


Former yacht crews themselves,  
**Frances and Michael Howorth** ask crews and  
specialist providers what they mean when  
they talk of Crew Benefits.





# FOR YOUR BENEFIT



**D**ifferent ships, different long splices is a phrase used by sailors to suggest that every vessel has its own and particular way of doing things. But it can also be used to explain why a phrase, in everyday use aboard a super yacht, can have two very different meanings. Use the words Crew Benefits in the mess room and every one thinks of free medical care, the use of the crew car and extra time off just because the Captains a good chap! Use the same term in a yacht manager's office and the focus changes to become what has to be given away to keep a crew loyal and happy to say nothing of fulfilling the

legal requirements an owner is obliged to grant to his crew. But whatever interpretation, one of the attractions of working in yachting is generally a crew member finds that basic essentials are paid for – rent, food, work clothing, toiletries and drink. It is the extras that make the difference.

Melanie Langley is the Senior Sales Manager in Moore Stephens Crew Benefits Limited. She is part of a team who search for solutions for crew aiming to answer any questions crew may have in relation to their benefits. Put simply, their mission is to help super yacht crew find financial solutions from bank accounts to medical insurance, foreign

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exchange to tax advice; anywhere in the world. She told On Board, "One thing that makes our industry unique is the lack of standardisation of crew benefits from yacht to yacht. Owners wishing to retain professional crew can therefore differentiate their yacht and hence attract the best crew by providing better and more comprehensive benefits. The best owners couple this with treating their crews as family and that is when you see good crews staying with an owner for years. If people are looked after, they stay."

MLC 2006 will tend to level the playing field somewhat for those yachts subject to it, but it is still easy to identify yachts where the owners care, simply by the length of service of their crew. It is important to note that the MLC 2006 applies to all ships, whether publically or privately owned, that are ordinarily engaged in commercial activities. The term "ordinarily engaged in commercial activities" is not defined in the MLC 2006 and therefore, it is to be determined by each ratifying Government in consultation with its social partners.

## Size doesn't matter

During our research, while writing this feature, we contacted a large number of Captains of yachts of all sizes who answered a questionnaire about crew benefits. Their replies showed a surprising wide range and variation on what owners were willing to give their crew and it was not just the largest yachts that were the most generous.

Most Captains told us that soft drinks in an almost limitless supply were always available for their crew. Beer and wine were available on many yachts, but some Captains did impose rules over when and how much was consumed. The supply of free spirits for crew consumption was less common among those Captains responding and there is evidence of an increasingly eco friendly attitude towards drinking water. Many Captains are now preferring to give crew nice, personalised drinking bottles so that they could avail themselves of what one Captain referred to as; "Carbon filtered and limestone treated silver ionised, cooled, water from the watermaker" rather than rely on product purchased in plastic bottles.

Snacks were, mostly, freely available on yachts but here again the evidence is crew are taking a cautious approach when it comes to consumption. One Captain told us, "We do supply snacks but my crew are generally very health conscious so they don't consume many snacks. He did however admit, "Consumption rises hugely on passage!" Another Captain quipped, "Yes I buy snacks for the crew and try, frequently unsuccessfully, to avoid eating them myself."

When it came to toiletries, responses were mixed with a few yachts supplying none and others saying that everything, even make up cosmetics for the girls was included. One Captain told us that his yacht supplied everything they might need in the way of toiletries except for condoms and tampons.

This means that a huge percentage of what a crew member earns can be saved or spent on luxuries. The problem is that the perceived immortality of youth combined with a fast-paced lifestyle, moves things like access to cash in foreign currencies, income protection, medical coverage off the boat, taxes and pensions to very low on the list of priorities for most junior members of crew. Even under MLC 2006 income protection will only be for four months. So it does become paramount that crew check what is available to them from the yacht before

they sign up. "With the ratification of the MLC 2006 and its entry into force on 20th August 2013, there will be a need for Seafarers to know if they have a mandatory Social Security or National Insurance Contribution to a Flag State. Eventually

## LESIA

Lesia Employment Services ICC Limited is the premier independent contract employment company for the yacht industry based in Guernsey. They also have a representative office in the Beau Rivage building, next to Port Hercule in Monaco.

Lesia provides employment solutions to yacht owners and their representatives irrespective of their location or size of yacht. In addition to employment solutions Lesia also provides: Social security, assessments for Owners, social security assessments for Crew, pre MLC, 2006 assessments and bespoke MLC, 2006 training.

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there will be a requirement for Governments to provide social protection for Seafarers who are resident in their country", said John Cook of the Lesia Group.

## Training matters

One area that even the best of owners sometimes overlook is funding of, and time off, for training, meaning crew often have to take unpaid holiday in order to gain qualifications. Some crews were paid to take first aid and fire fighting courses, others made crew pay for training themselves first then refunding the expenditure one year after they had successfully completed the course. This way, the yacht received the benefit of that training. One senior Captain told us, "Here study leave is paid after 1 year's service. Crew members must agree to work onboard for a further year afterwards. No vacation is accrued during study leave. If the crew member fails the exam then they must pay the cost themselves to take it again." Another Captain told us, the yacht pays for training and there is a special additional leave allocation of up to one month to get courses completed. He explained that this benefit was, at his discretion, and needed approval from management and owner. The Captain of another



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yacht said that courses such as massage for the stews and various cooking courses for the chefs were also paid for, while the Master of yet another yacht said he preferred to pay for on board training where everyone got to benefit from the likes of first aid, jetski, powerboat along with wine appreciation and serving courses that went on to benefit not just the crew themselves but the owner and his charter guests as well.

## Going offshore

Many crews are now being paid by specialist offshore payroll providers. Giroscope is one such crew employment and payroll administration company. Based in the offshore island of Guernsey, the firm was especially created to concentrate 100% on providing super yacht payroll. It has invested heavily in modern technology commissioning a software provider to provide them with the most up-to-date software system on the market today. This linked to their relationships with local banks allows them to take the stress out of payroll and to add the benefits of value and service.

The incidences of crew not being paid are somewhat higher than most would think. Our own research highlighted several cases in which super yacht crews have not been paid. In one instance crew called upon the services offered by Nautilus International a union for maritime professionals at sea and ashore. It is an independent, campaigning and progressive organisation that speaks up for and protects super yacht crew who have become members. While the union took up the case on their behalf and won, in another case, an entire crew had to walk away from a yacht having not been paid for months. Simon Roberts Head of Dominion Crew Solutions in the Isle of Man tries to ensure that crew are always treated fairly in accordance with both the terms and conditions of their employment and all maritime employment legislation. He told On Board, "My opinion on this is that Crew Benefits are not always about what more can the owner offer me? More importantly the question should be which yacht and employment company are best going to look after my interests? He added, "A lot of the additional benefits will soon be covered by the new MLC regulations when they come in to force this coming August."

Our survey into crew benefits asked many questions and covered topics such as insurance on and off the yacht as well as leave and flights home. Much of what we learned will come to light in future articles that will be covered in the pages of future editions of On Board. One question did, however,

give rise to many wonderful answers when we enquired, Do you provide any additional crew benefits not mentioned on our list? Our favourite response was from one wise old Captain who said, "Yes, heaps of love and attention, surrogate mothering and unbelievable amounts of patience."



Based in Guernsey, the friendly and professional team at Giroscope spend 100% of their time dedicated to super yacht payroll. The team have built excellent relationships with local banks to ensure a stress free process each month. Using the industry leading Cello Marine software from i-Bos allows the team at Giroscope to deliver timely payroll and customer service that is second to none. The combination of modern, up to date software and years of industry knowledge and experience allows Giroscope to achieve their aim of providing a seamless and supportive service to all customers. For more details; Tel: +44 (0) 1481 729 020 or visit: [www.giroscope.gg](http://www.giroscope.gg)

## CONTACTS

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Lesia	<a href="http://www.lesiagroup.com">www.lesiagroup.com</a>
Moore Stephens Crew Benefits	<a href="http://www.msiom.com">www.msiom.com</a>
Nautilus International	<a href="http://www.nautilusint.org">www.nautilusint.org</a>



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## DOMINION

Dominion Crew Solutions provides crew employment and payroll services to many of the world's most prestigious superyachts. With the MLC coming in to full force in August for all commercial superyachts, now is the time to prepare your yacht for compliance. To assist you, their Seafarer Employment Agreements are flag state approved and meet the requirements of the MLC and all associated maritime employment legislation.

Dominion Crew Solutions has also developed a seamless process to implement pure white label arrangements for yacht managers where the importance of retaining brand identity is paramount to the continued success of their business.

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