




Living

Wind in your sails; (clockwise from main) cruising around the Ionian islands in Greece; Cannes harbour; The Lugger Hotel in Cornwall; onboard the *Provident* in the Outer Hebrides; sailing in Spitsbergen, Norway  
J BELGERS

# A life on the ocean waves

**Travel** If Cowes Week is floating your boat, why not experience the thrill of a European sailing holiday? **Rhiannon Batten** steers you on the right course

## What's the attraction?

Jackie Onassis, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, Brad and Angelina... gliding around sparkling waters has stellar appeal. Yet you need not have the funds of a movie star or tycoon to enjoy a sailing holiday. For many, the allure isn't just feeling the wind in your hair and the exhilaration of watching the sea slip by, but the escape from technology combined with the means to explore a region in just a week or two.

With little else to do but sleep, read or swim, it's the perfect way to put the wind back in your own sails. Seeing a country from the water gives you a fresh perspective on a destination – and one that's gained without queuing in traffic or fighting for space on the sand. If a beach is busy you can simply sail on to another. And when the landlubber in you takes over, pull into port and shop, eat or stroll around before taking to the waves once more.

## Riviera style

France's Mediterranean coast is dotted with marinas and harbours, from chic Monaco to cheerful Pézenas, the port for Montpelliér Essential Sailing has fully crewed one-week trips along the French Riviera (0845 653 0126; [www.essentialsailing.com](http://www.essentialsailing.com)). They start and end at the firm's base at La Napoule, calling at ports such as Menton, St-Tropez and Cannes. Prices, excluding flights or trains, start at £1,150

per person based on six sharing, including transfers, onboard accommodation, most meals and drinks.

From November, crewed trips are also offered around Tenerife and La Gomera in the Canary Islands.

## Grand designs

You'll need your darkest shades and whitest attire to step aboard the *Beluga*, the 28-metre Turkish gulet belonging to the designer and hotelier

Anouska Hempel. Until October the vessel is available for charter along the coastlines of Croatia and Montenegro through Dalmatian Destinations (09333 700 8007; [www.dalmatiandestinations.com](http://www.dalmatiandestinations.com)). Remodelled to Ms Hempel's own spec (stylish touches include black sails), it comes with three *en suite* double cabins, a single cabin and a crew of five, including a chef and butler from Blakes hotel in London. A week starts at €35,000 (£31,000) for





Utracks' (0845 241 7599; www.ustracks.com) new Ionian Islands Bike and Sail trip is the answer for anyone who thinks they might suffer from cabin fever with a full week on board a ship. Steering travellers from island to island between Corfu and Kefalonia, the itinerary alternates between time ashore exploring fishing villages and historic sites by bike with time on the boat to swim or lie out on deck.

Prices start at £1,350 per person for eight days, including accommodation, most meals, activities and transfers but not flights. There are four planned departure dates between 27 August and 22 October this year.

**Light up**

European sailing holidays aren't just a summer-only activity; take, for example, the autumn expedition on the 1910-built *Noorderlicht* schooner. Setting sail for the Arctic, around Spitsbergen, in Norway, the trips are timed to coincide with the onset of winter – and, hopefully, clear, dark night skies – giving travellers a good chance of seeing the Northern Lights. Passengers are also encouraged to try their hand at sailing.

During the day guests can keep an eye out for wildlife. Though the boat is comfortable, beds are bunks and bathroom facilities are shared. Prices start at £2,350 per person including flights, full-board and guided excursions (01285 880980; steppetravel.co.uk). There are four departures this year, between 26 September and the end of October, each with good availability.

**What Google will tell you...**

"I recall with particular fondness a visit we made to the Hebrides when I was competing in the Round Britain and Ireland race a couple of years back. This is a place that suits my kind of cruising: solitude and peace, but now and again, there is somewhere you can be sure of tying up your boat and enjoying a quiet dram and a bit of yarn." – Yacht-racing veteran Pete Goss (www.rya.org.uk).

Classic Sailing (01872 58 00 22; www.classic-sailing.co.uk) has a six-day trip exploring the Outer Hebrides by a traditional sailing trawler, *Provident*, on 27 August, costing £685 per person.

**What Google won't tell you... until now**

"When you step aboard a new vessel, the first thing you need to do is check the boat thoroughly, including all the safety certificates, equipment, life vests and harnesses. Allocate the bunks. Brew a cup of tea and then brief the crew on the sailing area, the crew ability and weather forecast.

"Next, carry out a deck briefing to cover the methods of hoisting and dropping sails and also of slipping lines. Start: the engine, issue the command to slip and take the boat out of the mooring, watching at all times for other vessels. Proceed to sea." – Steve Rouse, senior instructor and educational co-ordinator, UKSA (www.uksa.org).



up to seven guests, including the crew and all meals but not flights. Trips start in either Split or Dubrovnik and are available until the end of October.

**Baltic banquet**

Each autumn, West Sweden's coastline celebrates its lobsters, oysters, mussels, crayfish and prawns with a "Shellfish Journey" festival (www.vast.sverige.com). On certain weekends in October, you can also join a new,

two-night sailing adventure aboard a racing yacht (00 46 31 29 19 89; farr65r.com), fuelling up on gourmet seafood along the way. Trips cost 4,800 Swedish kronor (£467) per person, including two nights' yacht accommodation, all breakfasts and lunches and a lobster party at Bjornholmen. Gothenburg is around 30 miles away, and has plenty of flights from the UK.

**Learn at leisure**

For beginners unsure about how they will take to the open water, the Neilson "Stay and Sail" concept may appeal. You spend a week at one of the firm's Beach-club activity resorts in southern Turkey or Greece, while the second week is spent afloat. As an extra temptation for September and October departures, a four-day sail-training course during week one is thrown in free.

**Who said that?**

"If you live a life of make-believe, your life isn't worth anything until you do something that does challenge your reality. And to me, sailing the open ocean is a real challenge, because it's life or death." Morgan Freeman (on CBS News 60 Minutes)

"Water, water, everywhere, and all the boards did shrink; water, water, every where, nor any drop to drink." Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

"The yacht is his real passion. He is constantly looking to see that everything is impeccable." Aristotle Onassis' first wife, Tina, on his yacht, the *Christina O*



**Carry on kit**

**Feel the squeeze**

When you've siphoned your shampoo, conditioner and shower gel into 100ml containers, it's more than a little annoying when you can't get at the dregs. GoToob's colourful silicone tubes let you squeeze out (nearly) every last drop and come with a rotating ID window that lists the contents. There's also a suction pad so the bottle can be stuck to the wall if there's no shelf in the shower. The range comes in three sizes. £15.99; www.lakeland.co.uk



**Snooze in style**

Upgrade your journey with these smart travel pillows, designed by Otis Batterbee. Available in pinstripe, Prince of Wales check and dark grey with spots, the velvet-lined neck pillows are handmade in England, are easily inflated and deflated when you're on the go. £75; www.otisbatterbee.com



**Snap decision**

That picture-perfect sunset or your child's first splash in the sea – whatever the moment you've captured on camera, you can now gloat to friends and family at home with Albelli's Send a Card app. Available for the iPhone, it works by uploading a photo then adding a personal message and address; it's then turned into a hard copy and sent through the post. £2.49 per card; www.albelli.co.uk



**Take out the sting**

Jellyfish can spoil a day out at the beach or worse still, a holiday. However, LifeSystems Travel Healthcare has come up with a new sun-protection cream that contains what it claims to be a clinically proven jellyfish repellent. Available in SPF25 and 40, the cream is also water resistant and offers three-star UVA protection. £9.99; www.life-systems.co.uk