

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE CRUISING WORLD

The very best cruising destinations the world has to offer Frances & Michael Howorth

WHALES

See the gentle giants in Mexico

Mexico is not the first place most people associate with whale-watching but it is considered one of the best places to see the awesome humpback whale. The start of the season in early April is the best time to go when the Sea of Cortez is teeming with wildlife. *Panache* is a particularly welcoming 33.5-metre Broward available for charter in the area. She carries just six guests in comfort for one of those trips of a lifetime. Captain John Butler tells us: "Honestly, trying to describe the magic of whale-watching is impossible. In the Sea of Cortez in high season, 20-30 individual whales can be seen in a day. Then there's dolphins playing and manta rays jumping out of the water. Jacques Cousteau hit the nail on the head when he referred to the Sea of Cortez as 'the world's aquarium'. Sharing this over and over with people who have never had the experience is always a pleasure. For us, it's like the 'first time' all over again. No wonder my crew love their jobs."

The yacht to see it in: Panache

Available from Fraser Yachts from \$32,000pw.
www.fraseryachts.com



ANTARCTICA

Splendours of the frozen zone

The coldest, driest and windiest continent is strangely alluring to visitors. There are some marvellous places to see: you can swim in the naturally heated waters off Deception Island, take a tender ride into Paradise Harbour to see icebergs freshly calved from the glacier at the head of the bay, or to watch blue-eyed shags nesting on the colourful cliffs. And you won't want to miss the penguin rookeries or the chance to view elephant and fur seals at play. And there's a yacht that you can see all these things aboard: *Sherakhan*. "I have seen many places, but the Antarctic is something truly special and completely apart. When you love nature in all her splendour and want a little bit of adventure then this is surely where you should go. It deserves a place in the highest-ranked charter destinations," says her captain and owner Jan Verkerk.

The yacht to see it in: Sberakhan

Available from Camper & Nicholson's International at €380,000pw. www.camperandnicholsons.com



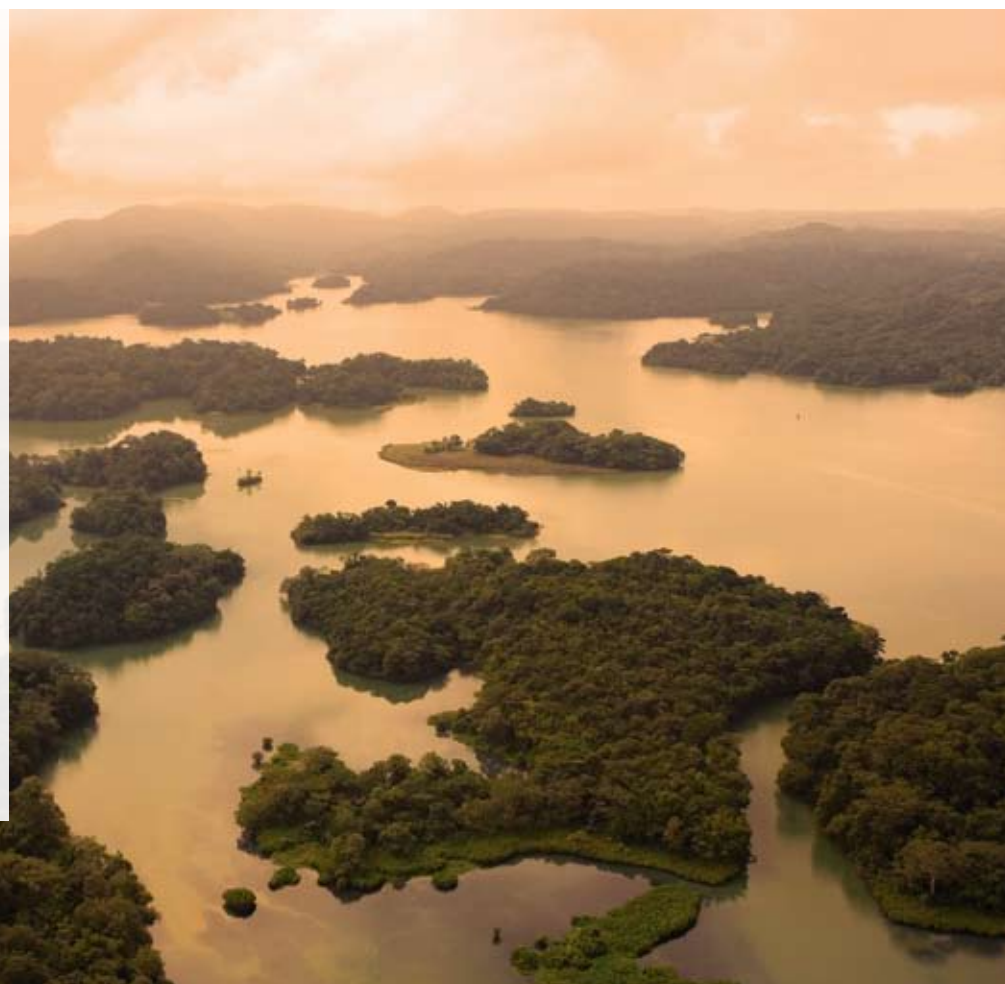
PANAMA CANAL

A wonder of human engineering

This marvel of engineering cuts the distance from New York to San Francisco by water in half. The canal consists of artificial lakes, channels, three sets of locks, and an additional lake that acts as a reservoir. It's a 15-hour passage and the Bridge of Americas is a stumbling block for some of the largest sailing yachts now being built – the term 'Panamax' is often applied to denote a yacht able to pass under it. *Silver Angel*, the new Benetti, will be going through the canal soon after spending the winter in the Caribbean. Look out for the 'mules': the diesel-driven locomotives that pull ships and yachts through the locks.

The yacht to see it in: Silver Angel

This 64.5-metre Benetti is available for charter from Camper & Nicholson's International at €450,000pw. www.camperandnicholsons.com



MARTINIQUE

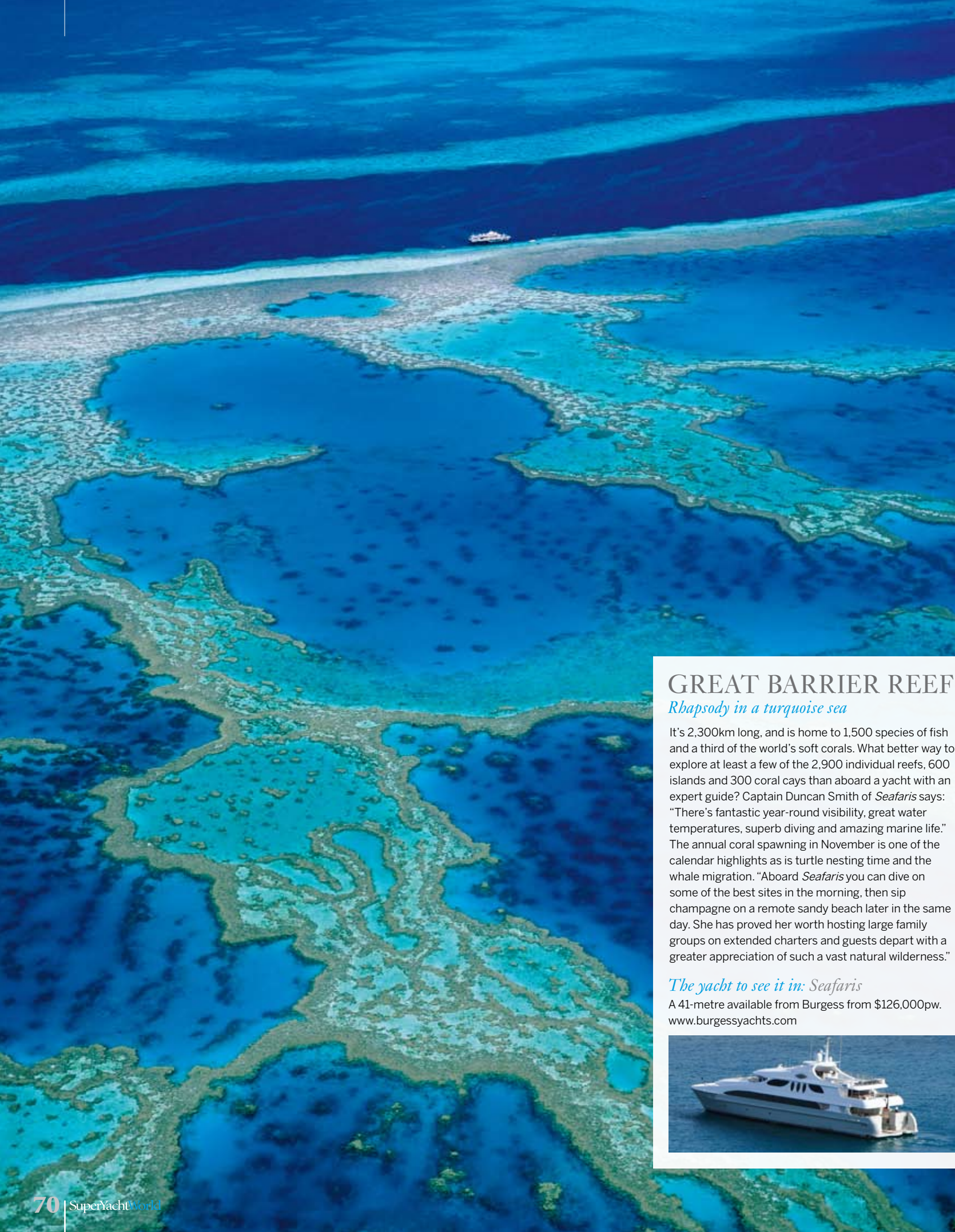
Exploring the wrecks

The island of Martinique is our favourite place in the Caribbean because of its friendly inhabitants and the delights of shopping in the capital of Fort de France. We also love to wander round the old city of Saint-Pierre, a modern-day Pompeii – this thriving place was destroyed by a volcano in 1901. Many wrecks from this catastrophe are there to be explored – especially if you've chartered a yacht like *Mine Games*, with her own sub. J. D. Ducanes, her captain, says: "Martinique is such an interesting place to visit within the safety of our submarine because you are able to view the many

The yacht to see it in: Mine Games

This 50-metre Trinity is available for charter from International Yacht Collection at \$265,000pw. www.iyc.com





GREAT BARRIER REEF

Rhapsody in a turquoise sea

It's 2,300km long, and is home to 1,500 species of fish and a third of the world's soft corals. What better way to explore at least a few of the 2,900 individual reefs, 600 islands and 300 coral cays than aboard a yacht with an expert guide? Captain Duncan Smith of *Seafaris* says: "There's fantastic year-round visibility, great water temperatures, superb diving and amazing marine life." The annual coral spawning in November is one of the calendar highlights as is turtle nesting time and the whale migration. "Aboard *Seafaris* you can dive on some of the best sites in the morning, then sip champagne on a remote sandy beach later in the same day. She has proved her worth hosting large family groups on extended charters and guests depart with a greater appreciation of such a vast natural wilderness."

The yacht to see it in: Seafaris

A 41-metre available from Burgess from \$126,000pw.
www.burgessyachts.com





SOLAR ECLIPSE

The day the sun goes out

A total solar eclipse is an awesome sight wherever you view it from, but nothing beats experiencing it from the deck of a yacht in a memorable location. This year, on Sunday, July 11, it happens along a narrow corridor across the Southern Hemisphere, making little landfall except for some remote islands. Try the Tuamotu Archipelago in French Polynesia, which boasts 41 inhabited islands in 78 coral atolls and a population of just 12,000. Getting there and staying there is best achieved on a yacht – and, of course, once the eclipse is over there are copious other local sights in the region for charterers to enjoy.

The yacht to see it in: Surprise

This 35-metre built by McMullen & Wing is available for charter from 37 South. www.37south.co.nz



EGYPT & THE RED SEA

Ancient wonders

There's already a portfolio of Seven Wonders from the ancient world, and the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt is the only one that today survives substantially intact. Chartering *Alfa XII* will enable you to visit this unique and historic site. With her home port of Jeddah, the yacht and her crew know the area intimately. Guests are flown by private plane from Al Gouna/Hurghada airport, on the west coast of the Red Sea to Cairo in less than 20 minutes: *Alfa XII*'s captain, Leonedis Aslanis, will arrange an expert guide and a private tour. You can also enjoy plenty of the other delights the area has to offer, including diving and snorkelling in the Red Sea.

The yacht to see it in: Alfa XII

This 40-metre ISA is available from Fraser Yachts from €130,000pw. www.fraseryachts.com

