





SEASON IN THE SUN

This 43-metre stunner will be basking in the Med this summer. So does it have the perfect mix of technology and treats to make your trip round the R vieras truly unique?

Frances & Michael Howorth

As our helicopter lifted off at Monaco's heliport, darting quickly past the port air traffic lights at the end of our shorter, we had a glimpse of the superyachts cheek by jowl in the harbour. It was a shame to be leaving all this behind, and particularly Big City, the brand-new 40-metre three-deck yacht from J/Boats that had been our home for the past few days. Herein lies the beauty of chartering: you arrive on board a yacht with the works of the world on your shoulders, but from the moment the chief stewardess places the first chilled glass of bubbling champagne in your hand you can forget about the rat race and relax. This is certainly the feeling we had when we stepped aboard Big City.

With an interior by Patrick Krawinkel, she has a refreshingly light feel inside – the perfect place to relax. Luxurious touches, of course, embellish the design, not least in the huge full-beam master suite, which boasts a delightfully discreet office as well as a private bathroom. Four further cabins are located a deck below, and there is an uncluttered sundeck to make the most of your surroundings.

Though escape is top of the agenda, a charter yacht is perhaps one of the few places busy business minds can take a proper holiday without being touch completely. Our yacht had Wi-Fi throughout and mobile phones worked, too – and when they don't, the yacht's satellite communications rock in.

Leaving our starting port of Genoa behind us, we set off for San Remo – a port much loved by superyacht captains for its ease of entry, and also for the superbly

efficient team of ship's agents based there whose job it is to make the impossible possible. Need a berth in St Tropez for the night? Head fresh yellowfin tuna for sushi or wagyu beef for dinner? No problem, just call Al Services and ask for Mrs Fick (otherwise known as Xenia). It's odds on that Xenia can quickly and efficiently arrange it – she's saved many a charter from going sour.

We cruised on westwards, leaving the Italian Riviera to starboard and passing close by the coastal towns of Cervo and Imperia, even getting a glimpse from seaward of La Mortola, home of the famous Huntbury gardeners. We stopped around Cap Feraud and dropped anchor off the port of Villefranche.

For dinner on deck our chief stewardess Pam made the perfect choice of wine, matching a Domaine Ott Cuvée de Grand from Château de Selle to delicious lamb cutlets served perfectly pink in a papaya of beans and chorizo, with a chutney of aubergine and tomatoes. Topping the cool drink, we watched the sun sinking below the horizon, making the sky a ruby red and listened to the tinkling sounds from the beachside restaurants ashore, whose palmists chose to sail there because they get a chance to watch the superyachts at anchor.

A swell rolled into the bay towards the end of the evening and Big City groined into it by the sterns, began a gentle roll, with a flick of a switch, Captain

Barry Brentall engaged the zero-speed stabiliser system and instantly the yacht's movement stopped. These yachts anchored nearby without this facility continued to roll in what appeared to be a peaceful anchorage.

Antibes was our next port of call. Entering Port Vauban is a yacht spotter's dream. Lined up, the sterns to the International Yacht Club are Antibes, some of the most famous names in superyacht folklore. On the day we arrived we found Kingdom 5 (Dorset), Virginia G. (Joe, Aljo and Chinnery-rossini), Yee, however, were in the harbour for other reasons, daily marked in the square is a must-visit, even if you don't have to worry about where the next meal is coming from. The fresh-fruit and vegetable are laid out like works of art, and stalls with fresh fish, cheese, herbs and olives add to the sensory overload. The our yacht's charismatic chef, was soon ashore to lay out a sumptuous haul for tonight's dinner. We went to explore more of the town and visit the quaint Picasso museum high on the walled ramparts.

Lunchtime the following day saw Big City anchor off the famous Hôtel Eden Roc, at Juan la Pène. At the Mediterranean sun-blossom our back to the beach club to try out the yacht's magnificent inlay water toys. Our crew set about giving us lessons in the art of high-speed PWC driving.

You can arrive with the worries of the world on your shoulders yet from the first moment you step aboard you INSTANTLY RELAX





Facing page (top left): The sky lounge on the bridge deck, the sundeck with its tempting hot tub — jump in and turn the bubbles up high, gloriously grand bed in the master suite.

Facing page (main photo): Big City at anchor off Costa Anchis, a mouth-blowing spot among charter ports.

Above left: Bubbles, bubbly and fine views from the sundeck.

Left: Freshly baked croissants served for breakfast on the aft deck under the shadow of the ancient Fort Royal, with its famous prison that includes the cell of the Man in the Iron Mask.

Top: Big City under way at 30 knots heading toward Cannes.

Above: The bathing platform in beach club mode.



Left: Ever attentive and ready to assist guests using the water toys, is the yacht's tender man when guests are having fun on the water.

Below left: The after on the terrace deck is a cool and intimate place for an evening cocktail.

Bottom: Charter manager Terry Hines left among Big City's crew.

Facing page, from top: A peaceful evening anchorage off the St. Helena, which is famous for its monastery, abbey and castle.

Facing page, from the 2: The food onboard was sumptuous, polished as you can see your back to Captain Barry Bramble.

Charter fact

Length
42.50m (139ft 6in)

Beam
8.53m (27ft 9in)

Engines Twin-Caterpillar
C32

Cruising speed
17.5 knots

Guests to
12

Crew 12

Summer destinations
West Mediterranean

Summer price
€175,000

Winter price
\$175,000

Contact Terry Hines of
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Collection
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We had already discovered the need for speed, being chased from Antigua not in Big City but in her flying Saab Twin, a 30-metre Intrepid sportsboat all built up around Cap d'Antilles at speeds close to Elliotts. Though she doesn't live on-board, Saab Twin comprises the motherhip everywhere she goes and at sea is fully covered by the charter fee. "It's a case of hairy one, get one free!" says Barry. Another delicious gift and session complete. It was time to sit on the swim platform, close in the afternoon sunshine and take a book. It was approaching four, and we were still going about looking for cool mojos when they finally appeared on a silver tray, ice-chinking and gently shaded from the sun under their very own cocktail umbrellas. Absolutely magical.

Next morning we descended on Cannes - a town jolly preparing for its famed film festival. Charter bills had already begun to stake their claim for the bed seats in the route. Cannes may be all about glitz, but just a few miles offshore lies one of the nicest anchorages in the area. Set between the Linné levels of St Marguerite and Îles St Honorat, it is steeped at the height of summer - wonderfully arid. Densely covered in pine trees, these craggy islands are part of a national park. After the day-toppers leave, they are almost completely deserted and wonderful place to walk, working up an appetite for Ed Michael's next gastronomic onslaught.

Sally, our cruise was drawing to an end and we said soon have to turn back east. Our destination was Monaco, with stops at Nice and Beaulieu sur Mer. The joy of chartering is that it is the guest who sets the pace when we could so easily have gone further, visiting

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St Tropez, St Maximin and maybe even Port Grimaud the fact is that in a fast-moving world the real luxury is to dawdle.

As lying in Monaco we cut in close to the land. The rock face drops away so steeply that it is almost possible to reach out and touch the facade of the Oceanographic Museum. Monaco was preparing for the Grand Prix as we arrived and the harbour was filling up with yachts separated by a fence's width. Captain Bramhill looked at the tiny space allotted to him and we all wondered if he could get

the yacht into the berth without incident. As if the pressure wasn't already on, we were allocated the dock alongside The One - ex-Caroline Island voted No1 in Super Yacht World's list of the most beautiful yachts ever built. Her dark blue hullsides were pristine, and this is how we hoped they'd stay. But Barry effortlessly slotted Big City into first into her space. A quick burst on the engines, a flick sideways with the bow thruster, and the port's officials handed over the ground lines, like everything on board Big City, it was no trouble whatsoever.

Our cruise had come to an end and it was back to a normal working life. Big City and her crew had done an impeccable job of soothing away the everyday strains during our stay. This may be one of the most popular routes to charter a yacht in the world - 'the milk run', some cynics call it. But if this was the milk run, then we had just lapped the cream. **NYN**

Francis & Michael Roworth's charter transfer from Monaco to Nice was facilitated by real Air Services www.fishermonts.com

