an extra night, included fuel, waived delivery or one-way fees, a reduced APA percentage, a shoulder-season discount, or a late-availability rate on a week the yacht has not sold. That negotiation is entirely my side of the table and costs you nothing.

What happens if I have to cancel?

The MYBA agreement is firm. Deposits are generally non-refundable, and cancelling inside 30 days can forfeit the full charter fee. In practice, if the yacht re-sells your week, the owner will usually return what was recovered, but that is goodwill rather than a right.

This is precisely what charter cancellation insurance exists for.

Should I buy travel or charter cancellation insurance?

Yes, and buy it at the same time you sign. A specialist yacht charter policy covers cancellation and curtailment for illness, injury, a death in the family, jury duty, and other named causes, and typically costs a small single-digit percentage of the charter value. Standard travel insurance almost never covers a charter contract.

Buying it early matters: cover for a pre-existing condition or an unfolding situation is generally void once you already know about it. I can put you in touch with brokers who write this cover specifically.

Does it cost me anything to use a broker?

No. The retail broker's commission is paid out of the charter fee by the yacht owner, exactly as it would be if you booked direct. The rate you see is the rate either way. What you get for it is someone who knows which yachts have a crew worth having, who negotiates the terms, and who is on the phone at 2 a.m. on Wednesday if something goes wrong.

How many guests can I actually bring?

Twelve overnight. This is not a yacht-by-yacht policy, it is international maritime regulation: a vessel carrying more than twelve passengers must be certified to full passenger-ship standard, which fewer than twenty charter yachts in the world are.

During the day at anchor, most yachts can host more, often twenty to thirty, subject to the captain's discretion and local rules. If you need to sleep more than twelve, the answer is a Tier 04 yacht or a second yacht cruising alongside, which is more common than you would think.

Can I bring children? Babies?

Yes to both, and yachts are unusually good with children. Cabins convert to twins, cots and high chairs are standard, and most crews include someone happy to run the watersports all afternoon. A nanny can be added to the crew for the week.

Tell me the ages early. Netting on the rails, appropriate lifejackets, childproofing and a chef who knows what a five-year-old will actually eat are all arranged before you board, not after.

Can I bring my dog?

Sometimes. It is entirely the owner's decision and it varies yacht by yacht, so it has to be asked at the shortlist stage rather than after you sign. When a yacht does accept pets there is usually an additional cleaning fee.

The bigger constraint is paperwork. EU pet passports, rabies titres and country-by-country import rules for the Caribbean can take weeks or months to arrange, so raise this at the first conversation.

How much will I see the crew?

Exactly as much as you want, and this is a genuine setting you control. Tell the chief stewardess on day one that you want service to be invisible and it will be: crew move on the service stairs, appear when called, and disappear otherwise. Tell her you want the crew around and you will finish the week knowing all twenty of them.

Note it on the preference sheet before you arrive so the tone is set from the first hour.

Is there Wi-Fi? Can I actually work from the yacht?

Yes. Nearly every yacht in these tiers now runs high-speed low-orbit satellite internet, which means video calls from an anchorage work reliably. Larger yachts carry redundant systems and 4G/5G bonding close to shore.

If a specific meeting matters, tell the captain. He will position the yacht for it.

Will it be rough? What about seasickness?

Far less than people expect. Yachts of this size carry zero-speed stabilisers that hold her steady at anchor as well as underway, and captains plan the week around the forecast, moving overnight or repositioning to the sheltered side of an island rather than taking guests through weather.

Note it on the preference sheet if anyone is sensitive. The crew keep remedies aboard and will pick the calmest anchorages without being asked.

How private is it? Can I ask for an NDA?

Yes, and it is routine at this level. Crew contracts already include confidentiality clauses, and a specific non-disclosure agreement for your charter can be put in place before you board. Phones-away policies, no-photography rules and restricted crew access to guest areas are all normal requests.

Discretion is the profession. Crew who talk do not work again.

What do the crew need from me?

Passport scans for every guest, for port clearance and immigration. A completed preference sheet. Flight details so transfers are timed properly. And any medical, dietary or mobility information the captain and chef need to plan around.

That is genuinely all. Everything else is theirs to handle.

How does the preference sheet work?

It is a detailed questionnaire that goes out after contract and comes back to the chief stewardess and the chef four to six weeks before you board. It covers every guest by name: how they take coffee, what they drink and at what temperature, favourite and forbidden foods, allergies and intolerances, pillow type, cabin temperature, music, celebrations happening that week, activity level, and how visible you want the crew.

The chef then provisions specifically for you, which is why the food aboard is unlike a restaurant: nothing was bought for a general public. Fill it in properly. It is the highest-leverage hour of the entire process.

Can the chef handle my diet?

Yes. Organic and locally sourced, gluten free, dairy free, plant based, keto, paleo, kosher, halal, seed-oil free, raw, or a specific protocol you follow at home. Charter chefs cook for twelve people with twelve different requirements as a matter of course, and they provision from the best markets on the coast rather than a supplier catalogue.

Serious allergies go on the preference sheet **and** get mentioned to the captain directly, so the galley can control cross-contamination.

Do we eat every meal on board?

Entirely up to you. Most guests eat breakfast and lunch aboard and go ashore two or three evenings. The chef would rather know the morning of than the hour before, purely so nothing is wasted.

Can you get us restaurant reservations and beach club tables?

Yes, and this is one of the real advantages of a large yacht. The purser and captain hold long-standing relationships in every port on the circuit, and a superyacht guest is a client those venues want. Tables that are unavailable to the public in August are frequently available to the yacht.

Send the list with your preference sheet. The further ahead, the better the table.

Can I request specific wines and spirits?

Yes, and you should. Send the list, at any level of specificity, and it will be aboard and correctly stored before you arrive. It is bought through the APA at cost, with no markup, which is one of the quiet advantages of chartering over any hotel.

Who decides where we go?

You do, with the captain. You describe the week you want, he drafts a route that works with the weather, the distances, the port availability and the timing of your arrival and departure, then you adjust it together. Nothing is locked.

When do I speak to the captain?

Around three to four weeks before embarkation, once he has your preference sheet. It is a direct conversation, usually a call, and it is where the week takes shape. You will speak or message again in the days before you board.

Can we change the plan mid-week?

Constantly, and most charters do. The itinerary is a proposal, not a schedule. The only limits are cruising time, fuel, port availability and the captain's judgement on weather and safety, which is final and non-negotiable, as it should be.

Can we start in one country and finish in another?

Yes. A one-way charter, for example Naples to Ibiza, or St Barths to Antigua, is common. Depending on the distance there may be a repositioning or one-way fee, and it is one of the first things I try to get waived during negotiation.

How much of the week is spent moving?

Less than people imagine. A typical day involves two to four hours underway, often during breakfast or after lunch, with the rest at anchor. Long passages are run overnight while you sleep. If you want to wake up somewhere new every morning, say so and the captain plans for it.

What if the weather turns?

The captain reroutes, usually before you notice. There is almost always a sheltered alternative within a few hours, and the crew are practised at making a weather day feel like a deliberate choice: a long lunch, the spa, a film, a protected bay you would not otherwise have seen.

How far in advance should I book?

For peak weeks in the Mediterranean, July and August, or the Caribbean over Christmas and New Year, nine to eighteen months. The best yachts with the best crews are gone first, and holiday weeks on the top yachts are booked two years out.

For everything else, three to six months is comfortable. Last-minute charters do exist and can be excellent value, but you are choosing from what is left.

Can I charter for fewer than seven nights?

Sometimes. Owners prefer full weeks and in high season most will only accept them. Outside peak, a five-night charter is often possible, usually priced at a pro-rata rate plus a premium. Day charters on yachts of this size are rare and largely a Caribbean and Miami phenomenon.

What time do we board, and when do we leave?

Boarding is generally from noon on day one, disembarkation by 9 a.m. on day eight. Most guests sleep aboard the final night rather than leaving the evening before, and the crew will serve breakfast before you go.

Where do I fly into, and how do I get to the yacht?

Tell me your flights and it is handled. Cars, helicopter transfers and private terminal arrangements are all booked through the APA, and the crew track your flight so the tender is waiting whether you land early or three hours late.

What do I pack? Is there a dress code?

Soft luggage only, so bags can be stowed. Swimwear, resort clothes, one or two smarter outfits for dinner ashore, and a light layer for evenings underway. No heels for the deck, and shoes come off at the passerelle.

There is no dress code aboard. The only one that exists is at the restaurants and clubs you might visit ashore.

What happens if something breaks?

Yachts at this level carry an engineering team and a full spares inventory, and problems are usually solved without guests knowing. In the rare case of a genuine mechanical failure that stops the charter, the MYBA agreement provides for a pro-rata refund of the unused days, and the owner and I would work to place you on a comparable yacht.

It is uncommon. It is also exactly why the contract matters.

Do I need a passport and visas?

A passport valid for at least six months, yes, for every guest. Visa requirements follow the countries in your itinerary rather than the yacht, so a Med charter crossing from Croatia to Montenegro or from Greece to Turkey has its own rules. The purser handles all port clearance and immigration paperwork; you just hand over the passports on day one.

What is the single biggest mistake first-time charterers make?

Rushing the preference sheet, and booking too small. The first costs you a week of small details that would have been effortless to get right. The second is the one people actually regret: the difference between a yacht that fits your group and one they are slightly on top of each other in is usually one tier and a fraction of the total spend.

NEXT

The rest of your questions are the reason I exist.

Tell me your dates, your region and how many of you there are. I will come back with three to five yachts worth your time and an honest note on each. No obligation, no fee to you, and no list of thirty boats.

REQUEST A SHORTLIST

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Denison Yachting · Fort Lauderdale

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Rates and figures are indicative and confirmed in writing before any commitment.