

'THE BEST TIME I EVER HAD ON A WINTER CHARTER'

3 leading charter brokers discuss their all-time favorite experiences.

One perk of being a charter broker is getting invited aboard yachts for a few days of cruising, sampling the cuisine and meeting the crew. Top brokers get to have extraordinary experiences in destinations where most yachts don't go: They get the invitations to the best insider parties around the world, so to speak.

The following three charter brokers have had the good fortune to enjoy the best of the best opportunities. Of everything they've seen and done during decades on the water, these are their singularly best memories.



MISSY JOHNSTON, NORTHROP-JOHNSON YACHT CHARTERS NEWPORT
The Galapagos Islands, aboard the 124-foot (34-meter) Picchiotti Stella Maris

I found the Galapagos to be extraordinary. Because the wild marine and bird life is so unafraid, given their limited exposure to humans, we were able to sit right next to a sea lion who had just given birth. We watched the sea lion pup nurse for the first time. The mother moved, because another young pup came over and wanted a snack as well; she reared up and, with her nose, pushed the other pup away.

We were watching all of that, and we were also watching on the beach. Once the pup is a little bit older, the pups stay on shore, trying to be hidden, and mom has to go out and search for food. They can be gone a day or two. We watched one sea lion pup as her mother was returning. The pup was calling out for the mother, and in the waves, the mom was surfing in. It was really quite something. And it's terrific because you have the naturalist with you, explaining the entire thing and all the dynamics of why the pup is on the shore, hidden in the seaweed and undergrowth, waiting for the mom to come surfing in.

Then at a different anchorage, the juvenile sea lions love to play in the volcanic formations from where the lava hits the water. There are a lot of caverns and tunnels above and below the water. The juveniles love to play hide and seek, and they include people in the games. I swam over—you really shouldn't ever touch the wildlife—but I got to be there, and we had three juvenile sea lions, and they were frolicking and playing in and out of the tunnels and caves. They saw me and came over, and I had to swim backwards because one of the sea lions got right in my face. It wanted to sniff my snorkeling mask. It just wanted to play. I was part of its playtime. That went on for about 20 minutes. You could swim and swim with them.

It was the coolest and the most interactive experience of anywhere I've been.

ENTICING ONBOARD AMENITIES

WaveRunners and inflatable slides are timeless for on-the-water smiles, but sometimes, it's the onboard amenities that shine.

SPORT COURTS

What could be more fun than catching the big match alfresco style on the aft deck flat-screen TV? Playing that match yourself. While many yachts offer gyms and exercise equipment, sport courts are coming in vogue



among some superyacht owners, with bowling alleys, basketball half-courts and tennis courts now being integrated into yacht design. Game, set, match.

THEATERS

When it comes to cinemas on a superyacht, there really isn't a bad seat in the house. At the end of a sun-drenched day of water sports or exploring, there's no better way for a large family to unwind than with a themed 'movie night' that the crew hosts. Full-blown movie theaters are are regu-