

ELITE


SUPERYACHTS

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Experience talks

Mr W, the owner of *Exuma*, shares with us his views on the best destinations to go cruising. His 30 years of yachting experience reveal a passion for the world's unspoilt landscapes.



The Palau archipelago in Micronesia features rock formations that can be seen nowhere else

Elite Traveler Superyachts: How much time do you spend cruising?

Mr W: Approximately two months a year. I would love to spend more time onboard but, not only do I have other occupations to worry about, I also like the idea of having other passengers enjoy the pleasure of cruising the world onboard *Exuma*.

Which cruising destinations inspire you most for a weekend getaway?

I can't conceive spending only a weekend away. It's too short a time to get to really exotic locations.

For a week's holiday?

The Indian Ocean, or even the South Pacific, anytime, even if it takes me and my family 20 hours to get there by plane. Maybe it's because I've traveled the world extensively and got used to it, but the time to travel

doesn't count; only the destination is important. I'd recommend going to French Polynesia, but away from Tahiti. The Society Islands are wonderful, but there are many other atolls to explore. Places like Raivavae are similar to Bora Bora, but are still completely unspoilt. Further away, there are the Marquesas Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago, and Micronesia with islands like Palau and Yap, which are just wonders of the world.

And for an extended holiday?

A Pacific crossing from French Polynesia to New Zealand! I've done it twice, during two round-the-world trips, the first one in 1979, and then a three-year circumnavigation from 1994 to 1997 onboard a 112' Christensen. It's thanks to such experience that I've been able to define and continuously refine the technical requirements that were to lead to the creation of today's *Exuma*.

Which dream destination have you not cruised to yet but desire to?

There's one particularly magnificent atoll in French Polynesia called Maupiti. It is one of the smallest of the Society Islands. I've been there, but could not cruise through the one pass to reach the inside part of the atoll with my former yacht. It is a very difficult pass that requires the right marine conditions. I must actually admit that *Exuma* was almost born out of my obsession to be able to get through that pass while staying onboard. There are also remote places in Africa, South America and Asia that I haven't sailed to yet, and certainly intend to do so with *Exuma*.

What are your best yachting memories?

There's a small atoll in Micronesia, Lamotrek, near Yap Island, where my wife and I ended up being the guests of honor of the local village, with a superb dance

show prepared for us by all the inhabitants. And of course we couldn't speak their language. It was a rare, one-of-a-kind experience. They had probably not seen Westerners for ages. The underwater and above-water marvels of the Rock Islands of Palau are astounding. They offer the most wonderful dive sites, but are equally beautiful when only snorkeling, or enjoying the scenery from the beach platform or the decks of a yacht. There I remember feeding a giant Napoleon fish with hard-boiled eggs; it almost became our local pet.

Whom do you ask for advice when deciding on a cruising destination?

It's actually the other way round. Friends, knowing me both as an avid traveler and experienced navigator, ask for advice. The way I've devised the itinerary for *Exuma* for the next three years is to make the best journey. My recommendation is therefore to pick any of the regions she's meant to be cruising, and just enjoy; but anyone keen to discover Palau and Yap islands should be advised *Exuma* will be there in the spring of 2012.

What makes yachting special to you?

Although I've inherited a passion for travel from my parents, I accidentally realized that yachting provides the ultimate freedom to go places unencumbered. I bought my first boat, a 32/10m Couach, as an alternative countryside home. It proved an amazing experience: being able to feel at home while in different places gives you a sense of the continuous flow of magnificent landscapes our planet is filled with. It's much better than an aircraft, which only takes you from one place to another like a vortex would.

What do you think is the key to a successful yachting experience?

The right choice of yacht for a given destination. Although the choice of destination, and being there at the right time of the year is paramount, it is important to ensure the vessel that takes you there is relevant both to your lifestyle and the place you're going. One should also be aware that there are places such as Bali or Easter Island that shouldn't be discovered by boat, due to the lack of pleasant harbors or good anchorages. And it is important to rely on someone, whether your captain or broker, who can help handle all the administrative difficulties and numerous regulations that otherwise can easily take the fun out of boating. I would also recommend for anyone keen to own or build a yacht to charter a number of different yachts first.



Bora-Bora: the pristine waters of the lagoon with the volcano beyond offer spectacular views where the sea meets the sky



Cruising on *Exuma* is the ultimate freedom