

A high-angle, perspective shot of a wooden yacht's deck. The deck is made of light-colored wood planking and features a stainless steel railing. In the foreground, there are several large, white, rectangular cushions. A white cooler is secured with black straps on the deck. The yacht is on a calm blue lake, with a forested shoreline visible in the background under a soft, golden sunset sky.

CAST OFF

Ready to explore a new port aboard a crewed charter?
These boats are just right for your first time.

By Kim Kavim

Standing at the helm while cruising in a new locale definitely has its moments. You get to look out toward the horizon and enjoy a sense of solitude that simply can't be found on land. Now, imagine that experience without having to keep an eye on the chartplotter or figure out why the engine just started making a strange noise. That's the beauty of a crewed yacht charter. You get all the fun parts of boating without the headaches. There's a captain at the helm, so you can actually look at the scenery instead of catching a glimpse as you cruise past it. And because there's a chef cooking meals, a deckhand offloading water toys and crew taking care of everything else, your only job becomes stretching out and relaxing. Quite a few options exist for those who want to try a crewed charter. Granted, the expense is a splurge, but know that some boats can be chartered in the same per-person price range as high-end cruise ship or a house rental in Nantucket. And yes, the captain will often let you take the wheel, if you just can't help yourself. Here are crewed yachts leading brokers recommend in beautiful locales.



Dubrovnik Aboard *Libra*

Charter bookings in Croatia skyrocketed this past summer when *Game of Thrones* fans realized the HBO blockbuster was ending. The series has long filmed in Croatia, and specifically along the part of the coast from Split to Dubrovnik where charter yachts cruise. Walking through some of the towns with ancient stone walls and buildings can feel like strolling along a mystical Hollywood set.

"This is a comfortable cruising area with semi-protected waters and many islands, anchorages and ports to visit," says Missy Johnston, who owns Northrop-Johnson Yacht Charters in Newport, Rhode Island. "A charter can be done in either direction between Split and Dubrovnik. And there are two UNESCO World Heritage sites in this cruising area, which are Diocletian's Palace in Split, and Old Town in Dubrovnik. In addition, there are medieval walled towns, beautiful scenery, boutique wineries, farm-to-table peka bell cuisine and klapa singing."

Motorsailers called gulets are regularly offered for charter here. They originally were built for carrying cargo, so they have wide decks and surprising stability for hulls with sails. On board, they feel more like catamarans than monohull

powerboats. Gulets tend to rock and roll a lot less than performance sailboats. One of Johnston's favorite gulets in Croatia is the 113-foot *Libra*. English is spoken on board, she says, and the staterooms are roomy with ensuite heads.

"The captain and mate are brothers and own the gulet. They do an excellent job," she says. "There are two other crew. Each winter, like all Croatian gulets, the family works on board on maintenance, including varnish and new projects to keep the boat updated."

Given the crew's local knowledge, Johnston says, charter itineraries can include popular waypoints such as the Old Town in Dubrovnik, the island of Mljet, the Old Town in Korcula, Hvar, Brac, the Old Town in Trogir and Split. At each of these locations guests have the chance to swim, relax and use the boat's water toys in beautiful waters. You can also hire guides to tour historic locations, hike and bike. There's night life, too. njcharters.com

LOA: 113'
 Staterooms: 6
 Guests: 12
 Lowest weekly base rate: \$18,500



Libra is a classic gulet motorsailer that was built in 1997 and refit in 2014. She's made of mahogany. Two of the six staterooms are large enough to be considered masters.