



“I'd most like to head south from Chilean Patagonia and push ice around in Antarctica”



The Captain **Richard Felton**

Age: 45 Place of birth: UK Previous yachts: *Lady Christine, Kingdom, Aquel II*
Current yacht: *Montigne* Number of crew: 11

What was your first taste of the sea?

At the age of ten, I found my grandfather's sextant and box-compass in a suitcase in the attic of our house. I used to look at the sun through the smoked glass and despite not knowing much about it, I took them into school for a show and tell. Then in my early twenties, I saw an advertisement in *Yachting World* looking for crew to deliver boats across the Atlantic, and a few weeks' later – after exaggerating my yachting 'experience' – I found myself going offshore for the first time as part of a three-man crew.

Which ports and harbours do you most look forward to visiting?

The marina at Panama City is fun, with giant corvinas swimming around the stern in the underwater lights. I like to fly fish for these magnificent animals and enjoy watching the locals' faces as I release them.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

Sitting at roadside food stalls in South East Asia, drinking a cold beer and eating the freshly cooked local delicacies while watching the world go by. Great value, fantastic food and always something happening.

What's the one place in the world you'd like to cruise to that you haven't already?

The best cruises are often the most difficult to plan, and if I had to choose just one to undertake, I'd most like to head south from Chilean Patagonia and push ice around in Antarctica.

What are the biggest changes you've seen in the industry?

Professionalism. Yacht crew today are better trained and yachts better equipped than when I started out. The important thing is that it's still possible to keep a sense of fun and adventure.

What do you like most about your current yacht?

It has got sails! Everyone smiles the moment the engines are turned off. Guests and crew come alive as they trim the sails and watch boat speed rising.

Which is your favourite on-board toy?

Having a helicopter opens up the whole cruising experience. Sure, they're a headache, but being able to scout out cruising grounds, or organise expeditions to the interior of countries we're visiting is worth the maintenance and regulation. And they look good, too.

What would you change about the industry?

I would like yacht owners to travel more. We, the crew, are ready and waiting! Cruising off the beaten track is much more rewarding.

What's the most curious request you have had from a guest?

Asking a neighbouring boat to move on as they were spoiling the view, and their music was too loud. I sent the most tactful crew member armed with champagne and flowers, and he returned with a dinner invitation. A friendship was born, which involved us spending the rest of the cruise in their company.

What's the worst weather you have encountered on board?

The Golfe du Lion in the Mediterranean throws up a really nasty sea. The short, steep waves are punishing in the extreme. Gales at sea are never much fun, though often quite beautiful.

Who is the most eccentric/strangest/funniest member of your crew?

I am working with a chef who is the heartbeat of the crew. He has an infectious and unique sense of humour, which comes out at the oddest moments.

What's the most stressful part of your job?

Bad weather with few options other than slogging it out; accounting in a hurry; crew changes; and not enough time with my children.

What's the next big thing in yachting?

Self-polishing stainless steel, always-clean windows and engines that don't need fuel. That would be a good start!

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Get the sea time and watch how experienced sailors handle themselves. Remember that every crew member needs to be a part of the team; try to involve everyone.

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

I'd like to have Jimi Hendrix guitar duelling with Stevie ray Vaughn on the aft deck, chat to Captain Scott and Captain Cook about how to motivate crew, and then maybe go fishing with Rex Hunt.

What's the biggest cock-up you've ever seen another captain make?

Watching bareboat charterers in Admiralty Bay, Bequia at the end of their first day on the boat. They're told to drop two anchors and seeing the mess they get into is always good viewing! We invariably have to send one of the yacht tenders over to lend them a hand.

Captain Richard Felton was talking to Frances and Michael Howorth on board Montigne. The yacht is available for charter through Ocean Independence from €140,000pw. www.oceanindependence.com