

“Do not expect a crew to work for you: instead, encourage them to work *with* you”

The captain

# Watson da Silva

Age: 53 Place of birth: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Previous yachts: *Excellence, Huntress, Blue Moon*  
Current yacht: *Paraffin* Number of crew: 17



## What was your first taste of the sea?

I first went spearfishing aged nine, then qualified to be a scuba diver at 14. After the second year of my degree I went on a three-month offshore sailing trip, and when three months became 18 months I realised I was probably not going back to college.

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

I remember a time when we crewed charter yachts just in swimming shorts, and the guests and crew all just joined in the fun. Now the boats are bigger, crews are more professional and safety conscious, and as captain I am responsible for the safety of up to 30 people at a time. When I started that number was at most eight.

## What do you like most about your current yacht?

I have been here for four years and I know the boat's history and how she reacts when I ask her to do something. I appreciate the owners and their attitude towards superyachting, and I admire all the effort put in during the yacht's construction by her build captain.

## What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

I love to chill in Basil's Bar in Mustique, especially during the Blues Festival, but my favourite is Le Select in St Barts – I remember it from the early days when I'd see Jimmy Buffett strumming his guitar there.

## Which is your favourite on-board toy?

I love my windsurfing board and my bicycle: they keep me fit and give me time to myself. Guests love the diving equipment.

## What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

I would like to see charter brokers cut their commissions to below the usual 15-20% when they ask a yacht owner to reduce the fee and expect crew to work without receiving a gratuity. Sales brokers do that to facilitate a sale, so why don't charter brokers follow suit?

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

We once had a lady on board for 12 days who wanted to change the position of all the paintings. We had to explain to her she was just renting the boat, not buying it!

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

I was off Cape Hatteras in a 23-metre sailing boat that was surfing down the waves. For 36 hours, all I could see in front and behind were waves, so when I saw the horizon I was very grateful. Also, once on a large motor yacht we hit by a freak wave that caused the dishwasher and trash compactor to move from one side of the mess to the other.

## Who was the funniest crew member you've worked with?

My crew are all great, but the second officer has a good bank of jokes and a wicked sense of humour. Sometimes I call him 'the Joke' – and sometimes 'the Jerk'!

## What's the most stressful part of your job?

Playing the role of daddy to 16 crew. Many years ago I had a crew member jump over the side in a state of distress. I was so lucky to find him, barely alive but wanting to be rescued.

## What's the next big thing in yachting?

Greener and more environmentally friendly boats. I believe that owners and guests want superyachts that pollute the sea and the air less, and we professional seafarers would like our seas cleaner as well.

## Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Do not expect a crew to work for you. Instead, encourage them to work *with* you. Give them time off, and if you leave the boat don't expect them to carry on working as hard while you are away!

## Who would be your top fantasy charter guests?

The Rolling Stones: I met Mick Jagger once in Mustique and would like to chat some more. However, I am happy to have any guest on board who really appreciates how hard my crew work to make their time with us so very special.

## What's the biggest cock-up you've seen a captain make?

I was mate engineer on a yacht in Antigua. When we went to leave the dock at the St James Club, we let go the lines and the captain became anxious that the yacht was not steering well. As it was blown towards shallow water, he shouted at me that I had forgotten to start the steering motors. I ran to the engine room to make sure I had, and realised he had forgotten to start the main engines from the bridge before we left.

## And yours?

One balmy night lying at anchor in Bequia a long time ago, I decided to save time and leave the awning up overnight. But a squall blew up and the awning acted like a sail. We sailed quickly through the anchorage, waking up several crews aboard other yachts as we bumped our way past. I learned a great deal that night.

Captain Watson da Silva was talking to Frances and Michael Howorth on board Paraffin. The yacht is available for sale at €44.8 million and for charter through Fraser Yachts from \$360,000pw. [www.fraseryachts.com](http://www.fraseryachts.com)

