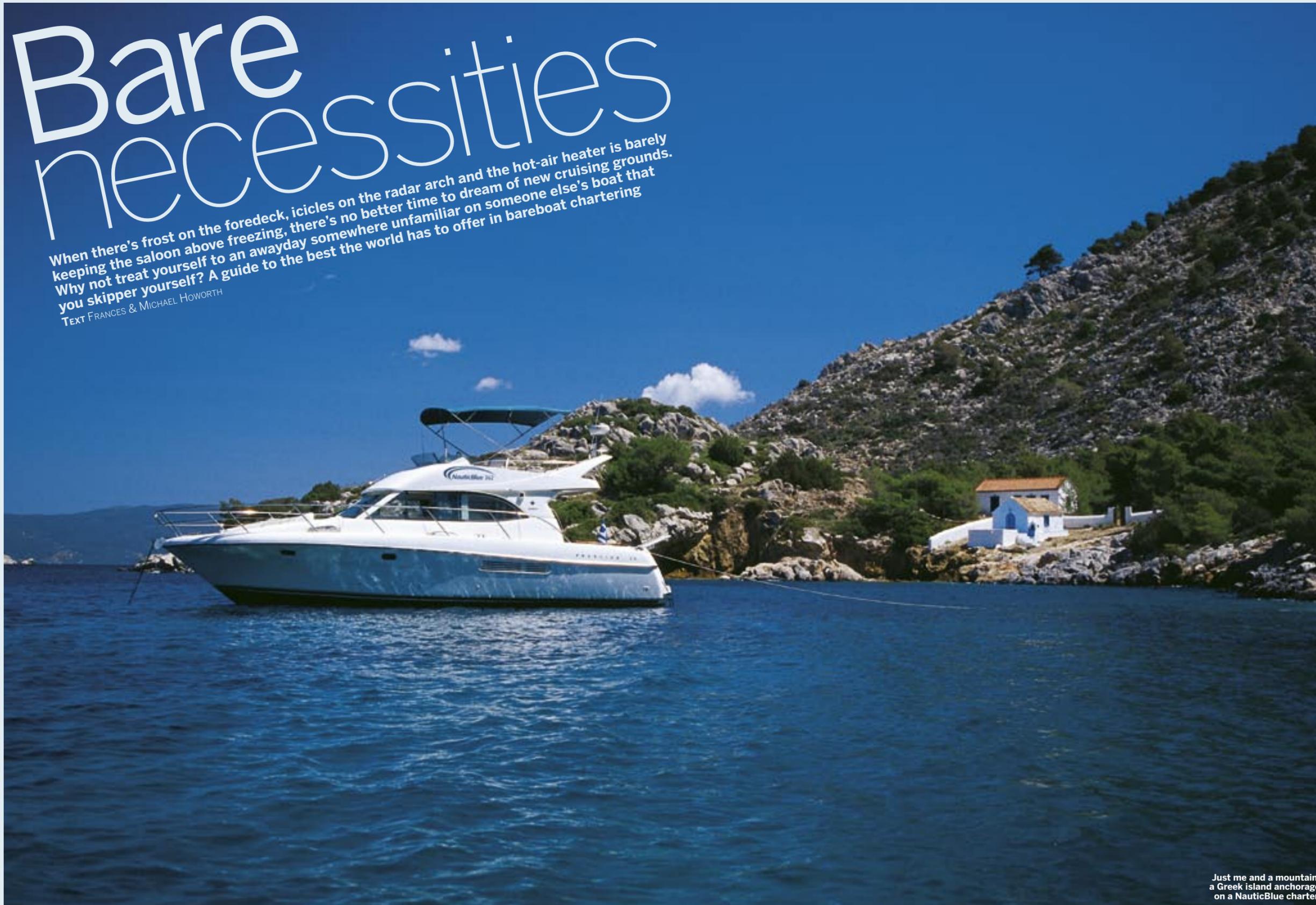


Bare necessities

When there's frost on the foredeck, icicles on the radar arch and the hot-air heater is barely keeping the saloon above freezing, there's no better time to dream of new cruising grounds. Why not treat yourself to an awayday somewhere unfamiliar on someone else's boat that you skipper yourself? A guide to the best the world has to offer in bareboat chartering

TEXT FRANCES & MICHAEL HOWORTH



Just me and a mountain: a Greek island anchorage on a NauticBlue charter.

However attractive the Solent, the Bristol Channel and the Thames Estuary seem, there comes a time when you fancy a change of seascape, when the chart of your local waters no longer holds the promise of adventure it once did. The blue planet is full of wonderful, sunny cruising grounds that become even more attractive to British boaters as soon as the nights start drawing in. If you want to explore a new spot, or even try out a different type of boat, a bareboat charter is the ideal solution. But where do you start? Due to their higher value and running costs compared to sailing boats, motor boats are more commonly offered for charter with a professional crew on board. But if you want to go it alone, motor boats are available for hire in most of the boating centres – it's just knowing where to look.

Bareboat for beginners

You'll need to convince the charter firm that you're able to skipper safely in the conditions you'll encounter, though requirements differ. One company based in the US demands that at least one individual on board must demonstrate proficiency in handling a vessel of a similar size and complexity to the boat chartered. Others ask that you have a working knowledge of navigation. Several firms have a day's training at the beginning of a charter to familiarise a crew with the new boat – a useful way of learning about any handling quirks.

If you fancy a holiday on a bigger boat, contracts may carry extra insurance clauses, higher deposits or only be available to those with commercial qualifications. Some firms insist on a skipper being on board to start with if the hirer can't satisfy the pre-contract conditions. This is not always a minus – local skippers are a mine of useful information, introducing hidden anchorages and being able to get a table at that impossibly full restaurant.

The simplest way of locating the right boat is to use the services of a broker or agency. When the broker has a detailed brief – location, type of boat, date of holiday, the number of people, and the maximum price you are willing to pay – he can do the legwork to find the best options. CharterWorld (www.charterworld.com) and Tenrag Yacht Charters (www.tenrag.com) offer a broker service.

Remember that bareboat fees are quoted before fuel, moorings and other essentials are accounted for, and these can add 25%. And there's also the cost of getting to your charter boat.

Our selection of the best places to do it bareboat covers a multitude of cruising grounds, from waters where boating is already well established to more isolated destinations where you'll find yourself with an untamed landscape to port and wide open ocean to starboard. Trust us, there's no better way to recharge one's cruising batteries.

• We've given each location marks out ten and an overall mark, and listed a selection of firms operating in that area. Sample rates show only a selection of the boats available. Some firms have mid-season rates, as well as low and high. It's also important to check that local tax is included. There can be extra admin and check-out fees at the end of your charter. Deposits vary.

10 FRENCH RIVIERA

On the coast from St Tropez to the Italian border, there is plenty of energy and excitement oozing from the ports and harbours. It's a hugely popular spot with the good and the great, of course, but it's also a fine boating area with plenty of facilities

for visitors in almost every port-of-call. And it isn't just about avoiding the paparazzi at the end of the pontoon – if you prefer tranquil anchorages and unassuming waterside seafood restaurants, you can find them in abundance. However, while

the waters are rich in fully crewed charter boats, finding a firm prepared to charter you a bareboat is another matter. But it's worth pursuing: the French Riviera is 100 miles of the world's most extravagant and exclusive coastline.



THE FRENCH RIVIERA: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	May to September	
Availability of boats		2
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		5
Attractiveness		6
Shoreside amenities		8
Ease of access from the UK		7
Total:		56%

Who to go to

Dan Sailing www.dansailing.com
M&M www.mmsyb.com
Top Charter www.top-charter.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Dan Sailing		
Gobbi 375	€7,020 pw	€7,800 pw
M&M		
Airon 223 Fish	poa	€2,310 pw
Airon 345	poa	€7,320 pw
Top Charter		
Lomac 510 RIB	€150 pd	€150 pd
Ranieri 17.8	poa	€1,500 pw
Bayliner 602	€1,800 pw	€2,160 pw

NEW ZEALAND: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	November to April	
Availability of boats		3
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		7
Attractiveness		10
Shoreside amenities		5
Ease of access from the UK		4
Total:		58%

Who to go to

Compass Charters
www.compass-charters.co.nz

Sample rates	Low	High
Compass Charters		
Resort 35	NZ\$3,570 pw	NZ\$4,550 pw
Pelin 45	NZ\$4,760 pw	NZ\$5,775 pw

9 MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS, New Zealand

This spot at the northern tip of South Island is one of New Zealand's most-favoured cruising locations, boasting a wealth of protected bays, serene islands, and an untouched coastline almost 1,500km long. Commune with seals, observe the wildlife, and fish for your supper – it's more Captain Cook than Thomas Cook. The main charter season is from November to April when the weather is generally settled with warm days and onshore breezes. Yes, it's a long way to go, but for a chance to get close to nature at the unsullied edge of the world, there's no finer destination.



8 BAHAMAS

Stretching 130 miles from north to south, the Bahamas are made up of dozens of pristine islands in the Sea of Abaco. Here you will find snug harbours, deserted sandy white beaches, and captivating villages. Drop anchor at Hopetown Harbour, whose candy-striped lighthouse provides a picturesque landmark to steer by. Climb the steps to the top for a truly breathtaking view of the surrounding area. The flower-filled gardens, quaint pastel cottages, and white picket fences remind you that it was New Englanders who once settled in these parts. Whether you head north to Green Turtle or south to Little Harbour, you are in for some of the best cruising the region has to offer.



BAHAMAS: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	December to June	
Availability of boats		5
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		6
Attractiveness		9
Shoreside amenities		7
Ease of access from the UK		4
Total:		62%

Who to go to

Atlantic Yacht Company
www.atlanticyachtcompany.com
Florida Yacht www.floridayacht.com
NauticBlue www.nauticblue.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Atlantic Yacht Company		
Sea Ray 300 Sundancer	poa	\$6,000 pw
NauticBlue		
NauticBlue 341	\$2,730 pw	\$3,676 pw
NauticBlue 464	\$8,554 pw	\$10,884 pw

7 FLORIDA

Miami, Fort Lauderdale and the Keys are standout cruising areas, but for those who want to experience something different don't forget the other side of the state with its quiet waters, secluded anchorages, islands and miles of sugar-white beaches. Fort Myers is the heart of the 200-mile cruising stretch that runs from Flamingo to Tampa and St Petersburg. Cruise to the resort islands of Sanibel and Captiva with their beautiful, shell-strewn beaches; go south to the silent Everglades and the 10,000 Islands; go north and then east into the heart of Florida along the Okeechobee Waterway.



FLORIDA: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	December to June	
Availability of boats		7
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		6
Attractiveness		5
Shoreside amenities		8
Ease of access from the UK		6
Total:		64%

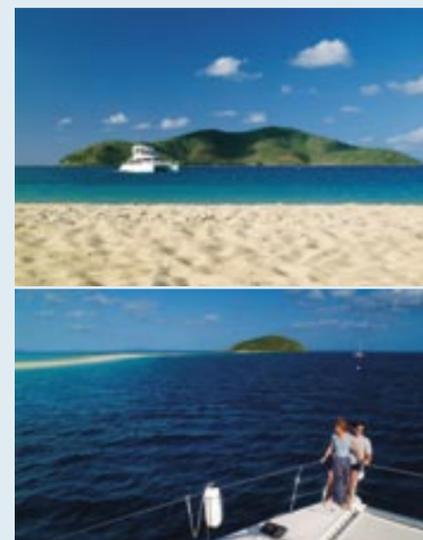
Who to go to

Atlantic Yacht Company
www.atlanticyachtcompany.com
South West Florida Yachts www.swfyachts.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Atlantic Yacht Company		
Sea Ray 380	poa	\$6,948 pw
South West Florida Yachts		
Grand Banks 42	\$3,534 pw	\$4,420 pw

6 WHITSUNDAY ISLANDS

The Whitsundays are cherished in Australia for their beautiful scenery and hospitable climate all year round. This incredible charter location is now beginning to be discovered by boaters from outside. If stunning beaches and great scuba diving get you excited this is a prime spot, as these islands are protected from ocean swells by coral reefs. Motor boats for hire in the Whitsunday Islands may be a little pedestrian – and since many are catamarans they can't be said to be as pretty as the waters they cruise in – but they are eminently suitable for the job of providing a cruising holiday home in a superb location. In their favour catamarans offer plenty of deck space and storage below, so can cater easily for larger numbers on board, making this location a great spot if you fancy chartering with a group of friends.



AUSTRALIA: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	November to May	
Availability of boats		7
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		6
Attractiveness		9
Shoreside amenities		7
Ease of access from the UK		4
Total:		66%

Who to go to

Charter Yachts Australia www.cya.com.au
Churchpoint Charters www.churchpointcharter.com.au
Cumberland Charter Yachts www.ccy.com.au
Queensland Yacht Charters www.yachtcharters.com.au
Whitsunday Private Yacht Charters
www.whitsunday-yacht.com.au

Sample rates	Low	High
Charter Yachts Australia		
Venturer 38 Cat	Aus\$895 pd	Aus\$960 pd
Cumberland Charter Yachts		
Fairway 36	Aus\$2,600 pw	Aus\$4,060 pw
Perry 44.5	Aus\$5,800 pw	Aus\$9,030 pw
Whitsunday Private Yacht Charters		
Sundeck 36	Aus\$430 pd	Aus\$590 pd

5 DALMATIAN ISLANDS

Over a thousand islands make up the Dalmatians, which lie scattered in the Adriatic, broadly parallel to the Croatian coast. They offer an infinite variety of scene and character, and make for an unforgettable charter holiday. Facilities for visiting boaters are good, and getting even better. The

Adriatic is remarkably clean and, unlike some parts of the Med, still teeming with sealife and fish, while the mainland towns and island communities are historic, intriguing and friendly. It's fair to say that parts of the Croatian coastline are a trendy destination these days – it's not

unusual to share an anchorage with a superyacht – and there are signs of ever more companies setting up shop to offer boats for charter. If you are not using a charter broker, it pays to pick an established company and ask for references from someone who has recently returned from holiday.



CROATIA: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	May to August	
Availability of motor boats		7
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		6
Attractiveness		8
Shoreside amenities		6
Ease of access from the UK		7
Total:		68%

Who to go to

Adriatic Holidays www.adriaticholidaysonline.com
Kaiser Yachting www.kaiser-yachting.com eng
Yacht Charter Croatia www.croatia-yacht-charter.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Adriatic Holidays		
Bénéteau Antares 9.8	€2,300 pw	€4,000 pw
Riviera 42	€7,900 pw	€10,900 pw

4 GREECE

The stunning blue waters and skies, stark white architecture and beautiful little waterfront villages that tumble down the mountainous islands summon boaters back to Greece year after year. Those interested in history and culture will find that there are ancient ruins round almost every corner. No wonder it is the most visited charter area in the Mediterranean.

Island groups like the Cyclades are deservedly popular, because you can drop the hook off an idyllic isolated beach in the afternoon and after sunset be enjoying the exclusive nightlife on Mykonos and Paros. The meltemi, the strong northerly winds that arrive in July and August, means that the region is best visited in spring and autumn.



GREECE: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime times	April-June & Sept-Oct	
Availability of boats		8
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		7
Attractiveness		6
Shoreside amenities		6
Ease of access from the UK		9
Total:	72%	

Who to go to
Alpha Yachting www.alphayachting.com
Corfu Yachting www.corfuyachting.com
Kiriacoulis www.kiriacoulis.com
NauticBlue www.nauticblue.com
Odyssey Sailing www.odysseysailing.gr
Vernicos Yachts www.vernicos.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Alpha Yachting		
Bavaria BMB 37	€3,500 pw	€5,495 pw
Sealine 37	€5,180 pw	€6,202 pw
Corfu Yachting		
Carver 356	€2,500 pw	€4,400 pw
NauticBlue		
NauticBlue 362	£2,740 pw	£3,527 pw
Nautic Blue 473	£5,737 pw	£7,988 pw



3 PACIFIC NORTH WEST

The San Juan and Gulf islands easily earn their nickname 'Virgin Islands of the North'. Protected by Vancouver Island, the islands offer short port-to-port passages within the Strait of Georgia and a great variety of onshore entertainment. It can still be showery at any time of year so wet-weather gear is essential. Just north is Desolation Sound, another stunning location for those who want peace, dramatic scenery and an abundance of wildlife. Most companies specialise in trawler-style motor yachts.



PACIFIC NORTH WEST: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	June to September	
Availability of motor boats		8
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		8
Attractiveness		9
Shoreside amenities		6
Ease of access from the UK		6
Total:	74%	

Who to go to
Bellhaven Charters www.bellhaven.net
Blue Pacific Ch'arters www.bluepacificcharters.ca
Charters NW www.chartersnorthwest.com
Cooper Boating www.cooperboating.com
Desolation Sound Yacht Charters www.desolationsoundyachtcharters.com
Ship Harbor Yachts www.shipharboryachts.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Cooper Boating		
Monaro 25	Can\$2,721 pw	Can\$3,024 pw
Desolation Sound Yacht Charters		
Island Gypsy 44	Can\$4,596 pw	Can\$5,295 pw

2 VIRGIN ISLANDS



The Virgin Islands are an easy-to-navigate Caribbean cruising ground where there is always somewhere protected and gorgeous in which to anchor. There are three main groups: the British Virgins Islands (BVIs), the US Virgin Islands, and to the west the Spanish VIs. The myriad of islets and cays provides a superb boating playground. Waterside restaurants and bars are often a short dinghy ride – or swim – away. In the daylight enjoy gentle motoring, gorgeous snorkelling and diving, and stunning beaches. It is generally most convenient to charter from a base in the island group you most wish to explore because the paperwork needed to cross the national boundaries can be time-consuming. Bareboats in Virgin Islands tend to be displacement types – but that's no matter, as you don't want to be going anywhere fast. They vary greatly in age and condition, but there are so many to choose from that there is one to suit every charterer's budget and skill level.

VIRGIN ISLANDS: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	December to June	
Availability of motor boats		9
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		10
Attractiveness		9
Shoreside amenities		6
Ease of access from the UK		6
Total:	80%	

Who to go to
Catamaran Company www.catamarans.com
CYOA Yacht Charters www.cyoacharters.com
NauticBlue www.nauticblue.com
North South Yacht Vacations www.nsyv.com
TMM Yacht Charters www.sailtmm.com
VIP Yachts www.vipyachts.com
Virgin Traders MY www.virgintraders.com

Sample rates	Low	High
NauticBlue		
NauticBlue 382	£2,794 pw	£3,221 pw
VIP Yacht Charters		
Tarquin 59	\$1,150 pd	\$1,465 pd
Virgin Traders Motor Yachts		
Virgin Trader 44	\$4,950 pw	\$6,600 pw
Horizon 56	\$8,085 pw	\$9,250 pw

1 SPAIN

Much of the appeal of Spain is that it's so easy to get to – hop on a cheap flight and a couple of hours later you're there. But that's not all the Spanish mainland and Balearic Islands have in their favour. The coastlines offer an exciting mix of old and new with history reflected in gothic

castles, museums and ancient cobbled streets. Spanish nightlife thrives in tapas bars and portside cafés. Chartering a quality boat could not be easier since a vast choice of makes and models is on offer, with a good availability of key British and Italian marques.



SPAIN: HOW DOES IT RATE?

Prime time	May to October	
Availability of motor boats		10
Suitability for inexperienced boaters		8
Attractiveness		5
Shoreside amenities		9
Ease of access from the UK		10
Total:	84%	

Who to go to
Fairline Menorca www.fairlinemenorca.com
Mallorca Cruising www.mallorcacruising.co.uk
Maritimo Yachts www.maritimoyachts.com
Ocean Drive Ch'ter www.oceandrivecharter.com
Quaysport www.quaysportmenorca.com
Sea Teach www.sea-teach.com

Sample rates	Low	High
Spain Motor Yachts		
Vitesse Yachts		
Vitesse Yachts	www.vitesse-yachts.com	
Voyage Charters		
Voyage Charters	www.voyagecharters.com	
Mallorca Cruising		
Sealine F33	€3,750 pw	€5,725 pw
Fairline Targa 52 GT	€9,950 pw	€12,750 pw
Maritimo Yachts		
Cranchi Zaffiro 34	€4,725 pw	€5,775 pw
Princess V50	€10,200 pw	€12,800 pw
Sea Teach		
Sessa Oyster 42	€6,900 pw	€8,400 pw
Fairline Targa 43	€7,100 pw	€8,500 pw
Spain Motor Yachts		
Sealine S34	€4,300 pw	€5,500 pw



AND THE REST...

We couldn't fit everywhere in to a Top 10, so here's a selection of other destinations that might catch your fancy.

UK
 Adrenaline Sailing: www.adrenalinesailing.co.uk
 Hamble Point Yacht Charters: www.yacht-charter.co.uk
 First Class Nautical: www.firstclassnautical.co.uk

NORTH AMERICA
Chesapeake Bay
 Tred Avon Yacht Sales: www.tays.com/charter.html
North Carolina
 Whittaker Creek Yacht Harbor: www.whittakercreek.com

Canada
 Great Lakes – Canadian Yacht Charters: www.cycnorth.com
REST OF THE WORLD
Seychelles Dream Yacht Charter: www.dreamyachtcharter.com

Thailand
 Thai Marine Leisure: www.thaimarine.com

Turkey
 Travel to Turkey: www.travel2turkey.org

For more charter holidays see the special charter section in our classified section.