

# Starboard

The horizon's the limit when it comes to cruising the blue waters of the Med and the Aegean.



Jessica Basi selects five of the best itineraries and destinations for dropping anchor

## Cruise like a celebrity

### FRENCH RIVIERA PRIVATE CHARTER

The most luxurious way to sail the Med is aboard a privately hired Dream Sailing super yacht. At 55ft, DreamCatcher is a little shy of Roman Abramovich's 536ft Eclipse – the world's largest private yacht – but she still offers five-star hotel refinements and personal service. Owners Alan Oliver and Michelle Blore can charter a route around the French Riviera to meet your every whim, picking you up at a point of your choosing and docking in celebrity hangouts like St Tropez, or isolated spots like Porquerolles in the Golden Islands.

The sleek cabins are furnished with king-sized beds topped with Ralph Lauren linen, and are equipped with personal DVD and stereo systems and a complimentary minibar. As you slumber in comfort, your steward will lay out wakeboards and waterskis on the sizeable sun deck, while a gourmet chef gets to work on the day's menu. Sea bass and langoustines are served up on Wedgwood china with Conran crystal, while summer berries doused in rosé materialise as you enjoy an afternoon sprawl in a low-swinging hammock.

Docking in St Tropez, you'll see dozens of onlookers lined up quayside hoping for a glimpse of Orlando Bloom or Mariah Carey. Sporting your obligatory oversized sunglasses, saunter off into the cobbled streets to hit the designer boutiques. Dinner at Arnaud Donckele's two-Michelin-starred Vague d'Or, at the Résidence de La Pinède hotel, is a must; exquisitely presented dishes of smoked duck breast tartare, and foie gras salad, sit well with the opulence of your trip. Book a table on the balcony and savour a decadent tangerine praline while looking out across the sea.

After the glamour and excess of St Tropez, a sail south to Port Cros National Park provides the perfect contrast; the snorkelling bays, quiet beaches and simple bistros on this remote island are ideal spots to avoid prying eyes and enjoy your newfound hide-and-chic lifestyle. It's unlikely you'll be able to wade your way though the DreamCatcher's weighty wine list, but should you want a taste of something fresh from the vine, Château de Berne, in Lorgues, makes a handy pit stop. Vintner Brigitte Guiet lines up samples of the many vin de pays varieties grown in the vineyard, while a classic bread and cheese buffet is prepared in the caves below. Your sea legs will take a serious hit after a few glasses of the grande cuvée, their signature red – best stagger back on board, sink into a pillowy armchair and dazedly watch the sun set over France.

A quick word with the captain and you could change course – perhaps the biggest perk of private sailing – for Corsica. Moor up in Algajola, a fishing village where Napoleon spent a lot of his time. Set back from the port is a mass of chestnut, olive, fig and mulberry trees, the fruits of which can be found at the Place César-Campinchi daily market and stowed back on board.

**THE DETAIL** Dream Sailing (00 33 664 03 70 20, [dreamsailing.com](http://dreamsailing.com)) can charter a French Riviera trip from a destination of your choosing. A seven-night cruise starts from £1,556 per person, based on six passengers, including airport transfers.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE BLUE WATERS OF CORSICA; READY TO SAIL THE FRENCH RIVIERA; LUNCH ABOARD THE DREAMCATCHER; PORT CROS; CRUISING THE CORSICAN COASTLINE





Board the catamaran once more for a meander over to Amorgos. The 'deep blue' island is possibly the most peaceful of the Cyclades and the waterfront is lined with tiny cafés serving giant portions of the Amorgosian speciality, 'fisherman's spaghetti'

## Crew a catamaran

### SANTORINI ROUND TRIP VIA NAXOS

The Chrysovalandou catamaran, a Nautitech 395, glides stealthily around the 39 islands that make up the Greek Cyclades, dropping anchor in largely deserted bays and shallow inlets out of reach of yachts and bigger ships. There's room for eight passengers, along with a personal hostess who'll serve up plates of fresh seafood and help you seek out the best snorkelling spots. An avid fisherman, captain Nick Xenakis patiently shows his guests how best to cast lines in the hope of hooking a fish or two for dinner.

If you can drag yourself away from the tranquility of life aboard the catamaran, you'll have plenty of time to explore the beautiful island of Santorini. The island still bares the geological scars of a volcanic explosion around 1600BC. Lava cliffs at Red Beach have taken on a rusty hue, while the chalky mountain faces at White Beach have earned the area the nickname of the Dover of the Aegean (albeit with a little more sunshine). A gentle sail away from Santorini will take you to Manganari Bay on Ios. You'll be bundled into a dinghy to roam the shoreline. Cliff-jumping is very popular with locals here but perhaps the more sensible option is to board the catamaran once more for a meander over to Katapola village on Amorgos. The 'deep blue' island is possibly the most peaceful of the Cyclades and the waterfront is lined with tiny cafés serving giant portions of the Amorgosian speciality, 'fisherman's spaghetti'.

Taking a winding route from Amorgos, the Chrysovalandou sails on to Naxos, the largest of all the Cyclades and Nick's home turf. Barozzi house, a stone-built castro in the centre of the island, is the most prominent landmark in the old Venetian enclave and you'll often find folk dancers and street musicians drawing a crowd in the surrounding streets. Explore the turquoise-blue freshwater caves in Rina Bay, go horse-riding along the beach and enjoy a traditional meal in one of the many family-run tavernas. Wild caper bushes are strewn across the island, and this peppery fruit finds its way into a huge array of dishes. The blossom, leaves and berries themselves are collected by chefs for use in classic recipes like black-eyed peas with capers salad and sole fish with grapes and capers.

The tiny islet of Nea Kameni, the penultimate stop on your cruise, just off the coast of Santorini, has several hot springs believed to have therapeutic properties, especially as an excellent tonic for the skin. Soaking in the shallows, with a cold beer in hand, is an inspired way to round off your laid-back tour of the Cyclades.

**THE DETAIL** The Chrysovalandou (00 30 694 458 75 74, sailcatgreece.com) departs Santorini every Saturday from May to July. The seven-night privately skippered cruise costs from £3,392, plus additional fuel charges. The services of an onboard hostess costs an additional £119 a day.





Take a ride on a tall ship  
SOUTHAMPTON TO MALAGA VIA TANGIER

The Star Flyer casts off from Southampton and heads for the infinitely more alluring waters of the Med, setting a course from Brest to Spain and down Portugal's sandy west coast. Just looking at the clipper's white sails, rigging and gilded portholes conjures up thoughts of secret rum stashes and chunky pieces of eight. The treasure troves in reality may be tricky to come by, but drinks and gourmet food is readily supplied in the grand dining hall. The 360ft ship carries up to 170 passengers, and features an Edwardian-style library, antique wall hangings, Belle Epoque fireplaces and a contemporary piano bar, which is the source of much evening entertainment. No need to walk the plank to get your morning dip (that would be going overboard), you'll find two sparkling pools up on the sun deck.

Sailing southwards from Brest, you'll hit La Coruña at the northerly tip of Spain. Take a day to explore this Romanesque city or visit the Gothic cathedral in nearby Santiago de Compostela. As you near the plateau on which it sits, the cathedral's two towers look more like a charcoal sketch in the sky. Inside you'll find a beautifully carved dome ceiling and a dazzling altar lit with pilgrims' candles.

At sea once more, you'll cross into Portuguese waters and dock in Lisbon. You'll have time to snake through the backstreets on the Lavra funicular and peruse the boutiques on Rua de São José. When the sun goes down, sink a few cocktails on the Sky Bar's roof terrace at Hotel Tivoli Lisboa as you gaze out over the mosaic city.

On the African leg of your journey, you'll moor up in Tangier – it is the biggest port in North Africa, although it boasts fewer souk-seeking tourists than Marrakech. The Mendoubia Gardens, with its dragon trees and 800-year-old banyan, are a reminder of this city's ancient heritage. Haggle at the Sidi Bouabid Berber food market and toast your bargains with a mint tea in the square before boarding the Star Flyer one last time to Malaga. As the birthplace of Pablo Picasso, the city has several galleries dedicated to the famous surrealist, while the *chiringuitos* bars that line Playa de La Malagueta beach are a good place to enjoy your final tapas meal.

**THE DETAIL** Star Clippers (0845 200 6145, starclipper.co.uk) offers this trip aboard Star Flyer, departing Southampton on 1 September. The 14-night all-inclusive cruise costs from £2,688 per person.



Go guleting in Turkey  
BODRUM TO GOCEK VIA LYDAE

Setting sail from the Bodrum peninsula, you'll stumble upon many relics and rustic restaurants on this gulet cruise to Gocek, on Turkey's south-eastern coast. Almira's pointed prow extends far beyond its body, like a gnarled finger nudging captain Peter Sommer and his crew out to the open Aegean. Made of aged pine from the Taurus Mountains, and mahogany, she could almost pass for a Byzantine trade ship. The eight en suite cabins, however, are more welcoming than the musty chambers of her medieval doppelgängers.

As you moor up in Caria and set foot in the ancient city of Knidos, the imposing temples and ruins you'll encounter will allow you and your fellow cruisers to drift back in time. The white marble city holds a monumental temple dedicated to Aphrodite, complete with fitting heart-shaped columns and bordered by two opposing harbours, one stretching out into the Mediterranean and the other into the Aegean. Both offer excellent swimming spots to escape the midday heat.

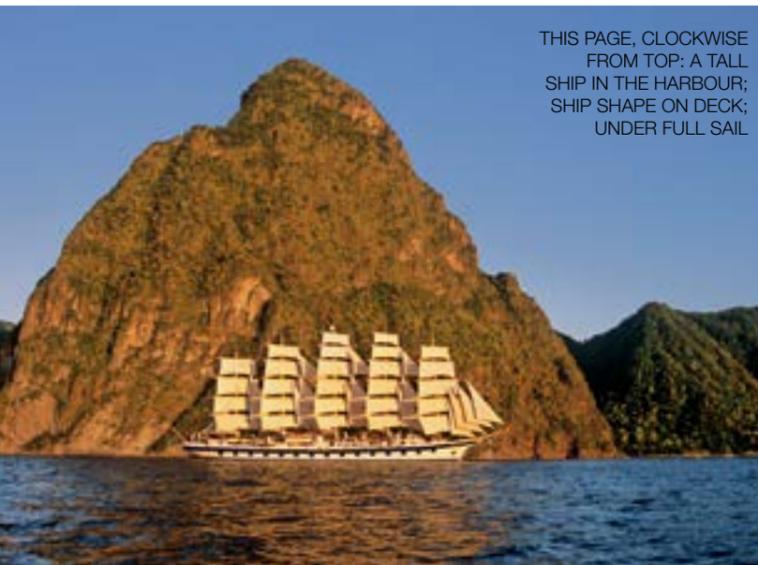
Drifting east to the hilly village of Bozburun, you'll put your culinary skills to the test under the guidance of local restaurateurs. You'll have the unique opportunity to source fresh market produce and prepare

traditional dishes such as moussaka and lamb pilaf. At your next stop at Loryma Bay, you'll enter the home of a local family and cook flatbreads in clay ovens. *Lavash* is a favourite in these parts and reflects the region's chequered history of Greek, Persian and Turkish rule. Drizzled with olive oil and poppy seeds, it's turned into densely packed kebabs, while leftovers are stuffed with halloumi, butter by the bucketload and thyme, and rebaked to form crispy parcels.

You'll continue on your journey sailing east to ancient Kaunos. On arrival, the gulet's archaeologist in residence, Serdar Akerdem, will usher you up limestone steps to a colossal amphitheatre that was once fit for 5,000 spectators. Your final stop is the pretty inlet of Aglimani in Lydae. As you sit down to lunch with local Lydaen goat herders in the 'forgotten valley', you'll find yourself clinging to your last few precious hours in a world still filled with ancient wonder.

**THE DETAIL** Peter Sommer Travels (01600 888 220, petersommer.com) offers this trip aboard the Almira, departing Bodrum on 26 May. The seven-night full-board cruise costs from £1,995 per person, including airport transfers, excursions and entrance fees.

THIS PAGE,  
CLOCKWISE FROM  
TOP: A GULET; ISLAND  
RUINS; LUNCH IS  
SERVED ON DECK



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP: A TALL  
SHIP IN THE HARBOUR;  
SHIP SHAPE ON DECK;  
SHIP SHAPE ON DECK;  
UNDER FULL SAIL



## ACTIVE TRAVELLER



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A MOTOR YACHT; MOORED; THE CROATIAN LANDSCAPE; CATCHING SOME RAYS; A SECLUDED BEACH; FRESH PRODUCE; A TYPICAL VILLAGE

### Make waves in a motor yacht SPLIT ROUND TRIP VIA DUBROVNIK

Sail Croatia's motor yacht glides down the Dalmatian coast to Dubrovnik with a maximum of 30 guests onboard. It offers a more intimate experience than formal cruising, though three-course lunches and hours spent stretched out on the sun deck lend a similar sense of self-indulgence. With favourable winds, there's often no need to power up the boat's engines but if all is still, you'll motor along the Makarska Riviera, hitting the town centre in time to visit the famous Franciscan monastery or take a mini hike across Biokovo Mountain before the sun sets. Day two brings you to Mljet, where a national park holds two emerald saltwater lakes both perfect for swimming and, marooned in the centre, a 12th-century Benedictine monastery.

Hoisting the mast on day three, the captain will set his compass east and for Dubrovnik. If you find yourself hankering for higher ground, take a walk along Dubrovnik's 1,940 metre-long city wall. The maze of turrets and walkways was originally built to protect the city from pesky pirate invasions. Now it provides a lookout onto the patchwork of green mountains, red roofs, and stony crenulated towers of the Old Town. This cobble-clad portion of the city hosts a huge festival throughout August, with classical music, theatre, opera and dance acts performing across 70 open-air venues.

No Croatian cruise would be complete without a stop-off in stunning Hvar. Here you'll gorge on wild olives growing and sample wines such as *plavac mali*, a local favourite made from 'small blue' grapes created from a blend of zinfandel and dobrić varieties. The island's public theatre, nestled within a converted arsenal, is one of the oldest in Europe still hosting performances today. Built in 1612, it celebrates its 400th anniversary this year with a string of concerts, dance and folk festivals in summer.

Hop aboard your motor yacht for the return journey to Split, punctuated by picturesque swimming stops – the bays circling Brač are particularly good for snorkelling. In Split itself, take a wander round the Diocletian Palace, a Roman masterpiece, or park yourself in a harbourside café and try the local delicacy, a spiderfish salad.

**THE DETAIL** Sail Croatia (0845 257 8289, [sail-croatia.com](http://sail-croatia.com)) offers a round trip from Split, departing on Saturdays, until October. The seven-night half-board cruise costs from £489 per person, twin-share. □