

# A GUIDE TO CAREERS IN YACHTING

BY JEN ERRICO



**UKSA**  
The Maritime Academy

**Whatever your age, whatever your experience, the yachting industry has a whole host of opportunities for professional employment providing you have the right training and attitude. Finding the right branch to suit your skills and requirements is the all important first step. With many years experience training and placing people from outside the yachting industry into challenging and rewarding careers on the water, UKSA are ideally placed to advise anyone with an interest in changing their life for a career on or around the ocean.**

**Newcomers are often surprised by the huge variety of jobs available in today's vibrant and global yachting community.**

**As well as working onboard large luxury yachts in a whole host of roles, careers can include water sports instruction, charter, flotilla work, sail training, corporate charter, racing, yacht services and brokerage, specialist equipment sales and services, marina work, and much much more.**

## About the author Jen Errico

Jen has been involved in the superyacht and yachting industry for over fifteen years. In this information guide, she offers a brief look at the industry for anyone considering a career afloat. For more in depth information we would recommend her book "working on yachts and superyachts".

## About UKSA

A charity and non profit making organisation, UKSA has been at the forefront of professional yacht training for the last 15 years. With a global reputation for excellence in marine career training, the Academy offer a whole range of highly refined and specialist training programmes for all aspects of work afloat.



## A career afloat

**“There is something about the colour of the light when you are anchored stern to in St Tropez as the afternoon deepens to dusk. Equally there is something about the breeze just off Antigua that can get you just right, like having an itch scratched in the exact spot. It blows away the sweat and the heat and leaves in it’s place an exhilaration that is seldom felt in an ordinary workplace.”**

There aren’t many jobs out there that offer; travel, adventure, jet set lifestyle and good money combined with the opportunity to work in beautiful marine environments. In fact jobs like that are generally considered few and far between, so when you do get to hear about them part of you is torn between disbelief, ‘Yeah, sure, like a job like that exists!’ and cautious scepticism ‘Yeah sure and they’d employ me?’



But what if you could find a job that provided good money, great lifestyle, and the opportunity to travel. What if you could spend your summers cruising the Mediterranean doing the 'milk run' between Antibes and St Tropez, or island hopping in Croatia. Winters could be spent visiting the best hot spots in the Caribbean. And what if you found out that you don't need to be from any particular background to find a job like this?

What if you found out that finding a job like this isn't that hard, in fact quite the reverse. The good news is, the yachting industry is crying out for dedicated and qualified crew.

## DID YOU KNOW?



It is estimated that if you lined up all the scheduled new large yacht builds you would have a stretch of yachts averaging fourteen miles. If you took a rough guess and said that each of those yachts was 50m in length it means that there are over 600 fifty metre yachts on order and due to be launched in the next few years.

Which means, in addition to the current estimated global superyacht crew shortage of around three thousand, the industry will need at least another seven thousand crew just to meet this growth alone.

## Superyachts



**Also known as Megayachts, Luxury yachts, even Gigayachts, essentially a superyacht is a yacht that is longer than 24 metres. There is no maximum length. Currently the largest privately owned superyachts in the world are around 150 metres long.**

A superyacht can be a sailing yacht or a motor yacht, old or new and it can come in a variety of shapes and forms. A superyacht is the epitome of luxury, money and the jet set lifestyle. It is only the very rich that can afford to purchase and maintain one. Owning a superyacht says you have 'arrived'. Having one built to your specifications suggests that you are here to stay.

Superyachts do not come cheap. Various new builds have just been launched with price tags sitting at a conservative £40 to £60 million. Even a small second hand superyacht is going to set you back a couple of million, at the very least.

So with a financial outlay of this magnitude you are going to need the right people to help you look after your asset and this is where well qualified yacht crew come in.



## DID YOU KNOW?

UKSA Professional Yachtmaster, Ocean Graduate Plus or Yachting Cadetship training includes training and qualifications to command up to 200gt vessel. Further training to skipper yachts up to 3000gt is also available. Before you can skipper large yachts, most employers will want you to have several years experience. Being well qualified is always a bonus and helps with faster career advancement.

You don't have to work onboard superyachts to realise a successful career in yachting. UKSA courses are suitable for anyone wanting to realise their dream of a career

afloat on boats and craft of all sizes. Details on other work opportunities outside of superyachts can be found at the back of this booklet.

## Professional yacht crew frequently asked questions

**What qualifications are needed on yachts? Why do I even need qualifications. It's just a job on a boat. Isn't it?**

Not so long ago you would have been spot on the mark. You didn't need entry level qualifications, but in the last decade or so legislation has tightened up considerably and now every single crew member on board needs the relevant qualification.

## What positions can you find on board a superyacht?

**There are numerous jobs onboard and all need markedly different skills. First you get the skipper/captain. He or she (you get female captains too and even female engineers!) is the 'boss' of the boat. What they say goes when it comes to the safety of the vessel and all those who sail in her.**

Then there are the engineers, the mates, stewards and stewardesses and the deckhands. You also need a chef or cook. You may also find pursers or bosuns. All these positions have different roles to fulfil and some are unique unto themselves.



## The MCA

**Just as your car has its license plate, so a yacht needs to be licensed. A large percentage of superyachts are registered under the MCA flag (red flagged vessels). If a yacht is registered under this flag they need to abide by the rules that the MCA impose. While these rules can be very stringent, they make MCA registered vessels some of the safest in the world, which isn't a bad thing.**

Many of these MCA rules apply to the build specifications of a yacht, and related issues. A small proportion also apply to the crew outlining what qualifications they must have as well as stipulating working conditions and other related issues.

## The MCA and Deck Officer qualifications

When it comes to deck officer qualifications and the MCA, it works roughly like learning to drive a car. Just as you can go to any one of hundreds of driving schools to train, you will still need to visit the Department of Transport to do your final exam, the same applies to senior crew qualifications on superyachts.



### DID YOU KNOW?

MCA stands for Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The MCA is a British organisation responsible for implementing the Government's maritime safety policy. With international recognition as the leading maritime regulatory body, MCA training standards and guidelines are used and employed globally.

## Kickstart your career with the right school

**Obviously the better the school, the better your chances of success. Before booking a course, check out what training facilities they have, whether there is additional classroom support, and what type of careers support they offer.**

There are a whole host of professional yachting qualifications which you can get training for. If you have no previous experience and/or qualifications but would like to become involved in the industry, UKSA can well advise you. Their experienced course advisers will be able to advise on the most suitable training options and talk to you about some of the typical work opportunities. Additionally they hold monthly career seminars which are free to attend where you will be able to discuss your requirements with their careers advisers.

If you already have some sailing experience and wish to know what qualifications and skills you require for professional work, UKSA can help you with guidance and advice tailored to your needs. UKSA publish an extensive range of training prospectus' designed to help you understand training programme structures and content.





## DID YOU KNOW?

UKSA careers publish the latest job opportunities for their graduates online every week. Visit [www.uksa.org/jobslst](http://www.uksa.org/jobslst)

### **Yachting jobs are like holiday jobs aren't they? Do I really need to invest in training?**

If you owned an aeroplane worth £20 million would you let an unqualified, unlicensed pilot fly it? Would you care if your stewardess had no idea what to do in an emergency, or if she has no idea of the difference between Champagne and sparkling wine? Would it matter if your navigator landed you in Birmingham UK, or Birmingham, Alabama?

Precisely! The same applies to yachting. Crew, depending on the level of their responsibilities on board, require specialist skills and qualifications.

## Captain

**The captain is the officer in charge of the yacht and all who sail in her and everybody answers to him or her. A captain's duty is to see that a yacht is maintained and managed to the maximum standard, ensuring the safety of all on board and protecting the environment as much as possible.**

A captain not only has to have an excellent sea faring knowledge, he must also have a good grasp of accounting as he will be expected to manage significant sums of money.

An ability to communicate effectively on all levels, both with contractors, crew and with owners and guests, is a vitally important aspect of the job. A captain will also frequently be in charge of hiring and firing and he or she has to strike a fine balance between being one of the crew and being the boss.

In order to captain a large yacht most people will gain command experience and qualifications through working up to the position of first officer where they will build a reputation as a first class professional. This can take anything between three and five years.



### DID YOU KNOW?

On the largest yachts simply filling up with fuel can cost around \$100,000.

Annual salaries for captains of superyachts can range from around £45,000 to £250,000+, all found, plus perks.

Of course you don't have to skipper large vessels, and you don't need to have years of experience to skipper smaller yachts. RYA Yachtmaster qualification will allow you to command vessels up to 200 tonnes, giving you access to command an estimated 75% of the worlds yacht fleet. On a practical note, before taking command of larger vessels you would, as you would expect, need to build up command skills and experience while working in the industry. Working this way gives you the opportunity to highly develop your command skills and, should you choose, progress to work on larger and larger vessels.



## Engineer

**Engineers keep all of the mechanical and electronic aspects of the vessel running problem free. One minute the engineer will have his head buried in an engine the size of a small car, the next he will be expected to fix a hair dryer, then mend the outboard on the tender and so on and so forth.**

Given that the number of superyachts grows daily (almost doubling during the last decade to over 6000 yachts) and the changes in manning requirements of large commercial and leisure yachts, the demand for qualified crew and particularly engineers has increased proportionately. In fact, there is now a worldwide shortage of qualified engineers able to work on superyachts and the potential earnings reflect that, with some engineers able to command salaries higher than those of their captains.

Engineers are some of the most sought after crew and can earn as much as a captain, between around £60,000 to £250,000+ a year, all found, plus perks and bonuses and gratuities. Although rare, you can find female as well as male engineers.

## Mate / First Officer

**First officer means the officer next to the captain in the line of authority on board a ship. He or she may also be called first mate or chief officer. You will also find second and third officers/mates on larger yachts. Although they may never have to, the first officer must be capable of assuming control of the yacht and undertaking all the responsibilities of a captain should it be required.**

He/she is in charge of the exterior crew, namely second and third officers and the deckhands, and he or she is expected to train and supervise the deck crew and ensure

equipment is kept in good order. A first officer must also implement safety drills and procedures for both crew and guests.

A first officer is also expected to keep the sporting equipment in good order, arranging maintenance schedules with the engineer and ensuring that all crew and guests are capable of operating them safely. The first officer must also ensure that the exterior of the yacht is maintained in tip top condition by the crew under his or her command and by his or her own actions. Annual salaries on superyachts can range from around £30,000 to £50,000+, all found, plus perks and tips.

## Deckhand

**Deckhand is the typical entry level for work on large yachts. A deckhand's duties involve maintaining the exterior of the boat, which covers everything from cleaning the windows to operating and cleaning the sporting equipment, from changing the sun loungers covers to varnishing the guard rails. As a deckhand you will also find yourself turning your hand to a variety of nautical duties such as standing steering watches, repairing ropes and cables, rigging towing lines, handling mooring lines and of course, the washing down etc.**

The deckhand is answerable to the first officer or bosun, if the vessel is too small for either of these he then answers to the captain. Any skills and/or qualifications in any form of watersport is without doubt an asset, as a deckhand may be asked to help instruct a guest in the use of jet skis, wave riders, windsurfers etc.

Annual salaries on superyachts can range from around £20'000 to £40'000+, all found, plus perks and tips.

## Steward and Stewardess

**A steward or stewardess is in charge of the interior of the yacht and his or her role is similar to that of a housekeeper. Working as a stewardess can be a demanding yet very rewarding experience. Stewards get to meet owners and guests more than any other member of crew. The service a stewardess provides is vital to the quality of the guests stay.**

As a steward or stewardess your duties will include everything from silver service to ironing, from flower arranging to PR. On larger yachts you will have a chief steward/ess who may have as many as four or five stewards and stewardesses under his or her command. The steward/esses job is to make sure that the interior of the boat is kept pristine and the decor kept fresh with flowers and new linen etc. He or she is also frequently in charge of arranging the provisioning of drinks and snacks to the vessel, for both crew and guests. He or she will have to submit accounts to the captain or purser so being methodical and organised is a huge asset.

There are a number of professional skills and qualifications that are very advantageous to those wanting to work as steward/esses like nursing, massage, physiotherapy and a variety of the hospitality trades. A good way of entering into the industry is to take advantage of skills courses focussed on developing the knowledge and requirements demanded by employers in the industry as well as helping with finding initial placements.

Annual salaries on superyachts can range from around £20,000 to £60,000+, all found, plus perks and tips.



## The Chef/Crew Chef

**The chef/crew staff provisions the yacht, prepares and cooks for guests and crew. A chef onboard a megayacht does not have to be qualified in as much as he or she might not need formal culinary qualifications but he/she does have to be experienced, capable of operating on their own and must also be used to working under pressure.**

Chefs along with engineers are hugely sought after. A chef on a yacht will be expected to cater for crew and for guests. He or she will be expected to prepare excellent meals whatever the weather and time and distance from shore. A chef will prepare food for crew who will frequently have picky dietary habits. He or she will also have to know and memorize all the owners' particular foibles when it comes to food, for example: fruit never kept in fridge or no garlic to be used on board or no alcohol etc. He or she must be fully capable of adapting his or her menu to deal with these eventualities.

Annual salaries for chefs on superyachts can range from around £22,000 to £70,000+, all found, plus perks and tips.

### DID YOU KNOW?



UKSA provides a 5 day essential marine cookery programme designed to develop good standards of creative cookery using small galleys and limited provisioning often demanded of cooks afloat. This programme is included as part of the 4 week Marine Hospitality programme, or can be taken as a separate module.

## Other Yachting career routes and opportunities

**Many UKSA graduates choose to start their careers by working on much smaller yachts where there are great opportunities to refine their sailing skills and develop a great reputation for outstanding service. These jobs provide a great way to start working afloat in an industry you love, with excellent opportunities to fine tune your people skills.**

### Flotilla Skipper

Responsible for the running, sailing, maintenance, guest care and operation of a yacht or entire flotilla (up to 20 yachts). Working with an engineer and host/hostess, you will organise everything from route planning to entertainment, guest briefings to maintenance. There are often commissions to be earned from restaurants and social visits which help to boost the fairly low salary. Flotilla Skipper provides excellent personal sailing opportunities and a great way to build miles and experience.

**Salary:** £100 - £250 per week depending on the company and location. Often reasonable tips.

### Flotilla Engineer

Responsible for the general upkeep and maintenance of all the yachts in the flotilla and all of their equipment. Repairs are often completed underway and at anchorage at night. Also likely to assist the guests with operating systems, power handling, equipment use etc.

**Salary:** as Flotilla Skipper.

## Flotilla 'Host'

Responsible for the care of all flotilla guests. Likely to liaise with local restaurants and attractions for group visits, coordinate weekly airport transfers, medical issues, complaints, entertainment etc.

**Salary:** £80 - £150 per week.

## Yacht Instructor (shore based)

The big holiday companies often run day sailing aboard cruising yachts at their beach bases. As the Yacht Instructor, you will live aboard the yacht but stay in the same marina every night (no guest accommodation aboard). You will be involved with the overall beach programme and evening entertainment with the rest of the base staff. Lots of opportunities for personal sailing including dinghies and windsurfing.

**Salary:** £80 - £150 per week.

## Delivery Skipper

Often long distances, sometimes short-handed and therefore a bit of a strain! You are your own boss (with no guests to worry about) but it is up to you to make sure that the boat gets there safely and on time. The hardest thing to deal with is the weather over which you have no control.

**Salary:** Travel expenses are usually paid along with food etc, on board. Freelance skippers negotiate their own pay and it varies dependant on the type and size of boat and the duration of the trip. A very rough estimate is £1 per mile. If working for a specialist delivery company, expect to do 2 or 3 trips as a volunteer crew member before being let loose as a paid skipper.

## Charter Skipper (or Charter Couple)

May include commands of 35 - 60ft yachts (often catamarans as their popularity is increasing) operating in the Mediterranean or Caribbean. Very different to working on a private vessel as high turnover of guests with a fast turn around at the end of a charter. Often a very busy schedule as '1 or 2 week' guests will want to pack a lot into their holiday. Many couples work together as a team in order to run the boat and prepare and serve all food aboard.

**Salary:** Circa £13,000 per annum per person but likely to at least double in tips.

## Yachtmaster Instructor

A commercial Yachtmaster with a cruising instructor endorsement can teach up to Day Skipper level on behalf of an RYA school.

Salary: Taking responsibility for teaching RYA syllabus and up to 5 students for typically 5 day or 2 weekend courses at a time. Pay likely to be £50 - £90 per day for freelance Skippers. With 7000 miles and a seasons teaching experience you will become eligible for the RYA's Yachtmaster Instructor Course. Successful skippers can command £65 to £120 per day teaching up to Yachtmaster level. Daily rate may reduce if full time contracts are secured but overall benefits will increase.

## Marina Manager

General responsibilities will include berthing arrangements, bookings, services and repairs, customer liaison, cash handling, staffing etc. A huge growth area at the moment, skillful managers can keep their marinas full and paying all year round.

**Salary:** Dependant on size of marina but typically £18,000 - £30,000 per annum

## Other opportunities

Within the global scope of the yachting industry there are a whole host of specialist career routes which are open to those qualified and with the relevant experience. Opportunities also exist in yacht racing, yacht brokerage, event management, youth work, and adventure sailing as well as a whole host of shorebased support industries. For further information on these, or any of the career routes outlined in this publication please contact UKSA for information on their free monthly careers seminars.

As well as the above opportunities, career options for those qualified include specialising in adventure sailing, professional yacht racing, as well as socially rewarding jobs working afloat focussing on charitable youth work.

**Contact UKSA for advice that will be tailored to your needs. Tel 01983 203034 or visit [www.uksa.org](http://www.uksa.org)**



### DID YOU KNOW?

UKSA provide life long careers guidance for every student they train. With over 800 employer contacts worldwide, their careers network can help you kick start your yachting career.

## Other Frequently Asked Questions

### What personal attribute will most likely guarantee me a job?

A good work ethic is essential, together with good qualifications and an understanding of the yachting industry and its requirements. The dock is plagued by ski bunnies who slide off the slopes at the end of the season, laid back and ready to replenish their bank balances with a 'summer job' on the boats. However they expect to work the same laid back hours and in the same generally haphazard way for what amounts to as much as ten times the salary. It doesn't work that way. The job is demanding, physically, mentally and even emotionally. The expectations are high. If you are prepared to work hard and deliver the goods you are nine tenths of the way to establishing a thoroughly rewarding career in a field that offers considerable benefits and perks, not limited to financial rewards.

### What benefits does working on a large yacht offer?

When you work on a yacht, naturally a significant perk is the travel involved and although traditionally superyachts tend to cruise just ten percent of the world's oceans this is expanding constantly and the old cruising grounds of the south of France and the Mediterranean and the Caribbean are being abandoned in favour of more exotic playgrounds like the Maldives, Thailand and Malaysia, even New Zealand and Australia.

## Experiences

Working on a large yacht will open a window to an adventure playground that many people save all year for and are limited to a week when they eventually get there. Most yachts make the onboard sports equipment readily available for the crews use when the guest are not on board. You can find yourself kite surfing in Antigua, windsurfing in the Caspian Sea, water skiing in the Mediterranean, scuba diving in the Red Sea. All these fabulous experiences at little or no personal expense to yourself.

### **Okay so you've got my interest, what do I do next?**

Excellent! You won't regret it! Yachting is one of the most fascinating, challenging and rewarding careers today. Having read the brief job descriptions listed above, decide what interests you the most and take steps to get the best education possible so you can meet and exceed the captain's/owner's requirements.

### **Am I too old? Am I too young?**

Experience and professional reputation / attitude play a vital role in your employability. Clearly not every job is suitable for every person of every age, but people of all ages enter this industry so don't be put off by feeling too old or too young. With the right attitude, qualifications, experience and motivation it is almost always possible to find work within yachting. UKSA provide one to one guidance for anyone considering a career in yachting and can direct you to the opportunities most suited to your age.

### **What job skills from other industries transfer well into the superyacht industry?**

When it comes to jobs that slot neatly into the superyacht field there are a number that are a huge asset. Nursing and medicine in particular, regardless of what job you are after. Carpentry, cabinetry and mechanical skills for deckhands and assistant engineers are helpful. Hospitality skills are also invaluable, with special emphasis on silver service and sommelier expertise. Stewards/esses who have experience in professional catering and who can cook to a good standard will also find this skill an asset.

**Contact UKSA for advice that will be tailored to your needs. Tel 01983 203034 or visit [www.uksa.org](http://www.uksa.org)**

### So what is life onboard really like?

Before you put on your rose coloured glasses and swan off to St Tropez with your sunscreen clutched in your hand there are a few more points worth considering. Living on a yacht offers many benefits. Your living expenses are virtually nil, particularly as many yachts will foot the bill for toiletries, laundry, linen, food, drink etc. You have a built in social life where you mix with other like minded individuals with a significant disposable income, and there are many mornings where you will wake up in a different port, or even country with a whole new region to explore.

### Of course there are some downsides....

You might not like the crew chef's style of cooking but you will have to eat it every day and it will be difficult to complain about it as you will still have to live with him or her.

Your social life is great but you will be living in close confines with everyone onboard. When you are on a 40 metre yacht in the middle of the Atlantic you can't just jump in your car and go home at the end of your shift. While you might feel that you could genuinely throttle the deckhand if he so much as breathes once more, you will have to bite your tongue as you will probably end up eating dinner with him. And breakfast. And lunch...!



Waking up each day to a new place can also wear thin after a while. Yachting is a rootless existence and while some people thrive on this others find it hard to deal with.

It is worthwhile thinking about the negatives and being aware of what they might be. Forewarned is forearmed.

It is also wise to be aware of the rumours of extreme salaries. While the industry is well known for it's high rates of pay it is also wise to take some of the tales with a pinch of salt, and understand that the highest wages you may hear about will sensibly require people to have gained many years of experience before they can enjoy the highest financial rewards.



## Is it hard to find work?

**There is a massive demand for 'good' crew. Good crew are prepared to work hard and long hours yet still maintain a cheerful easy going persona. What no one wants to employ are prima donna's, who throw in the towel at every hitch.**

It is unlikely that you will have a problem when it comes to finding and keeping a job if you have a good work ethic.

## Where can I find out more about jobs in the yachting industry?

- UKSA in association with J.Errico offer a book (paperback or download) which goes into considerably more detail about the available jobs and what will be expected of you if working in the superyacht industry.
- UKSA are also on hand to provide guidance and advice on any aspect of living, training or working in the yachting industry on yachts of all sizes. The Academy runs free monthly career seminars which have been specifically tailored to offer a further insight into training and work opportunities.

Where can I find more information? Where can I find out about the courses and qualifications I will need?

**UKSA offers one of the most comprehensive programmes of study and training for people considering yachting as a serious career move. Offering courses for everyone from the complete novice right up to comprehensive in depth training modules for already qualified captains and engineers.**

Additionally for all UKSA graduates there are in house careers advisers who will not only help you for the duration of your training offering help and advice but will go on to help you find a job once you have completed your training.

Contact UKSA for advice that will be tailored to your needs. Tel 01983 203034 or visit [www.uksa.org](http://www.uksa.org)

Course information & guidance  
+44 (0)1983 203034

reception  
+44 (0)1983 294941

e-mail  
info@uksa.org

fax  
+44 (0)1983 295938

web  
www.uksa.org

## FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM UKSA



### YACHTING CAREERS

Short recreational  
training  
programmes for  
yachting and  
motoryachting



### WATERSPORTS CAREERS

Career training  
for dinghy sailing,  
windsurfing,  
kayaking,  
kitesurfing,  
wakeboarding and  
waterskiing



### MCA DECK OFFICER CAREERS

Reference manual  
for MCA training  
for Deck Officer  
and Engineering  
Officer (Yacht)  
qualifications

UKSA in association with author Jen Errico have produced this booklet for anyone curious about what a career afloat may have to offer. This guide provides a broad overview of some of the career opportunities in the yachting industry, with direction on training routes guidance and advice to help you realise success.

PUBLISHED BY UKSA // THE MARITIME ACADEMY

PHOTOS: UKSA / JAMES MORRIS / FAIRLINE YACHTS

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 299248