



HOW TO COMBINE THE CAPTAIN'S RESPONSIBILITIES AS MANAGER OF A SUPERYACHT WITH A SEAFARER'S PASSION.

Patrick you have been Ammonite's Captain since 2020. Can you highlight the most challenging requirements asked of a charter Captain as regards to bureaucracy, planning and operations?

The most challenging part of the job, especially in the past few years, has been keeping up to date with regulations and the Covid situation. There has been a lot of change: anchoring restrictions in France for example and I'm managing a UK flagged boat so we're not part of the EU anymore. Making sure that you have ticked all the boxes is one of the most challenging things, it's very easy to make what could be considered a little mistake but if you fall on the wrong side of regulations it's never going to have small repercussions. At the same time we're quite lucky in this line of work because while there are more regulations than there were in the past, online you can find more Q&A platforms and info.

You can get assistance from a superyacht Captain's group, where we have access to more information. But the more you do it the more you become attuned to what's going on, then it's small changes more than big ones. By working closely with yachts agent and charter broker we can avoid an unnecessary mistakes.

Being a superyacht Captain nowadays also means being a multi-tasking manager. You have to take care of accounting, budgeting, flag and registration Class compliance while supplying tailor made itineraries and going over Preference Lists. Do these tasks get in the way of the "romantic" part of your job as seafarer, which we assume is sailing?

They don't have a negative impact at all. Naturally your outlook changes if you're running a commercial boat, you have to view the project as a whole as romantic or you wouldn't be able to do the job. It's business, the romance is the whole task. I get enjoyment out of all of it; it's so multifaceted. You can't pick an individual part of the job as being the reason why you do it, it has to be enjoyable, and you have to love all of it, otherwise it's an impossible task. The individual parts like accounting might not be why you started the job, but it all becomes one. At that point the satisfaction and the romance is when it all comes together and works. There as many moving goalposts as with a successful marriage, but it's worth it.

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PATRICK WYNN

Interview by Clare Mahon



On board Ammonite you also cover the role of engineer. How do you manage both your roles in and out the engine room without interfering with the guests' enjoyment?

It's kind of a game of cat and mouse. Without being sneaky, we plan our days in such a way that we can get people off the boat for at least part of the day so that we can do the dirty work. Thanks to the way that Southern Wind yachts are laid out, 70% of what we have to do on a daily basis is behind closed doors so it doesn't affect guests. We have access to most things without getting in the way of guests. Obviously we try not to disturb the guests unless it's an absolute necessity but if they go for a swim or go out for dinner we can nip in and get some work done. It's always a bit funny when they say 'we're going to shore, you guys have a nice rest,' because that's the time when we can access the guest area to complete maintenance and repair jobs, or the chef will go off to re-provision. Then the guests will come back and ask if we had a nice rest and we'll say 'Oh yeah!' So you just try and "help" them to plan their day around what you need to do. Guests don't need to know everything that happens aboard a superyacht and we don't need to tell them.

Which were some of the nicest and some of the hardest moments of the past season aboard Ammonite?

We had two moments that were hard this past year, but at the same time in the end they worked out well. We had a breakdown in Greece with the boss on board right when we would have had to motor through a canal.

We couldn't find anyone to tow us, so we had to make a big loop around and sail in very light air the whole way. It was challenging to keep spirits up but in the end we had a fantastic sail. I think that even the owner enjoyed it.

We sailed all the way to a marina starting just after noon and arriving at 4 AM but it really was fantastic. Two days later the boat was repaired and we carried on.

We also had a lighting strike very near the boat and lost most our navigation electronics. There were no guests then, we just had to sail back to Tuscany from Greece with very limited equipment but on the way back we hit three more big storms. It was very challenging, at a certain point we had to turn around and anchor to wait it out. Just storm after huge storm.

We got to Tuscany in the end, but it was pretty challenging with limited navigation equipment.



ABOUT PATRICK

British, born 1981.

Patrick is an enthusiastic sailor and a very conscientious captain with more than a decade of professional sailing experience.

Before joining Ammonite in 2020 he accumulated a wealth of experience on a variety of sailing yachts from modern racers to classic gaff-rigged yachts.

Patrick is passionate sailor and rower; when not on the water, he enjoys skiing, walking and music.

Do you have any tips for a young Captain aiming to become a good Charter Captain?

Sure! I would say that you have to be calm but firm. One of the things I suggest most strongly is to make use of the "family" aspect of a yard like SW where there's a lot of knowledge and a support network. People are always willing to help and give advice. Be open to taking advice from other people with the experience and the knowledge pool. There's a great sense of community at Southern Wind, a Captain has set up a Whatsapp group where I think we're 45 Southern Wind Captains participating. If you do get stuck you'll have a community where people are more than willing to share knowledge and advice.

Do you have any tips for charter guests on how to get the most from their vacation?

I think that just having a degree of understanding and flexibility is important. As a crew we'll try to move heaven and earth to get you things as they should be, but there are many variables like equipment, weather, vacation crowds. We can't produce miracles, but we will try. Have a degree of understanding that even if things don't go as planned, you'll still have an enjoyable experience if you keep an open mind. Don't have rigid expectations and you'll find enjoyment even if things aren't 100% as you had planned.

“ WE CAN'T PRODUCE MIRACLES, BUT WE WILL TRY. ”