

Tips for Booking a Yacht Charter; Know What You Want

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For travelers who have never chartered before, having an imagination of what your dream holiday vacation would be like will be helpful when planning a VIP luxury yacht charter experience.

While you may not know quite what to expect you have to ask yourself, is your idea of a perfect holiday cruising through luxurious sumptuous surroundings while sunbathing with cocktail in hand? Do you want to spend time docked at the most fashionable marinas? Would you like to host parties for your family and or friends on board?

Or maybe you are more adventurous and would you like to learn several different water sports like diving, snorkeling or skiing with family? You may be just looking to escape to a secluded tropical oasis where you can anchor in a private cove and curl up with a good book to enjoy the peace and quiet? No matter what your ideals are, there is a yacht out there that is perfect for your needs. By working with a reputable yacht charter broker, they will help to relieve some of the anxiety of planning a charter vacation and will share useful information to help the booking process. When working with a charter yacht or agency there are standard questions that you will want to be prepared to answer so that the agent can begin planning your itinerary right away. There is no need to feel overwhelmed if you aren't quite familiar with some of the industry lingo, a good agent or captain will be more happy to explain the details to you. If you are looking to send in a charter inquiry read the list of details below that you should include. This will give you an idea of some of the decisions you will need to make early in the booking process.

Motor yacht or sailboat? Motor yachts tend to be larger and faster, and usually appeal to those who desire the super yacht lifestyle. Sailboats entice those who anticipate the feel of the ocean and the romance of the sea, they also incur lower fuel expenses. If you opt for a sail yacht you may also be asked if you would prefer a monohull or catamaran. Mono's have a single hull and tend to be built better for speed while cats are a little more stable in the water which can reduce the risk of guests becoming seasick.

Who will be going with you? The size of your party will determine how many staterooms you will need and how they need to be configured. It is also very important to discern adults and children passengers as some rooms may have twin beds ideal for small children but may not be suitable for adult couples. Knowing your group's needs will also help the agent or captain ensure that the proper amenities are available and appropriate activities are incorporated into the itinerary to keep everyone happy. How long will your charter holiday last? Charter yachts are usually available on a weekly or daily basis. The length of time you will spend on your charter will also be consideration as to areas you wish to visit.

When do you want to take your charter? You will want to plan early (holidays are booked up to a year or more in advance) and be flexible. Dates will also effect the selection of yachts in the region you look to visit. For example, many vessels may charter in the Caribbean from November-April and migrate to the Mediterranean from May-October while vessels located in the Bahamas during the winter months often travel to New England in the summer. Some vessels stay put year round pending that the weather conditions are safe to do so. What is your total budget? Although vessels are listed with a weekly or daily charter rate you will also want to include airfare, marina charges, fuel, food, and beverages, embarking/disembarking charges and gratuities on top of the yacht's rate into your total budget.

NOW WHAT?

You have finally figured out what you want, you or an agent have found the perfect yacht at the right time for your holiday, and its within your budget.

Here is what happens next: The Charter Agreement: While at first glance, the charter agreement your agent will send you may appear daunting, it's not as difficult as it seems. You already have a basic understanding of different terms, and you will want to go over anything you do not completely understand with your booking agent.

Payment: Once you fully understand and have finalized your charter agreement with your agent, you will be asked for a 50% down payment.

The Questionnaire: you will receive a detailed questionnaire to complete. This will pertain to preferences, special needs, dietary or medical requirements. This is vital for the crew to be able to provide you with the foods you desire and the appropriate activities to make your charter holiday one to remember.

Final Payment and Advance Provisioning Allowance (APA): The balance of your payment is normally due one month prior to the charter. You will also be asked to send funds to cover the APA, if that is in the terms of your agreement. All charter costs must be reconciled before you disembark from the vessel.

Insurance: Cancellation and Curtailment Insurance is available to protect your investment if unforeseen circumstances prevent or cut your charter short. Ask your charter agent about this insurance and other forms of insurance that might be prudent. Some yachts require that travel insurance be purchased for each of the guests before they may board.

Captain's Responsibility: A charter yacht captain will always try to comply with your wishes, but his primary responsibility is to the safety of the yacht and passengers. Should any scenario arise where a request conflicts with this responsibility, your captain will discuss all possible alternatives with you. However when relating to the yacht and safety of those on board, the captain's decision is final.

Gratuities: Tipping is customary and discretionary. Remember that your crew has worked long, hard hours to make your holiday a success. If you feel the crew has been excellent, a gratuity equal to 15% of the charter fee may be fair. If the service has been exceptional, 20% or higher might be warranted. The tip is handed to the captain at the end of the charter to be distribute fairly between all members of the crew.