



## White-Hot Charter Market

Business hasn't been this good since before the recession—which means the game has changed for booking private yacht vacations.



Top: Falmouth Harbour and the Antigua Yacht Club during the Antigua Charter Yacht Show. Above: The extended swim platform on 131-foot (40-meter) Perini Navi State of Grace.

Consider Swarovski-studded, python-skin, leather-trim wallets to be once again open.

By widespread accounts, the charter industry has returned to a level of activity not seen since early 2007. It can be hard to remember just how strong business was before the global economy sailed over the edge. Yachts were booked at least a year in advance. Advertised rates were non-negotiable. In rare cases, would-be clients were paying extra to usurp cruising dates already booked by others.

It's heady stuff to recall, especially coming off the past seven years of last-minute bookings and deep-discount negotiations, and yet it's not terribly off the mark when it comes to the buzz at this past December's Antigua Charter Yacht Show. Traditionally, Antigua is the bellwether event for the winter season in the Caribbean, but retail brokers and charter managers were already looking past that to summer and next winter—because their phones were ringing with inquiries for this coming August and beyond.

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT CHARTER? EMAIL: [YACHTSMAIL@AIMMEDIA.COM](mailto:YACHTSMAIL@AIMMEDIA.COM)



Subscribe to our e-newsletter *Making Waves Today* and get more tips on charter and popular cruising destinations sent straight to your inbox. Scan the QR code or go to [yachtinginternational.com](http://yachtinginternational.com)

*BOOKING SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR AHEAD IS AGAIN THE NORM, ESPECIALLY FOR PRIME DATES ABOARD TOP YACHTS.*

"I have one yacht in my fleet in the 140-foot range that is fully booked through the end of 2015," said a Fort Lauderdale-based motoryacht manager. "More than a year in advance. And I mean contracts signed and money in the bank."

Several retail brokers from Europe reported similar levels of demand. One, from Monaco, said clients started calling in autumn 2014 for this May's Monaco Grand Prix and Cannes Film Festival. Top yachts in Greece, too, already had bookings—for multiweek charters during July and August—on the calendar well before Christmas.

This new reality means anyone wanting to book a charter aboard a leading yacht needs to think differently than in recent years. Waiting until the last minute and hoping to negotiate a deep discount is unlikely to work. Booking six months to a year ahead is again the norm, especially for prime dates aboard the world's top charter yachts.

Some of the Antigua show's standout sailing yachts to watch include 131-foot (40-meter) Perini Navi *State of Grace* and 220-foot (67-meter) Alloy *Vertigo*, both in the Y.CO fleet. The latter yacht is an example of industry trends: a full six months before the Mediterranean season, and at a lowest weekly base rate of €225,000 (about \$275,000), *Vertigo* already had nearly a month's worth of charters booked for the coming summer from Italy to Croatia. (For winter 2014-15, *Vertigo* will be in Patagonia and Antarctica, with inquiries being accepted now.)

Superyachts expected to book quickly after strong Antigua showings include 241-foot (73.4-meter) *Freira Naita* with Yachting Partners International (also a top choice at spring 2014's charter show in Italy thanks to her texture-filled interior décor). From the Burgess Yachts fleet, insiders loved 239-foot (72.8-meter) Perini Navi Group's Picchiotti-built *Grace E*, delivered in 2014 with diesel-electric Azipods so quiet that, according to chief steward Will McLellan, "unless you have a visual of the shore, you have no idea we're moving," and 241-foot (73.4-meter) *Nobiskrug Siren*, launched in 2008 and until now kept mostly for owner use, with tall, vertical windows and more than 7-foot headroom making a grand impression. The Westport *Aquarina*, one of just two 164s (50 meters) from the builder on the charter market and the first to be displayed—beautifully—at a charter show, also is expected to do brisk business this summer with International Yacht Collection. **Y**



top to bottom: The Picchiotti *Grace E* has diesel-electric and Azipod propulsion, which enhances stability and quietness underway; the *Nobiskrug Siren* has more than 7 feet of headroom plus tall, vertical windows; *Vertigo* will charter this winter in Patagonia and Antarctica.