

THE CAPTAIN

Q&As with Louis Rich of the iconic *Maltese Falcon*

Louis Rich

Place of birth South Africa

Previous yachts *Globana, Lionheart, Alfa Nero, Windrose, Ethereal, Troyanda, Ace, Pestifer, Amazon Express, White Cloud, Rosehearty*
Current yacht *Maltese Falcon*
Number of crew 18

What was your first taste of the sea?

In 1978 I was conscripted for two years into South African navy service. I was trained as a scuba diver and served aboard the frigate SAS *President Pretorius*, for a year. This was followed by a year on trawlers operating out of Cape Town before my introduction to yachting.

Which destinations do most look forward to visiting?

The Mediterranean – there is so much hidden, particularly around the Aegean archipelago, which is also one of the most exciting sailing areas for the *Falcon* due to favourable winds and beautiful islands.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

Home, in the South of France. Wildlife photography on safari in Africa is pretty special, too.

What's the one place in the world you'd like to cruise to that you haven't already?

Hard to choose, but probably the Pacific. The Tuamotu archipelago, part of French Polynesia, consists of 76 atolls. Rangiroa is one of these and it is made up of over 400 islands. With an average air and sea temperature of 26°C, it's the ideal destination!

What are the biggest changes you've seen in the yachting industry?

Growth – in terms of the industry itself, size of yachts, technology, automation, and above all advances in sailing systems. Competition boats are applying amazing innovation that is maintaining sailing as one of the most exciting sports and experiences in the world.

What do you like most about your current yacht?

There will only ever be one *Maltese Falcon*. Her power under sail is awesome, her ability to give joy and comfort is unparalleled. The *Maltese Falcon* is a masterpiece that I am proud to be the captain of.

What is your favorite on-board toy?

The *Falcon* carries an array of toys like a Flyboard, jet-pack, sea pool, slides, diving equipment, PWCs and Seabobs, but the *Falcon*'s sailing system is by far the easy winner.

What would you change about the superyacht industry?

As captain, I appreciate the skills and experience of my crew, their training, high standards and loyalty, but I can see that due to the growth of the industry it is becoming harder to maintain standards if crew are promoted too fast.



What's the most curious request you've had on board?

A request to drop anchor halfway between mainland France and Corsica for the night. The depth there is over 2,500 metres.

What's the worst weather you've encountered at sea?

In the navy, on our way to Cape Town from Durban and we were caught in the worst storm for 40 years off Cape Agulhas, the southern tip of Africa. The wind increased to over 50 knots and the waves were averaging 15 metres for 12 hours. The captain had ordered the ship to be battened down and all topsides decks were out of bounds.

Who's the most eccentric/funniest member of your crew?

Phil, one of our engineers. He has total commitment, one of the hardest working ethics I've come across. At the same time, he's always smiling, with a wicked sense of humour and utter humility. Our team is amazing.

What's the next big thing in yachting?

Hybrid yachts using renewable energy. Yachts like the *Falcon* lead the way in offering a combination of comfort, speed and the reliable use of renewable energy while minimising our carbon footprint. To motor a superyacht of this size requires a minimum 600 litres of fuel for one hour of cruising. This is equivalent to 1.58 tonnes of carbon emissions released in the atmosphere. So far, the *Falcon* has travelled 54,700 nautical miles under sail – 40-60% of the total distance travelled. By doing so we have saved over 5,600 tonnes of carbon emissions. There is as yet no other superyacht with demonstrably reliable sailing technology contributing to a greener earth, and we will continue making every effort to improve our green credentials in the future.

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Attention to detail.

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

Churchill; Mandela; Dylan; Mick Jagger; David Attenborough.

What's the biggest cock-up you've ever seen a captain make?

I've seen a few boats run aground spectacularly well.

And yours?

No comment!

The 88-metre Maltese Falcon, delivered by Perini Navi in 2006, is available for charter through Burgess from €350,000pw (low season). www.burgessyachts.com www.symaltesefalcon.com



“The *Maltese Falcon* is a MASTERPIECE that I am PROUD to be the captain of”