



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Whether you're an owner aiming to attract a new level of clientele, or crew looking to offer guests something different, *Emma Bamford* reveals some impressive wins

Just imagine – what might the perfect charter trip or vacation on board your own yacht entail for you and your guests?

Perhaps you'd fly your friends and family to the boat by private jet one day and be perfecting your kitesurfing skills in a secluded turquoise bay with a world champion the next. Or you may be tucking into a spectacular onboard dinner of vegan “steak” prepared by your Michelin-starred chef before partying in your open-air nightclub with Drake performing on stage. And to top it all, you wouldn't even have to pack – because your closet would be curated for you and sent ahead, and you could set off with just your passport and phone.

Gone are the simple days of sunbathing on board punctuated by dinners ashore. The past few years have seen brokers, crew and

service companies raising the stakes with incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

“When a client charters a yacht, they expect a good time for both themselves and their guests,” says Bianca Nestor, charter broker at Burgess, who explains time on board as an “investment in well-being” – the inference being that the better time a guest has on board, the better they will feel when they disembark. As such, it behooves a broker and crew to ensure the guests have the best experience they possibly can. “We attribute a lot of our success to diligent planning, paying special attention to the guests' desires and trying to anticipate their needs,” says Doug Meier, captain of 114ft *Hargrave Renaissance*. Nestor agrees: “Exceeding expectations is the name of the game.”

So, if creating the ultimate experience for you and your guests is limited only by your imagination, the question, it seems, is how high will you allow yours to soar?

ACTIVITIES

“It's those money-can't-buy experiences that set you apart from the rest,” says Martin Armstrong, founder of Somerton Sporting Club, which arranges expert training and experiences in the best locations all over the world with the top athletes in their field. How about learning to climb karst limestone formations with Chris Sharma, developing your kitesurfing moves in Turks and Caicos with two-times world champion Youri Zoon, or increasing your freediving depths in Greenland under the expert guidance of Canadian William Winram, the world record holder?

Somerton will put the experts and equipment on board, so guests can leave the yacht with an immense sense of achievement. “Think about how you could improve you and your guests' surfing skills if we booked Jamie Mitchell to teach you over three weeks at all the secret spots in the Maldives,” Armstrong adds.

Specially curated experiences like these “up the ante of a standard luxury yacht charter and enhance an already amazing holiday”, says Janine St.Denis, marketing and communications manager at Northrop & Johnson. The broker works with Embark Beyond, a luxury travel advisor, to bring in a special events team, to, as St.Denis says, “create one-of-a-kind, once-in-a-lifetime experiences that are often otherwise unavailable or unattainable”. Its ultimate football package, for example, features VIP access to the Super Bowl, meet-and-greets with the players and access to the pre- and post-game parties, as well as a three-night stay at the Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale before a charter in the Bahamas.

Perhaps you want to show your guests parts of the planet that few others have experienced. Travel company Cookson Adventures produces a range of exciting and varied superyacht itineraries. It planned a trip for 180ft Amels-built *Kamalaya* to Svalbard, using an icebreaker to clear a path first, and taking naturalist guides on board to explain the habits of local wildlife, including walrus and whales, to guests. Over the next two years it is offering charterers the chance to contribute to a world-class scientific project, Seabed 2030, which aims to map the entire ocean floor by the end of the decade. The 206ft expedition yacht *SuRi* will be available for charter in Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, carrying a seven-seater U-Boat Worx Cruise Sub 7, allowing guests to dive to depths of 1,000ft and experience parts of the world hitherto unseen by human eyes. A multi-beam echosounder mounted on the submersible will record bathymetric data while guests are guided by an experienced sub pilot and a marine biologist in air-conditioned comfort. “This experience demonstrates one of our key beliefs: you have to keep innovating to create unique experiences,” says Adam Sebba, CEO of Cookson Adventures.



Above and bottom: guests on 206ft expedition yacht *SuRi* are offered experiences in places such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji

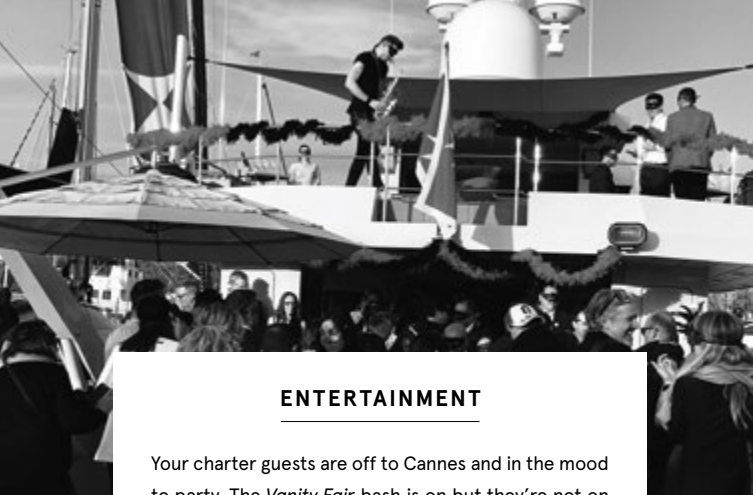


PHOTOGRAPHY: JIM RAYCROFT; WILLIAM WINRAM; COOKSON ADVENTURES



Above left: an icebreaker clears a path for *Kamalaya* on its voyage to Svalbard in the Arctic Ocean. Left: a freedive organized by Somerton Sporting Club





ENTERTAINMENT

Your charter guests are off to Cannes and in the mood to party. The *Vanity Fair* bash is on but they're not on the list, so what do you do? You need a fixer with all the right contacts who can lift that velvet rope and pull the strings to give your guests the night of their lives. Or perhaps a guest's child is mad about *The Lion King* – so why not throw an onboard party with Simba, Timon and Pumbaa? Emmanuel Akintunde, managing director of GF Entertainment, has created a Lion King show that could easily be transferred to a yacht. "Disney doesn't allow the original cast to perform anywhere other than on stage," he says. "But we've worked with a production partner to produce our own show as close to the original as it can be: costumes, dancing, music... everything."

With privacy being an important consideration for high-profile guests, many want the ability to bring the fun on board. The 249ft Oceanco *Wheels*, available for charter through Fraser, has a nightclub complete with Bose sound system, smoke machines, lasers and two spotlights that send symbols into the skies. "What makes it special," says Fraser charter broker Debra Blackburn, "is that the equipment is of the standard you would find in a high-end nightclub – plus it's outdoors."

And who better to take to the decks than an acclaimed superstar DJ? GF Entertainment booked DJs Martin Garrix and Afrojack so an owner and guests could celebrate Ramadan on a 118-footer, and during the 2019 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix it arranged for Akon to sing on a 124-footer. "We're also partnering with Drake to do private performances on yachts," Akintunde says.



It's now possible to stage an onboard party experience worthy of a high-end nightclub, complete with celebrity performers



FOOD AND DRINK

Eating on board is an integral part of a charter, and guests increasingly come with dietary requirements, from low sodium to gluten-free. Burgess's Bianca Nestor says one of the best lunches she's ever tasted was prepared by the chef of 295ft *Nero* during the Barcelona Boat Show: vegan "steak" frites. "Barbecued beetroot was marinated and turned every three minutes for three hours on a Teppanyaki grill to achieve the texture of steak," she says. "Also on the plate were potato terrine, broccolini and faux foie gras [achieved by combining cashews and miso paste] with truffle oil, served with almond and wild garlic horseradish sauce. The chef had begun his preparations for this dish two days in advance. Simply incredible."

Guests are often as gastronomically savvy as the onboard Michelin-starred chef, and increasingly crew are happy to accommodate their interest. Chef Andrew Reagan (pictured above, right), who works on *Wheels*, loves it when guests show an active interest in his cooking. "My ideal guest is someone who loves food," he says, "someone who will come to the market with me in the morning, pick out ingredients and say 'Oh look – what can we do with this?'" Then we'd come back and cook lunch and dinner with whatever produce we bought. It's fun to put a menu together with guests."

Let's not forget the drinks. Mark Sager, former mayor of West Vancouver, British Columbia, and owner of 95ft Burger *Oriana*, asks his crew to go the extra mile to make sundowners special. "At the end of the day we offer our guests a wonderful happy hour with our signature frozen-glass Martinis," he says.



PHOTOGRAPHY: STUART PEARCE/YACHT SHOT; JEFF BROWN/BREED MEDIA; COURTESY OF SOMERTON; EMMANUEL AKINTUNDE OF GF ENTERTAINMENT; XCLUSIVE YACHTS; COLE PARSONS



Web-linked Peloton spin bikes enable guests to stay in shape while on board

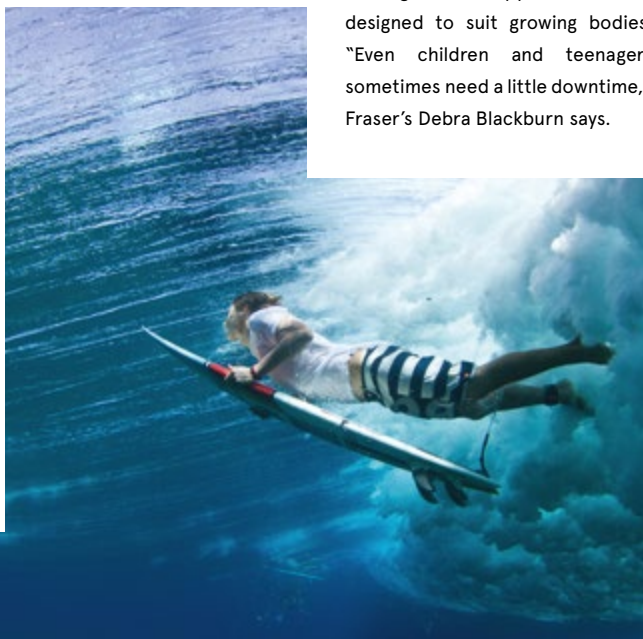
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A beach club was a rare luxury 10 years ago; now a wellness center and onboard spa are an integral part of any charter.

Guests don't want to let their fitness regimes slide just because they're away. Onboard gyms are getting larger, and the treadmill has been replaced with the latest web-linked equipment, such as spin bikes by Technogym and Peloton. One of your party not confident in the water? Your charter yacht is likely to have the solution. "Swimming pools on the main deck with incorporated power jets provide a vigorous workout before breakfast, if you don't fancy getting salty in the sea," Nestor says.

These days, it's possible to get the best personal trainers in the world on your boat. On Somerton's books is the fitness coach for the New Zealand national rugby team, who will come on board to deliver a strength and conditioning program. "These experiences are for the whole family and guests on board, not just one person," Armstrong adds – so by the time you disembark, you'll all be in much better shape.

And let's not neglect the younger guests: the onboard massage/spa room on *Wheels* has a special menu for teens, including a youth massage therapy treatment designed to suit growing bodies. "Even children and teenagers sometimes need a little downtime," Fraser's Debra Blackburn says.



SUSTAINABILITY

Owners and guests are increasingly taking a close look at their carbon footprint and seeking way to help mitigate their environmental impact.

Yachting and lifestyle services company Crew à la Mode reports experiencing this increased demand. "We are receiving an ever-increasing number of requests to source eco-friendly and ethical products for yacht owners," spokesperson Victoria Emerson says. The company's solutions can be found in every part of a yacht, she adds, ranging from "guest stationery and organic cotton bed linens to more natural beauty and cleaning products and staff uniforms crafted using innovative sustainable fabrics."

Elsewhere, GF Entertainment has a gifting scheme of reusable water bottles that reduces the amount of single-use plastic on board while also giving to charity. Each bottle given away on 288ft *Maltese Falcon* at last year's Monaco Yacht Show provided one person in a developing country with clean water for five years.

TECHNOLOGY

Staying on top of tech should be a priority for every yacht. *Renaissance*, for example, has 18 Wi-Fi hotspots and has upgraded from 4G to 5G to stay ahead of the curve. "Guests want their music Bluetoothed to the yacht system so they can control the song selections," Captain Doug Meier says.

Guests who are enjoying their charter naturally want to tell their friends, family and Instagram followers about it. So helping them achieve that has become a whole-crew priority, from a picture-perfect hors d'oeuvres presentation to capturing amazing memories. If a *Renaissance* guest goes out on a jet ski, crew will take footage, and it'll already be streaming on the salon television when they return to the yacht. "Then they can AirDrop it and out it goes to their friends and social media," Meier adds.



Crew à la Mode sources eco-friendly and ethical products, such as crew clothing, for yachts



GIFTS

A T-shirt bearing the yacht's name will no longer cut it when it comes to providing guests with a treasured memento of their trip. *Renaissance* steps up the level of its gifts, according to how many times the guests have chartered. "Our first-time guests get our custom swag bag, which has clothing, binoculars, a phone charger etc," Captain Meier says. "But our returning charter guests get a scale model of *Renaissance*." They must be doing something right: "So far, since our launch, we are seeing a 70 per cent return rate with charter clients," owner Christine Emmons, says with pride. "Some are on their third and we have one on their fifth."

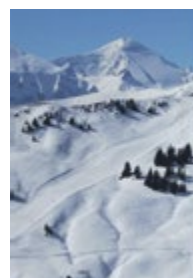
Returning charter guests on *Renaissance* are given a scale model of the boat as a gift



CREW

"Crew attitude is very important for the best charter experience," says Captain Meier, who believes guests like to see the same faces year after year, because it makes the yacht feel more like home. "Longevity is important," he says. "We have several programs in place such as longevity bonuses, tip-matching and special crew events to promote a positive crew morale. On our last trip we took the boat up to the Boca Raton Resort [in Florida] and turned the crew loose on the wave machine for an afternoon of surfing and [then gave them] dinner. They work hard for us, so we wanted to show our appreciation."

Rewarding crew with fun times will boost morale, which in turn improves the on board experience for guests



My Vacation Stylist is partnering with superyacht broker Edmiston to provide a curated holiday wardrobe service for yacht owners and their guests



PHOTOGRAPHY: CAT GARCIA, JIM RAYCROFT

CLOTHING

Imagine being able to turn up at the airport with just your passport, knowing that when you arrive at your boat there will be a whole new wardrobe waiting, with everything in your size, chosen to match the specifics of your itinerary.

Luxury travel and concierge company Voyager Club offers a wardrobe service called My Vacation Stylist, which curates pieces from brands stocked by Matches Fashion based on your needs and taste. Everything from socks and swimwear to dresses and jewelry will be ready in your cabin when you arrive.

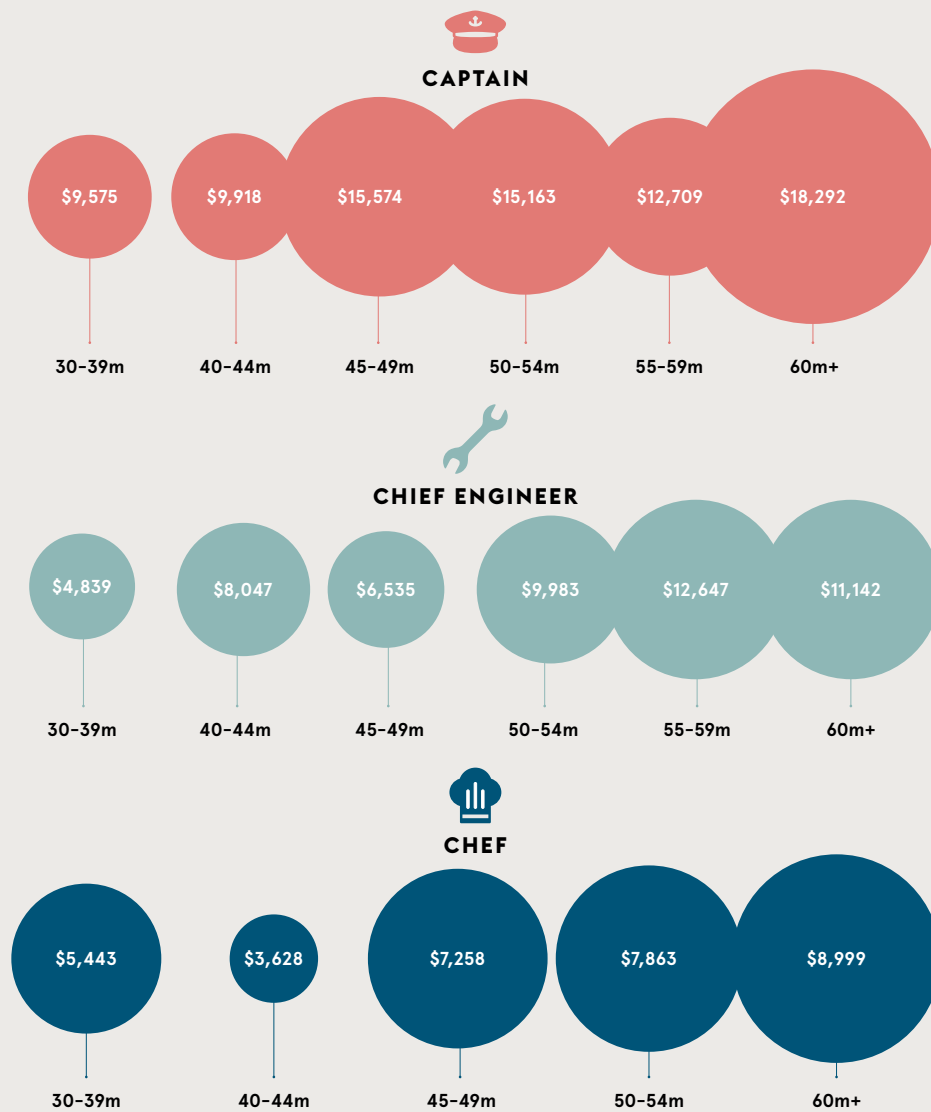
Company co-founder Sophie Caulcutt (pictured, left), who has a background in fashion and whose family owned 124ft William Fife *Mariquita* until recently says: "I couldn't understand why no one was connecting the dots between fashion and travel, that what you put in your suitcases is related to where you are traveling. Having concierge services personalized to you on board a yacht adds huge value. The greatest luxury is time." ■



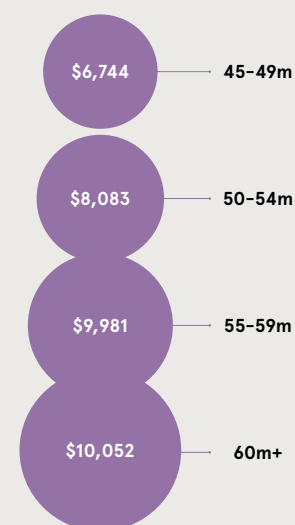
CREW COSTS

To say that it's been a strange year for yachting is an understatement, and nowhere has this been more clearly reflected than in this year's salary survey, undertaken by *BOAT International's* sister publication, *Dockwalk*. Of the agencies, captains and crew who took part, the changes due to Covid-19 were clear – crew are moving jobs less than usual, choosing to keep the roles they have rather than risk uncertain positions elsewhere.

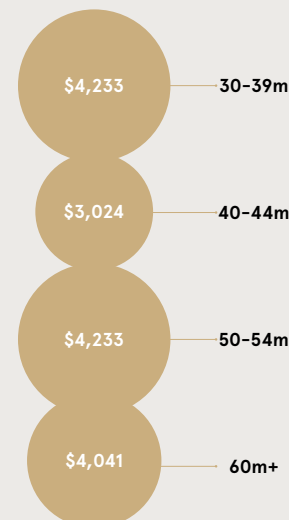
It's not all doom and gloom, however. Agencies see these rough waters as a blip, the effects of which should lessen if and when things return to normal, and there's a silver lining too. There's speculation that guests spending longer on board as a result of the pandemic may choose to increase their budget and invest in experienced staff.



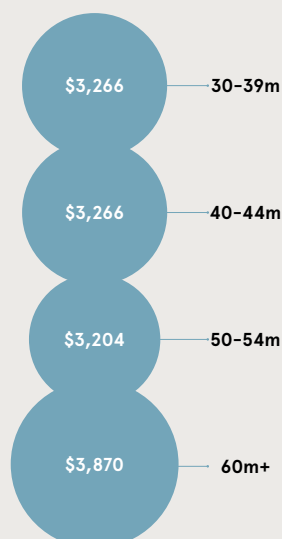
FIRST OFFICER



STEW/STEWARDESS



DECKHAND



Shown on this page are the average monthly salaries for 2020. They are given in relation to yacht length, but it's important to note that a more experienced captain on a smaller yacht may earn more than colleagues on larger vessels. In addition to the monthly salary ranges provided by 10 crew agencies, more than 340 individual captains and crew responded to the survey.

The tables online show the "agency range", which gives the average lows and highs of all ranges provided by the agencies, the "poll range", where results from captains and crew are tallied to show the extent of all the responses, and the "poll average" shown here, calculated from all responses. Visit boatint.com/crewsalaries for more. ■