



PROFESSOR FRANCS & MICHAEL HOWORTH

Cruising Greek waters in an elegant sailing yacht with influences from further east





Photo: Alamy



All photos: Frances Hazorth, unless otherwise stated

The skies are CLEAR, the sea is a deep AZURE BLUE. This is yachting in its most GLORIOUSLY natural form



Photo: Alamy

Left: The rugged coast north-west coast of Corfu. Facing page, top: The perfect conditions for *Montigne's* deck spaces. Facing page, left: Under way off Corfu. Below left: Exploring a cave at Ormos Liapadhes. Facing page, below: *Montigne* is a magical sight under sail. Above: Corfu's many historic influences include Venetian forts. Right: The perfect lunch aboard *Montigne*.



Our captain orders the sails unfurled. A fully battened mizzen appears, followed by two furling mainsails and then all three headsails. The engines are shut down and the only sound we can hear is the wind tugging on the sails of *Montigne*, the 57-metre, three-masted, schooner-rigged yacht. We had been under power for most of the morning, cruising from Corfu port, with the coast of Albania a brooding presence to the east shrouded in the morning mist. But now the breeze has chirped up and we are making excellent progress under a cloud-free sky across the creamy-crested azure blue of the Ionian Sea along the coast of Corfu. This is yachting in its most gloriously natural form.

Montigne's owner, who was born in South East Asia and lives in Hong Kong, commissioned her from Turkish builder Aegean Yacht and took delivery early last year. An experienced owner whose previous superyacht was a 46-metre Feadship of the same name (now called *Jana*), he took inspiration from travels on his previous yachts to create his new one, while also drawing on Asian influences for her exterior and interior.

Forward, under the impressively long bowsprit, colourful dragons adorn the bow, leading the yacht's



Montigne facts

Length: 57.00m
(187ft 0in)
Beam: 10m (32ft 10in)
Guests: 12. Crew: 10
Charter and brokerage contact:
Ocean Independence.
Charter rate:
\$140,000-\$161,000pw
Sale price: €16.5 million
www.oceanindependence.com

The coast looks RUGGED and NATURAL, with the LUSH green land sloping to the shore



Photo: Alan

Top: *Montigne* raises her sails in Ormos Liapadhes.
Above: Longos on Paxoi.

stately progress through the water. You'll see two more carved dragons curling around the stern, which is a counter-design style typical of yachts built in Bodrum. Dominating the main saloon is a model of a dragon boat in an illuminated glass cabinet, carved from a single piece of boxwood timber two metres long and a metre tall. Purchased a decade ago at auction in Hong Kong, it features deck upon deck of intricately carved figures, and is a representation of a ship ordered in 640AD by Emperor Yang Guang. Dragons are traditionally believed to be the rulers of the seas and to hint at wealth, so they are a fitting decoration for *Montigne*.

It is noticeable that nothing about the interior of the yacht jars: the artwork is discreet, the colours subdued, mahogany and burlled olive are tastefully applied throughout. The design has broad appeal, so she has the potential to become a successful charter. *Montigne's* expansive teak decks, which could fit 20 people without being crowded, and her generously sized guest rooms – unusual for a sailboat – also add to her charter appeal. The hot-tub on the sundeck is only a two-person although it's set into a plinth that could accommodate a larger plunge pool. However, in the warm waters of the Ionian, that hardly matters.

It seems a while since we left behind the olive groves and cypress trees after breakfast in Corfu, navigating round the top of the island and past the off-lying Erikoussa, Mathraki and Othoni. Pockets of tourist development dot the coast where the terrain permits,

but otherwise things look rugged and natural, with the lush green land sloping down to the shore and forbidding rocky cliffs that change from grey to white as we round the island and head south.

Our destination is one of the two off-lying islands immediately south of Corfu, Paxoi and Antipaxoi. We choose to anchor in Limin Paxos, a cove in front of Paxoi's main town, Gaios. The cove is divided into two by the island of Nikolaos and the narrow shallow channel between them would be ideal to explore by kayak. The main attraction of Antipaxoi, situated just to the south, is that it is hard to reach except by private yacht, so its small beaches and tavernas attract a nautical crowd, especially at weekends.

The yacht's French chef, Christophe, learned the finer points of Asian cooking from masters of the art in Hong Kong, and it has paid off. Dinner is a tartar of fresh crab with preserved ginger followed by lobster in champagne sauce with citrus fruit, and a dessert of warm red fruits in minted syrup and spring rolls stuffed with chocolate truffle. It is the perfect ending to a day on board one of the most welcoming and comfortable yachts we've ever cruised.

Montigne is now based in South East Asia and available for both sale and charter through Ocean Independence. Just look for an elegant yacht with three tall masts. **SYW** Frances and Michael Howorth flew with Olympic Air. www.olympicair.com