



“I learned that office work was bad, going to sea good, and that yachting was the most fun of all!”

The Captain

David Lee

Age: 38 **Place of birth:** Northampton, UK **Previous yachts:** *Abrouq, Montkaj, Chamar* **Current yacht:** *Name not disclosed* **Crew:** 25

What was your first taste of the sea?

Being born in Northampton, the furthest point in the UK from the sea, I chose a rather strange vocation, but my father chartered yachts when I was a child, and perhaps that is where I subconsciously made the decision. I studied Marine Studies at the University of Plymouth with the intention of working ashore in commercial shipping – but I soon learned that office work was bad, going to sea good, and that yachting was the most fun of all!

Which destinations do you most look forward to visiting?

Antibes, our home port for the summer; and Eden Marina in the Seychelles, which is paradise.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

Home!

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

Patagonia. That would be a real contrast of wilderness, temperatures and culture compared to the more usual cruising destinations.

What do you like most about your current yacht?

My crew are a positive bunch, and we have very impressive and distinctive communication domes!

What would your ideal yacht be?

A large explorer yacht with world-cruising capability and an owner who wants to use it to explore the far-flung reaches of the globe.

Which is your favourite on-board toy?

Broken PWCs!

What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

Naval architects and designers need to take into consideration the practical aspects of maintenance in engineering spaces as well as accesses into interior voids, such as deckheads and areas that carry pipework or cable runs. I am not the first to say that sometimes a yacht can be over-engineered, meaning the crew have to destroy interior fittings to get to something that needs attention.

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

Hove-to in the Bay of Biscay for three days in a 50ft sailing boat, then as captain of a sailing yacht I was holed up in Oyster Pond Sint Maarten when Hurricane Bertha passed through. On this yacht I try not to get into any bad weather, but we have tackled the Red Sea northbound with four-metre seas on the nose for two days. We have access to great weather routing and up-to-date forecasts, which helps me keep out of trouble most of the time.

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

All crew have their quirks and we all try to keep the banter and humour going. It is the only way to keep those stressful moments in their box. Someone is always there to lighten the mood.

Who's the most troublesome crew member you've worked with?

I had one I gave second chance to and, when he left, he metaphorically stabbed me in the back.

What's the most stressful part of your job?

With a large entourage on board it is difficult sometimes to filter out what is needed, what is priority and where we are heading.

What's the next big thing in yachting?

Tilt-rotor aircraft, that use the same tiltable rotating propellers, or proprotors, for lift and propulsion.

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Listen to your crew and communicate at all levels even if it is rumour. Better to control the rumour than hear the whispers in the crew mess. Keep an open mind as you don't know everything and never will. Reward your crew with praise when appropriate, and recognise and apologise when or if you step out of line. You are only as good as your crew. Don't raise your voice it is – unless it's windy, of course!

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

Family and friends – what better way to be on the other side of the bar while at work?

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

I saw one leave the controls while manoeuvring into harbour. He stood on the aft deck shouting instructions while the yacht continued moving astern, closing on the dock. Fortunately, his second engineer engaged ahead to stop the collision.

And yours?

When I was a deckhand on a 60-metre yacht, I knocked a MOB smoke float with a fender while the yacht was waiting for a swing-bridge to open. The thick orange haze that produced had the effect of stopping the road traffic on the bridge and brought spectators waiting for something bad to happen. Police eventually came to clear the bridge and we passed through once it opened. The next day was spent polishing orange out of the paintwork while the rest of crew had a jolly good laugh at my expense.

David's yacht is privately run – so private, her name can't be disclosed.