

# Mediterranean DREAM

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DOUG MITCHELL

**D**ID THAT SEASON REALLY HAPPEN or was it an especially vivid dream? Lately, I feel like I need to check my hard drive's cache of photos or our boat's logbook to answer these uncertainties. I returned to the U.S. after five months of cruising around the Mediterranean and now that I'm back on the palm-lined streets of Florida, it feels like we've been gone for only five minutes.

You hear it on the lips of yachties and non-yachties alike: "That summer flew by," or "Where do the days go?" or "Holy \$#!?, it's October already!" but it always amazes me how different the view is from the starting blocks to the finish line. It all comes down to relativity, I suppose.

In April 2010, after loading the yacht on a transport ship for the voyage across the pond, I spent my time running errands and banking as much quality time as possible with the amazing girl I had recently started dating. Apart from the horrendously poor timing, things were going extremely well with us. Of course, I was excited about going to Europe but

those looming five months felt like they were going to steal me away for a lifetime. Yin found its Yang, however, and I said my goodbyes and boarded a plane bound for Palma, my mind spinning about the five-month adventure that lay ahead.

After the crew assembled and the ship arrived, "our" yacht splashed into the Mediterranean Sea and we began a summer of work that would take us to Spain, Gibraltar, Greece, Montenegro, Croatia, Monaco, France and Italy – all amazing places filled with incredible, off-the-tourist-trail destinations that even the most researched and ambitious travelers might not get a chance to see.



Venice, Italy



Venice, Italy



Rhodes Town, Greece



Ostia, Italy



Dubrovnik, Croatia

There are so many things to fall in love with in the Old World, beginning on the palate. The simple and varied tapas instantly won me over in Spain. I became a fan of Greek cuisine when I took my first bite of Saganaki, breaded and baked cheese drizzled with honey and sprinkled with sesame seeds. Without being horribly cheesy, it was love at first bite. Add in the Italian pizzas, pastas and gelato, the French breads and desserts and the regional wines and beers to top it all off and you have more than enough proof that Mediterraneans know what eating and drinking are really about.

The history is inescapable. Whether it's walking around Pompeii, marveling at the Greek Isles' natural beauty and historical narratives or simply sauntering along any of the ubiquitous cobblestone streets, the rich history that is commonplace to the locals would send me into an awestruck trance. It also may explain why thousands of new photographs have shown up on my hard drive since the beginning of May.

The opportunity to enjoy the Mediterranean while being employed on a private yacht is veritable icing on the cake. Working with a great crew and terrific owners who encouraged us to do and see as much as we could when the schedule allowed made the experience even more exceptional. Every yacht's Med season is different and I appreciate what I had. Of course, there were trying days with long hours and close quarters with my crewmates that will cause trouble once in a while. And everyone has to deal with the stressors that working in



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this industry can bring to their relationships — some on board, some between vessels and some, as was the first time for me, stretching across oceans. I spoke to my girlfriend every day and although we stayed positive by keeping busy, there were times when the idea of “just a few more months” didn't inspire much enthusiasm. So, over and over again we reminded each other that time would fly by...and true to its usual behavior, it did.

Now, as I look back at that time, it's like it barely happened — like a wisp of smoke sucked into the whirling blades of a ceiling fan, it disappears from sight, but leaves a strong presence lingering on the other senses. My time in Europe did not fade away without a trace. The season left me with a mountain of photographs that aren't all great, but nevertheless effortlessly reveal how beautiful the Mediterranean coastline is. It left me with the ability to simply close my eyes if I want to smell the food or taste the mouthwatering wine. It left me with a promise to myself that I will return one day with my girlfriend. But above all, my summer season left me with enough proof that even though it did end up flying by, it wasn't just a dream. **DW**



Doug Mitchell has worked in the yachting industry since 2008. Currently, he is the boson on M/Y *Sovereign*, a 130-foot Westport. Doug is originally from Alberta, Canada, and studied photojournalism at university in Calgary.