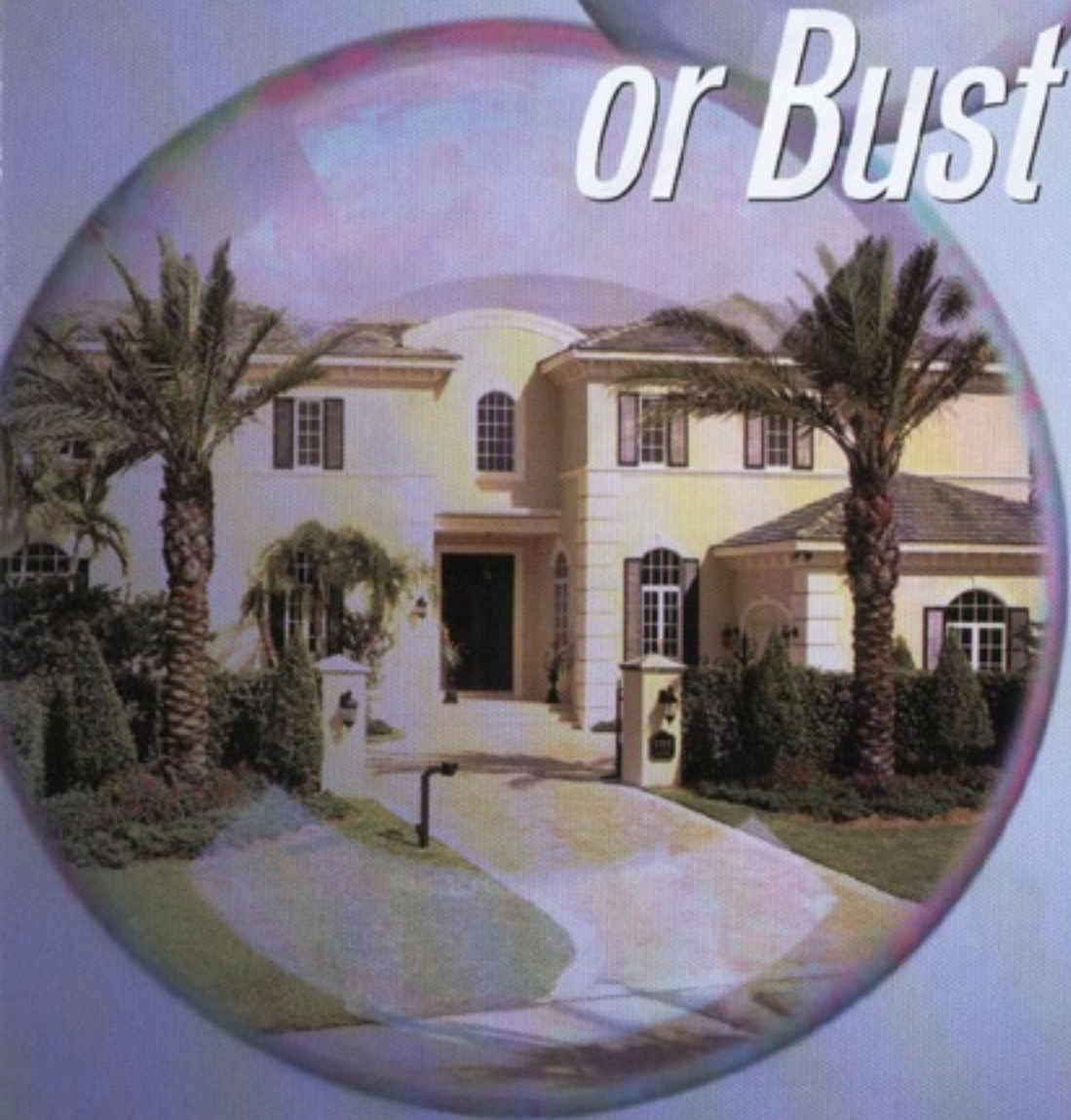


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ALL at SEA

Charter a megayacht and discover
a higher echelon of luxury vacations

BY MAGGIE ESPINOSA

LURED BY THE OPULENT MOTOR-YACHTING SCENE, a San Diego businessman chartered a 115-foot Benetti for three weeks off Italy's Amalfi Coast. Total cost: \$305,000.

"My wife and I have been going to the south of France for 20 years, and we would always see the luxury yachts," says the businessman (who requested anonymity). "We said we'd like to charter one someday. So we made it happen."

The couple contacted Fraser Yachts Worldwide on San Diego's Shelter Island. They were flown to Monaco by the charter company to see the *M/Y Nansabee*. After meeting the captain, interviewing the onboard chef and reviewing the itinerary, plans were made to take the vacation they'd imagined for two decades.

Their megayacht came with six crew members, a master suite (including his-and-her whirlpool tubs), four guest staterooms, a main salon, dining area, full galley, sundeck Jacuzzi, two Waverunners, two kayaks, water skis and fishing gear. Two 1,800-horsepower Mercedes engines propelled the consummate beast through the azure Mediterranean Sea. Stops included Capri and Sicily.

The Italian coast offered the couple—and their guests—numerous out-of-the-way coves to utilize the-supplied water toys. Or to relax on the aft deck and take in theatrical sunsets. A few evenings were spent investigating the local cuisine on shore, but most meals were prepared and served onboard.

"Vacations at sea," says David Roscow, a charter broker for Fraser Yachts, "are becoming increasingly popular. There is no place left in the world where you have control of your destiny like chartering a boat. The itinerary and food are tailored to your whims."

Megayachts have become the latest show of unabashed wealth. To qualify as "mega," a boat is usually 100 feet or longer. By some standards,

though, 100 feet is puny. The 280-foot *M/Y Annaliese* accommodates 36 guests and 34 crew members. She summers in the Mediterranean and winters in the Caribbean. Her opulence includes five decks, two master staterooms, 15 guest/crew staterooms, an LCD TV in each room, a medical center with nurse, business center, library, children's playroom, cinema, pool, fitness center, hair-and-nail salon and a helicopter deck. A one-week charter is \$826,000—not including fuel and food; tack on another 25 percent for those incidentals. Oh, and another 10-20 percent to tip the crew.

ROSCOW'S NAUTICAL PASSION runs deep. He's the chairman of Pacific Super Yacht Promotions, which produces San Diego's annual YachtFest. The world's most exclusive superyachts are displayed along San Diego Harbor for this four-day extravaganza in September.

Besides Fraser Yachts, other big names include Camper & Nicholson's International (CNI), Edmiston and Interpac Yachts Inc.

"The bigger the boat, the easier it is for us to charter," says Sara Montefiore, general manager of CNI's Fort Lauderdale office. "We do corporate events, too. They're very popular for the Cannes Film Festival."

Montefiore's most-desired "small" boat is *Java*. Built in 1990 and refitted in 2003, this 121-foot Broward holds 10 guests in five staterooms. As with all megayachts, the requisite water toys garnish the boat bridge. At \$45,000 a week, *Java* is booked year round.

Most charter companies now have offices in San Diego, Los Angeles, London, Monaco, Mexico and France. Paige Hemstad, who heads the Carlsbad branch of Edmiston, says, "Privacy is a big issue when chartering these yachts."

A high-powered clientele requests anonymity. Hemstad says relatively few Hollywood stars charter yachts. It's mostly businessmen. The average customer is a male between 45 and 60, traveling with his family.

Interpac Yachts is a relatively small company in the business. Beverly Parsons runs a "two-woman-show" across from the San Diego Yacht Club on Shelter Island. She and her assistant lease boats throughout the world. They match clients with the perfect yacht in Europe, Mexico and the Caribbean. "We sell dreams," says Parsons.

The helipad on the
M/Y Annaliese





The M/Y Anneliese aft dining area

Apparently, not many dream of cruising in Mexico. When renting south of the border, passengers fly to Puerto Vallarta, La Paz or Acapulco to meet the yacht. But Mexican prices are inflated, she says, and it's not a desirable destination.

In general, the summertime boating "hubs" are New England and Europe. In winter, it's the Caribbean.

Booking requires a 50 percent deposit. Final payment is due 30 days prior to departure. A questionnaire is handed out ahead of time, asking for passenger names, passport numbers, transportation needs, food-and-beverage preferences, special occasions while on-board, desired activities and music.

ONCE A GUEST ARRIVES at the destination, he or she can prepare for nonstop cosseting by the captain and crew. Quality is paramount. Mediocrity has no place.

"When designing a megayacht, it's aesthetics first, practicality second," says Patti Palanza, owner of Walker Interiors on Shelter Island. Palanza decorates some of the more lavish boats in the world. "Owners know they'll probably have their boat for five years, so they go for the look."

Most charter boats are privately owned, and rented out a few months a year as a write-off. In the maritime world, BOAT is an acronym for "Break Out Another Thousand."

Working in conjunction with Palanza's team is Doug Sharp, a naval architect and owner of Sharp Design. "The charter market has blossomed—150, 160 and 170 feet are primary sizes. When designing a motor yacht, I'm looking at what the boat will do in its first life [owned] and its second life [chartered]."

Though chartering a megayacht may be an elusive dream for some, those fortunate enough to seize the fantasy ascend to the pantheon of the American dream. ■



The M/Y Nanseabee

Charter Options

Camper & Nicholsons
International
954-524-4250
cncconnect.com

Edmiston & Company, LLC
619-850-8484,
310-777-6535
edmistoncompany.com

Fraser Yachts Worldwide
619-225-0588
fraseryachts.com

Interpac Yachts, Inc.
619-222-0327
interpacyachts.com

Jada Royale
619-236-9211
royalyachtcharters.com

Sabbatical Yachts
& Charters, LLC
480-540-6461

YachtFest
858-836-0133
integratedsportsinc.com

