

# GREAT ESCAPE

We caught up with this 47-metre explorer yacht as she cruised the Caribbean last winter. This summer she'll be strutting her stuff in the Med Frances & Michael Howorth





The beauty of discovery yachts is that they are designed with adventure in mind. Their whole ethos is that they seek out tiny bays, scenic coves and spectacular anchorages in which to spend their time. They are so wonderfully self-contained and they do not need to be constantly plugged into the shore power of a modern marina. In true discovery-yacht style, our cruise around the Caribbean aboard the 47-metre *Big Aron* took in not one single port frequented by the enormous cruise ships, nor did we visit a marina. Instead, under the command of Captain Will Kaye, we ventured from one beautiful anchorage to another, escaping the popular haunts and discovering more of the unknown Caribbean. And the good news for anyone thinking of catching some southern European sunshine on charter this summer is that *Big Aron* will be in the Mediterranean all season.

Of course, it's not just about exploring aboard *Big Aron* – there were other things in the mix, too. From the incredible plunge pool on the sky deck to the welcoming interior, this was don't-lift-a-finger luxury with a host of fun extras. Her crew were so utterly hospitable and *Big Aron* has so many appealing features that you won't want to go ashore at all.

Standing on the bridge with the captain, we watched as *Big Aron* slowly and almost silently slid out of Hermitage Bay, Antigua, heading south-west towards Montserrat just as the sun was setting. As her name suggests, *Big Aron* is capacious, but she never feels confined and she carves gracefully through the water. Built in 2004 by Royal Denship in Denmark, she features an interior design by Ole Rune, is fitted with quantum zero-speed stabilisers and was spectacularly refitted in 2006. Accommodation for ten guests is in two king-size and two twin staterooms, each with their own ensuite bathrooms below decks, and a master's suite.

We anchored off Little Bay, the new capital of Montserrat and opted to dine on the bridge deck so we could fully enjoy the views. This island is still recovering from the devastating volcano of 1995. Aboard *Big Aron* the long bar and comfortable seating was perfect for a relaxed dinner, and as the crew fired up the Brazilian barbecue we marvelled at the resilient little island etched out of the star-studded sky.

It's as if *Big Aron* knows what her guests are in search of: sophistication, relaxation and a sense of adventure. She also boasts plenty of spaces on board to retreat to. Nowhere is this more artfully achieved than in the incredible owner's suite. Occupying an entire deck, the owner's suite includes a master stateroom, generous bathroom, walk-in dressing room, private sitting room and office, and comes complete with its own treadmill to work off the calories that the ever-attentive chef has done so much to pile on each mealtime.

Add to this the private exterior dining area and you have a little world to retreat to.

After dinner we discovered another feature: the master suite's Lantic Yacht entertainment system, giving you instant access to music and over 600 movie titles on the hideaway 50in plasma TV screen. In short, we wanted for very little. And if you feel the need to stay in touch with the outside world this yacht is equipped with a comprehensive array of communications devices, including VSat broadband internet, and two VOIP and three satellite telephones.

Next morning, we passed the uninhabited kingdom of Redonda, a mile-long lump of rock that sticks 1,000ft above sea level. We journeyed on north towards Nevis, where we anchored off the capital Charlestown. Sister island to St Kitts, Nevis is teeming with natural beauty and is the perfect cruising ground for a discovery yacht. The day eased by as we dotted from beautiful anchorage to sandy cove, making the most of the toys on board *Big Aron*. Whether you're cruising the Med hotspots or exploring the Caribbean islands, the scuba-diving and snorkelling gear, waterskis, wakeboard and inflatable tubes will ensure many fun-packed afternoons. Other toys include a 10-metre Intrepid, a 7-metre Novurania RIB, and a pair of Waverunners

After playtime was over we made for the coastline of St Kitts, which has expanded its facilities for large yachts with the opening of Port Zante Marina in its capital Basseterre. But the last thing *Big Aron* needs is a marina. Instead, we continued our secluded cruise in private and anchored in White House Bay, a small spot tucked away in the south-west of the island. It's a beautifully unspoilt place, and hiding behind the white sandy beach is a lake formed by the crater of a volcano. White House Bay seemed the perfect spot for a late lunch on the sundeck and with acres of comfortable sunpads adorning the deck, an immense 12-cubic-metre plunge pool and a bar, this really was the place to while away the afternoon.

We sailed overnight up the leeward side of St Kitts and passing St Eustatius to starboard we rounded Saba. Despite the stiff breeze and considerable chop, *Big Aron* motored smoothly on, and we were gently rocked to sleep, cradled in our comfortable bed.

By the next morning we were safely tucked up in our anchorage close to the shores of Saba. This lofty, circular island seems to brush the clouds and as it has no real port or marina it made an appropriate

*In true DISCOVERY-YACHT style we ventured from one beautiful anchorage to another ESCAPING the busier ports*





Facing page, far left:

Hanging out on the bathing platform.

Facing page, far left: *Big Aron's* Intrepid tender is great for exploring.

Left: This season, you can catch up with *Big Aron* in the Mediterranean.

Above from the top:

Another day, another anchorage; the crew busily launch a tender; the interior is a comfortable and relaxing hideaway in the evenings; the fantastic plunge pool is the perfect addition to the sundeck.







**Right:** With five decks *Big Aron* is a palatial retreat offering acres of room for relaxation and a fine diving platform for the brave.

**Above from the top:** Dining on board is an experience in itself. Mouth-watering dishes rival those of the best restaurants ashore; *Big Aron's* interior spaces are the perfect retreat; Michael scans the shore to find the next perfect beach as Captain Will Kaye manoeuvres *Big Aron*; the incredible owner's suite occupies an entire deck.



stop for *Big Aron*. You can only safely visit when the seas are calm, but thankfully they were kind to us, and we were able to observe the white-walled cottages that cling perilously to the hillside – quite a sight. On to Anguilla and a similarly

quiet pace of life. It has no casinos, no cruise ships, no PWCs, no chartered Jumbos and almost no crime, and it is perhaps because of these factors that the island makes such a great place to take a large yacht. Though it may be hard to prise yourself away from the best view in these parts – from up on *Big Aron's* sundeck, in our opinion – be sure to visit Anguilla's Pyrat Rum factory. Rum is one of Anguilla's best-known exports, and inside the tiny factory a handful of dedicated staff blend and bottle this nectar. Visit the tasting rooms and choose between three superb Caribbean rums, including Cask 1623, aged in oak for 23 years.

While some people love St Martin, others turn their nose up at its brash, duty-free commercialism, but it has some great beaches, fabulous hotels, well-supported casinos and an exciting nightlife. With *Big Aron* we were free to roam and find our own secluded spot to drop the hook. Near the famed Le Semaine hotel, run by the same group as the Orient Express, Long Bay offers welcome solace from the noisier parts of the island. This is the cleanest expanse of fine golden sand you are likely to find, and although only tenable as an anchorage when the swell is in the right direction, it is a divine spot.

We left St Martin the following day and headed for the deserted Ile Fourchue just 30 miles away – now a French Marine Park with stunning red-hued rocks and cliff tops. It is in such idylls that *Big Aron* really comes into her own. Whether lounging up on the sundeck, sipping a drink in the sky lounge or relaxing on the private exterior deck of the owner's suite, you are spoilt for choice when it comes to deciding where to take in such vistas.

St Barts has to be the most chic of all the French West Indies. The island's new superyacht docks in Gustavia offer the best port-of-call

for most large yachts but a southerly wind allowed us to anchor instead inside the quieter Baie de St Jean on the island's north coast. Another relaxed dinner of fine seafood treats was topped off by a nightcap in the sky lounge that looked out, that evening, over another wonderfully calm bay.

Few yachts visit Barbuda as many captains are reluctant to tackle the reef-infested waters but its reputation is unwarranted in these days of electronic navigation. Will Kaye guided us skillfully into an anchorage off the southern shores close by the Coco Point Lodge – so exclusive that it even has its own private airstrip. There, early next morning, we boarded our tender and were whisked ashore, landing on the sandy beach where a guide was waiting to greet us. The island has some beautiful areas to explore, a rich history and highlands in the north that offer spectacular views over the Atlantic Ocean. After a hot and dusty day, we were happy to return to the comfort on board, flop into one of the soft sunpads on the sundeck and, with the light breeze cooling us, to let *Big Aron* transport us to our next destination.

Ask anybody who charters and they will tell you that having the finest yacht afloat is worth nothing if the crew are not up to scratch. Aboard *Big Aron* there is no cause for concern. Each and every one of Will Kaye's staff goes that extra mile to make the grade. Helen Austin, the chief stewardess, is the key to the well-run interior, while her chef is a master of the galley and chief officer Ferdi smoothly manages the deck department.

It was just a short hop back to Antigua for our last day aboard, anchored in Carlisle Bay in the shadow of the famous hotel of the same name. *Big Aron* certainly delivers with a design that ensures your every whim is answered and a layout that makes the most of those superb views, you'll be hard pushed to find any reason to go ashore. And with a seeming endless supply of spots where you can lounge, dine and while away the hours, that's no matter.

But time and tide wait for no man or charter party and our floating hotel is a busy lady. She left us to head home while she set off for English Harbour and a 24-hour turnaround before she'd be doing it all again for the next party of lucky guests. **SYW**  
*This summer, Big Aron will be cruising the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, before returning to the Caribbean for the winter charter season.*

## Charter facts

<b>Length</b>	46.68m (153ft 1in)
<b>Beam</b>	10.36m (34ft 0in)
<b>Engines</b>	Twin 820kW (1,100hp) CATs
<b>Cruising speed</b>	13 knots
<b>Guests</b>	10 Crew 11
<b>Summer destinations</b>	Western Mediterranean
<b>Prices</b>	\$150,000 (low); \$195,000pw (high)
<b>Contact</b>	For your nearest Camper & Nicholsons International charter broker call CNI London +44 (0)20 7009 1950 or go to <a href="http://www.camperandnicholsons.com">www.camperandnicholsons.com</a>

*LOUNGING up on the sundeck, sipping a drink in the sky lounge, or relaxing on the private deck, you are SPOILT for CHOICE*



**Left:** Who needs marinas? A self-sufficient *Big Aron* made every nook and cranny of the coast available.

**Above:** The crew on board were exceptional and made this charter an unforgettable experience.