

An engine problem destroyed by sailing holiday. What shall I do?

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**By Alexander Vournas**

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Nobody likes to run into problems whilst on holiday, but the very nature of a yacht charter holiday does demand that you have to cope with the sea – which is always unpredictable (hence "sea" being of the feminine gender) – and a vessel, which consists of thousands of parts and bits of equipment, (electrics, electronics, mechanical items, sails, etc) all of which should work together, and in unison. You can ignore all the promises that nothing will go wrong – it might just do that.

Add to that the fact that you have chosen an idyllic setting for your holiday – "away from it all" – for example the Ionian Islands in Greece (the Caribbean, Turkey, or any other exotic location would be similar), where you can not expect the natives to be as trained and proficient as those in the Hamble. A recent TV commercial for a Jamaican rum shows the very situation.

Let us look at an example – how you should react – how you should carry out the necessary damage limitation steps – and tips as to how you can smooth out the resulting aggravation.

Let's say you have chartered a yacht in the Ionian Sea, in Greece, for a week. Everything starts off well – until the morning of Day 3, when you are in Ithaca and THE ENGINE WILL NOT START. After a few vain attempts at sourcing the cause of the malfunction you call the contact number given to you for such eventualities, and a polite individual listens to your problem and says; "Don't worry, Mr Jones, somebody will come very soon and look at your engine". What they will, or should, do is to contact their man on the spot. Soon Vangelis arrives, spends a couple of hours with his head buried in the engine compartment, covers all your saloon cushions with oil and grease, and emerges triumphantly holding the fuel pump which he says is the cause of the problem. He states that he will take the pump back to his workshop and repair it.

"How long this repair will take, Vangelis?" You ask.

"Hmm, about a couple of hours" is his reply.

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Away he goes, with your pump, and as it is already noon on Day 3 of your holiday, you decide to go and have lunch and then wait for the return of Vangelis. But, there is no sign of Vangelis, or your pump, and much later, as the sun is going down Vangelis's assistant arrives with the wonderful news that your pump can not be repaired on Ithaca and that it has to go, by ferry, to Patras, where there is a pump specialist, and that it will be returned the next day on the ferry. Whilst this part of the saga is unfolding your blood pressure has gone sky-high. You have also made three more phone calls to the local contact and two back to the UK to your yacht charter agency, with whom you booked the charter in the first place.

WHAT YOU DID NOT KNOW was that Vangelis failed to tell you that – since it was noon, he would first have to go for his lunch, then his siesta, then his cup of coffee THEN he would have a look at the pump. For him, this is normal behaviour as working in siesta time is "out of the question" in a place like Ithaca. After all, you asked him how long it would take to repair the pump – NOT when he would come

back. He didn't lie – it took him the forecast two hours to find out that he couldn't fix your pump.

So, here you are, on the morning of Day4 of your holiday, with a vessel broken down, waiting for Vangelis to arrive. Imagine the state of your blood pressure when noon arrives and no sign of Vangelis. It is not until late that afternoon that a smiling local arrives and invites you to come and join the local Saint's Day celebrations. To work during siesta time is against local customs BUT to work on the local Saint's Day is a crime against humanity. Not only does Vangelis not work on a Saint's Day but he does not think it appropriate to inform "infidels" of the simple facts of life. For him it is a day to celebrate and anyone who doesn't realise that should be dead.

You have, by now, made another ten phone calls to your yacht charter agent and to the local contact, as has the charter agency BUT Vangelis doesn't answer the phone on a Saint's Day. The only thing you can do is to grin and bear it and join in the festivities. Taking more blood pressure pills or blowing up the village square will not enamour you to the locals, or get your boat fixed – it won't help you a lot, either.

Now it is the morning of Day 5. Still the yacht is not functioning and nobody has turned up. Now is the time to start believing in "God's Will". At around 11 o'clock a smiling Vangelis arrives with your pump – fully functional. He sets to work probably realising that the look in your eye is not indicative of your good temper and feelings towards him. Thus, after an unusually reasonable period of time, with the saloon cushions sporting another layer of grease and oil, with engine testing and cleaning carried out, your boat is READY. However, it is now 5 p.m and too late to set sail for your next port of call, so your departure has to be put off until tomorrow morning.

The morning of Day 6 dawns – and you are ready to sail, BUT a minor detail now crosses your mind – the only destination open to you is back to your original departure Port or Marina as you only had a week's holiday, your flight home departs tomorrow morning early, and you need to be back in that port that evening !!

What an we learn from this story? However reputable the yacht owner/agency, however new the yacht and its equipment, however well maintained, however careful you may be – this sort of thing can

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happen to anyone, anywhere. Just change the names and places and a similar problem can arise. Don't forget also that you can be gale-bound in harbour for days on end.

Can you protect yourself against such a happening, and what should you do when it arises?

The answer to the first question is NO, and the suggested reaction to the second is: – relax (difficult though this may at first seem); be patient; try to understand the elements of human nature which will be displayed by all around you – your crew and the "outsiders".

You could react like the skipper in our story and make endless irate phone calls to everyone you can think of or, as we suggest, you can accept the facts as they are – the problem has arisen.

1. Try and make the best of a bad job. Explore the locale where you are "marooned". Make short trips by water-taxi, taxi, hire-car, on foot or by local ferries and keep your crew amused and remaining in holiday mood, i.e. shopping, sightseeing, swimming, enjoying special lunches and dinners, etc.

2. Remember, you will certainly be compensated by your charter agent/owner for the lost sailing days, provided you take a few simple steps to ensure that your claim will be met.

3. Contact your charter company immediately, **PREFERABLY IN WRITING**, if it is at all possible, e.g. by fax or e-mail, and inform them of what has happened and that you will contact them again. Give them a telephone or fax number where you can be contacted.

4. **NEVER LEAVE THE VESSEL UNATTENDED OR OUT OF SIGHT** – Vangelis would love you to give him an excuse or "cover story" for not having come back to the boat when promised.

5. Be understanding of Vangelis's problems – he will do his best if you are polite and patient. Tip his assistant – that will work wonders.

6. When all is well again and the boat is repaired – contact your agent again, by fax or e-mail preferably, tell him that all is well and tell him that a **FORMAL CLAIM** for compensation for loss of holiday will be forthcoming.

7. When you finally return home make the formal claim, in writing, detailing the minutes details of the saga as it unfolded – what happened, the actions you took, the reactions of the local agent and his employed contacts.

Make sure you have all the paperwork involved, especially the contract documents– do not leave them on the boat! A sensible thing to have done would have been to look back in the Ship's Log Book (if there is any), to see if previous charterers had run into similar problems.

If an accident was part of the cause of the problem make sure that other people who may have been involved are brought into the act, and statements are taken for witnesses.

We can not really advise you as to whether, or not, you will accept any offered compensation – whether

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it be cash or substitute holidays – **THAT CHOICE IS YOURS**. Only you know how you and your crew felt about the happenings, whether you made the best of a bad job at the time, whether everyone did their best to mitigate your losses and disappointments, and whether the offered compensation is adequate.

Whether you accept cash or a replacement holiday will probably depend on how much holiday time you and your crew have left.

Alexander M. Vournas

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## **Charter Yacht Vacations**

### **By Graeme Ramsey**

With many companies offering a wide range of prices for their charter yacht holiday packages, more and more people are taking to the seas for an adventure that they couldn't experience in the past.

With crewed yacht charters, all the hard work is taken out of the yachting adventure, so you can enjoy the lifestyle yachting presents without the need to feel like you want another holiday after the charter to recover.

Charter yachts are available to suit many budgets from the most basic yacht to the luxury yachts that most people can only dream about. These luxury yachts come with a full crew including chefs and food fit for a king.

With so many beautiful places throughout the world to explore, charter yachts offer the advantage of seeing places that the average tourist will never go.

Imagine stopping off at a different island in the Caribbean everyday and then sailing off into the sunset for a new destination each evening as you sip champagne and eat the finest of foods.

When you compare the price of a yacht charter with a resort offering equal levels of service you might be in for a pleasant surprize at how cost effective yacht charters have become in recent years.

There is a wide range of yachts available for charter, from sailboats to motor yachts and the waters that you will be sailing will have a bearing on the type of yacht that you will want to charter.

It is wise to use a recommended charter yacht company as they have the experience to guide you in your decision-making.

If you are unsure it is always a safe bet to get a crewed yacht where you can safely trust the people who are familiar with the conditions that you will be sailing in.

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Before your next holiday consider the costs and the advantages of a charter yacht vacation.

Graeme Ramsey writes about many different vacation destinations.



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