

# Introduction

---

*“Thirty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the things you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”*

Mark Twain

When I was twenty years old I was told a story that changed my life. The year was 1995 and the storyteller was the relief captain on a local day cruise boat that I was working on to pay my tertiary fees and all the associated costs of being twenty. The captain Cecil Pittrese, or Cesspit as he was affectionately known on the waters, was on four week’s paid leave from his permanent job on a 160ft luxury yacht—a first mate’s position—and was filling in on that particular day for ‘a bit of extra drinking money’. Or so he said. Yet, knowing now what he would have been getting paid as first mate on a 160ft yacht, I think the fact a group of taut and tanned aerobic instructors had chartered the boat that very day may have been his real motivation.

Anyway, Cecil’s story went something like this: he had landed a job on a yacht owned by one of the wealthiest men in the world, a man who had made millions out of the dotcom boom, and the crew were in the final day of a five day break in the Greek Island of Santorini—doing nothing but waterskiing, diving, mopeding and generally running amok—when a phone call came through that Cecil answered. It was the owner. The Cannes Film Festival was on the following week and he wanted the yacht there so he could throw an after-party onboard for a few dozen of his closest A-list celebrity friends.

“Would that be possible?” the owner had asked Cecil.

“Would that be possible?” Cecil had rolled his eyes at me in the retelling. “We’re talking supermodels and superstars here Jenn, a mega event with mega, mega tips. I was ready to lift the passeraill as he spoke,” he said.

But that wasn’t the end of their conversation. The owner had a special request. He was already in Cannes, staying in a \$37,200 a night penthouse suite at Hotel Martinez with his young son, and he wanted Cecil to come and join them.

“To teach the kid how to ski.” Cecil had grinned at me. “Can you believe it?”

I couldn’t. This man, this dotcom billionaire, was so rich that Cecil had barely had time to pack before an Apache powerboat arrived to



[Click Here to Order Online](#)

whisk him to a neighboring island's airport where an awaiting Learjet flew him to Cannes International where a chauffeur ushered him to a Mercedes stretch limousine that took him along the Boulevard la Croisette to the Hotel Martinez, where a 2,000 square feet penthouse suite awaited him, complete with four bedrooms, marble spas, a sweeping view of the Mediterranean Sea, and a fully-stocked, fully-paid-for bar.

"I felt like a rock star," Cecil said while I listened with appropriate awe.

This was just one of many stories Cecil told me that day, a story no more astounding than any other in its extravagance, but it is the one I remember most vividly, for it was during its telling that a realisation had hit me. A rock star lifestyle with rock star wages; vast travels and endless money; sun, sea and travel; celebrities and tycoons: suddenly the sea was beckoning and Cecil, seeing what he called 'the first ripples in my eyes', was quick to pre-empt my next question.

"You want to do this," he said matter-of-factly and I nodded.

"But would that be possible? I mean, without experience," I said but Cecil merely smiled at an aerobics instructor walking by in a string bikini and, in lieu of an answer, said, "Are those things for real?"

I glanced absently at the girl's breasts. I hadn't a clue, but it didn't matter. I didn't need assurance from Cecil: I'd already made up my mind. I had to go and explore this world he had described. I had to see and smell and breathe it. And later that day, I realised, I wasn't the only one Cecil had inspired.

My younger brother Rob, who worked with me onboard, had also heard the stories and was also well and truly hooked. In fact, just six months later, at the tender age of nineteen, he set off to Fort Lauderdale on a whim and mum's anxious prayers. Seven months later, and twenty grand richer, he was back for four week's fully-paid holiday with a huge smile, a mass of photos and a constant stream of exotic tales.

That was it for me. Two weeks into Rob's holiday I quit my job and convinced my then-boyfriend David to do the same. We found someone to take over our lease, stored our furniture at my parents' place, and used the money we had saved for a deposit on a house to buy ourselves two backpacks and two airline tickets to America.

A fortnight later I was on the plane, David on my right, Rob on my left, and a smile on my face that can now only be described as blind optimism. For I was young and naïve and not the least bit concerned with the thought of not finding a job, let alone niggly incidentals like visas and vaccinations and travel insurance and taxation matters. Yet,



in retrospect, it was these ‘incidentals’ that I should have sorted out from the start.

*Oh, the wisdom of hindsight.*

Certainly, David, Rob and I went on to have long, exciting and fun-filled careers in the yachting industry—David is now a captain and the director of Kiwi Marine, a company that specialises in yacht refits and labour allocation, Rob met his beautiful wife on a yacht and returned home to start a business, and I spent seven years at sea, circumnavigating the world twice and visiting over fifty countries. I’ve ridden camels through Egypt, elephants in Thailand, donkeys in Greece, and whale sharks in the Coco Islands. I’ve had front row seating at everything from the Monaco ballet to a traditional island dance in Micronesia. I’ve dived with hundreds of sharks and dined in world renowned restaurants. I’ve piloted planes and powerboats and longtails, and driven everything from formula ones to tuk-tuks.

Yet, before I landed my first job on a yacht, my journey was far from smooth sailing. In fact, from the moment we landed in the US, my lack of preparation began to haunt me. There were problems finding decent accommodation and setting up non-resident bank accounts, there were unexpected and costly medical fees, and major difficulties getting resumes prepared. There was an expensive trip to Barbados to get the correct visas when my tourist one expired, not to mention the stress of convincing US customs not to throw me out of the country on my return. Then later, when I joined my first yacht and my bank account grew rather quickly, there were more problems with my US bank account and the complicated tax laws back home in Australia.

That is why I have written this book: to provide you, the reader, with a manual packed full of precisely the information I wish I had been given when I began yachting. Whether you are looking for a change of career, an extended holiday or a bit of day work to pay for further adventures, this comprehensive guide will provide you with everything you need to know to land a job.

Yes, you could do this too! You could get paid to travel the world. There has never been a better time to join this lucrative industry. There have never been more jobs available. In fact, according to International Yacht Master Training, in 2006 there were 17 miles (27km) of new yachts over 80ft (24mtrs) under construction in 25 different countries throughout the world and it is estimated that 5,700 new crew will be required to fill these positions throughout 2007. Opportunities abound for those that are willing to take a chance.

So if you have ever dreamt about travelling the world and enjoying expense-free living while getting paid great money to do it now is the



perfect time. With the right attitude and the practical advice outlined in this book you too can turn your dream into a reality. And if working on a luxury yacht is indeed what you desire, the opportunities are there for the taking.

As my favourite captain used to say, "Our future is in our hands. We cannot direct the wind...but we can adjust the sails.' So if the wind of change is blowing your way, grab this book and rig your sails. A world of adventure awaits you. Now it's entirely up to you to grasp it.



**[Click Here to Order Online](#)**

# 1 What is a luxury yacht?



*“There is a great pleasure in building a luxurious toy with which to express one’s dreams and aspirations, the pleasure of owning a super or megayacht made to measure for oneself.”*

Article in *Nautica* by Tommaso Nastasi

A luxury yacht can be motor or sail and range from 80ft (24m) up to the size of a mini cruise ship. In yachting circles they are referred to as superyachts or megayachts, but to the common observer they are typically referred to as ‘those big white boats’. Yet not all big white boats are the same. Even amongst experienced yachties there is debate about what differentiates a superyacht from a megayacht. And with yachts 260ft (80m) and larger becoming more common and more luxurious, these days even the line between megayacht and cruise boat is becoming blurred.

Personally though, I regard yachts sized 80ft (24m) to 260ft (80m) as super and anything larger than that as mega, provided of course they meet the lavish standards of a luxury yacht. Hence, that excludes cruise ships such as the *P & O*, the *Princess*, and even the predominantly owner-occupied *The World* which, although expensively furnished, lacks the prestige and distinction of true affluence. For it is immense, almost unimaginable, wealth that makes luxury yachts what they are: virtual floating palaces that generally exceed the standards of even the most exclusive five-star establishments. It is these elite standards that set them apart, and it is this distinction that comes at a price.

Truth is, luxury yachts can cost anywhere from a few million US dollars for a small second-hand fixer-upper to a reported US \$270 million for Larry Ellison’s 452ft (138m) state-of-the-art megayacht *Rising Sun*. Some are decked-out with every mod con and big boy toy imaginable, from widescreen plasma screens and hyperbaric dive chambers to submarines and helicopters, while others are sleek and minimalist. Some interiors are breathtakingly stylish, others so opulently furnished they look tacky (after all, money doesn’t buy good taste). But the one thing all luxury yachts have in common is their extraordinary upkeep costs.

In fact, every year luxury yacht owners must spend approximately ten per cent of the purchase price to keep their yachts sparkling and their crew happy. For an average \$US50 million dollar superyacht that is a staggering five million dollars annually simply for essentials like



[Click Here to Order Online](#)

fuel, maintenance, docking fees, and crew salaries and allowances, let alone the added costs if the yacht is due a refit. Hence, they are the ultimate symbol of wealth, afforded by only the seriously wealthy.

‘So who owns these yachts?’ you may ask, and the answer is as diverse as the yachts themselves. Some are owned by movie stars and royalty, others by politicians, business tycoons or their fortunate heirs, and still others are tax-deductible investments that are chartered out to the privileged few who can afford it. Just as diverse are the owners’ personas. Some value privacy above all else, and embrace the solitude and isolation a luxury yacht allows them. Others are exhibitionists who love nothing more than to flaunt their latest ‘toy’, while still others use their yachts solely to pursue passions like deep sea fishing or exploratory diving.

In short, luxury yachts and the people that own them come in many guises. Right now, more than a hundred yachts in all shapes and sizes are being built by owners with different needs and desires. Each of these yachts will be built to exact specifications and destined for unique locations, and all will need crew that ‘fit’. So the two questions a potential crewmember should be asking is, ‘what do I need to know to *fit* a yacht?’ and ‘what yacht best *fits* me?’

Throughout this book I will address these questions in detail and by the end you will not only have the answers you seek, but also the knowledge and confidence to ask the right questions to get what you want. So let’s begin with the basics: yacht categories, and the pros and cons of each.

## Sailing vs motor yachts

A Small Ships Manual on my bookshelf defines motor or sail as ‘the preferred method by which a vessel travels whilst underway’, which is of course correct. However, the thing I’ve more often heard is that a preference for sailing or motor yachts defines a person, which is perhaps not so correct.

Certainly there is an element of romance and freedom associated with sailing: the wind in your hair as you slice through the ocean, the taste of salt on your lips, the feel of sun against your skin, and the only sound that of waves lapping against the bow as you become one with nature, both in command of it and at its mercy. Sailors are seen as rugged and courageous adventurers, and sailing as both graceful and challenging. But, just as motor yachts have their fair share of true seamen onboard, sailing yachts are not the exclusive domain of old salty dogs.



In fact, I've known sailing yacht crew who refer to the ocean as 'a necessary evil' and count down the seconds until they reach their next port, just as I've worked with motor yacht crew who spend every possible moment relishing the beauty and volatility of the ocean, even when it is at its most volatile. And though many sailors routinely call motor yachts 'stinkboats' and many motor crew regard sailors as just plain stinkie, it is mostly in jest, especially considering that a great many crew have worked on both types of yachts. After all, a crewmember is a crewmember no matter what their preferred mode of transport is. And though some duties may differ between sailing and motor vessels (and from vessel to vessel for that matter), other things, like crew hierarchies and job titles, are identical.

What's more, with some modern motor yacht owners embracing informality and some new sailing yachts being built to motor yacht specifications, the lines between sail and motor are increasingly becoming blurred. Whereas motor yachts were once considered formal to the point of stuffy, today it is not out of the ordinary to see motor yacht crew wearing casual uniforms and interacting with owners and guests in a manner so relaxed that they are hard to distinguish from the very guests they are paid to look after. Likewise, I've worked on a sailing boat that never once 'set sail', despite the fact that it had four masts and the wind direction and speed made for ideal conditions, because the owner only wanted the sails hoisted when there was an audience to impress.

However, despite these emerging trends, there are still distinct pros and cons inherent to both sailing and motor vessels, and it is these that a potential crewmember must consider closely when deciding what type of yacht best fits them. So let us have a look at these factors in detail.

