

# SABBATICAL YEAR: : HOW CAN THE DREAM BECOME REALITY?

Let the one who has never dreamed of it cast the first stone... Leaving the reassuring but so-predictable daily routine to head off for the other side of the ocean to see if 'lagoon blue' is a real colour, to discover the wonderful islands bordered with coconut trees, and finally to be able to enjoy your family and watch the children grow... Living, cruising, with no other constraints than those you impose on yourself. A sabbatical year afloat is possible, and here is how to do it...

Over the almost thirty years that Multihulls World has existed, a good many of our readers have taken the step. They left, and came back. Often, the magazine's journalists were these adventurers' 'confidants', when they themselves hadn't done the circuit on their boat. Our photo library is full of their immortalized memories of the most beautiful places in the world. From these thousands of experiences, each different from the others, we can draw a conclusion: leaving for a sabbatical year (at least) is really worth it...

### **A PROGRAMME - A DURATION - A GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

But although it's well worth it, you will still have to prepare the adventure you want to experience in the best way possible. Let's not forget that leaving your comfortable cocoon to live on a boat (even if it is a catamaran) is a major change. And the anxiety preceding the departure is quite natural. Amongst the major pre-departure questions, security is the one that is raised the most frequently. In general, one's own anxieties are also added to by grandparents and friends,

for whom boats are dangerous. Although you mustn't bury your head in the sand – accidents happen – we must admit that they are very rare on a classic Atlantic circuit. And then there are the pirates, and an illness far from the nearest doctor. What will we do? Will we be able to return to society after having spent a self-sufficient year aboard our boat? And the children? Etc... ! And then one day, the desire becomes stronger than these constantly repeated questions. There are those who leave, and those who remain. Those who dare and those for whom the



dream will never become reality. In the opinion of all those who have left, the hardest thing is to take the decision. What follows is not necessarily only pleasure! Once the decision to leave has been taken, the hardest thing is done... All that remains is to organize your voyage. First of all, you should define the duration of the voyage, and your destination. Sabbatical leave (to be defined with your employer), resignation, retirement, sale of a business: there are numerous sce-

narios, and you will have to find the one which suits you best. The most frequent case is that of the sabbatical year. You leave for a year, often from July to July. If you leave from Europe, the most classic route is the Atlantic circuit, to go and spend the winter in the West Indies, before returning. An Atlantic circuit which allows you to experience two Atlantic crossings and spend six months discovering the Caribbean Sea. But many people choose to spend the whole year in the sun, and

*A sabbatical year means the pleasure of playing with your family, watching the children grow and quite simply, enjoying life !*



*Over almost 30 years at the magazine, we have witnessed some nice stories... It's your turn to write the next chapter!*

leave from and remain in the Caribbean or in Polynesia. A choice which allows them to avoid long ocean passages, which are always worrying for the family, and enjoy their year in the sun to the full!

**CHARTER OR PURCHASE?**

So? You're going to leave? Good, but how do you choose a suitable boat? For a voyage planned to last for several years, there is no question – you must buy the boat of your dreams. But for a sabbatical year, the question of charter inevitably crops up. The principle is extremely simple: in return for a sum defined in advance with a charter company, you have

year, the charter company will ask you to let them know regularly where you are, possibly prohibit certain areas they consider risky, and will arrange a few appointments in advance for boat maintenance. As for the rest, with the reservation that you use the boat 'in a reasonable manner', you are free to spend your sabbatical year as you please. On the last day, all you have to do is return the cat's keys to the charter company, carry out a full debriefing and a check of the boat, to recover your deposit, and leave, with your head full of beautiful images, and above all, no worries about having to re-sell your boat, and



*Two, three, ten people...Whatever the boat and the number of crew, the sabbatical year is more often than not pure pleasure !*

the use of a catamaran for the period defined... Roughly, you arrive at the port of Le Marin on 1st July and take possession of your 40-footer (for example), which is perfectly-equipped, completely serviced and ready to leave. All you have to do is stow your possessions, take on provisions and leave to visit the Lesser Antilles until 1st July of the following year (or 15th August, or 1st September...). During this

return to your life ashore!

**AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?**

The sum quite obviously depends on the type of boat, the charter period, and your start and finish points. For a year, reckon on around 45,000 euros for a 40-foot catamaran, plus a deposit of 6 to 10,000 euros, depending on the company, which is cashed and refunded after



*Purchase or charter, the right choice of boat is essential, so everything will go well during your year in the sun..*

the inspection at the end of the charter. In any case, charter is an economically viable solution, if you consider that in the case of a sale/re-sale, your capital will be tied up for at least two to two and a half years (you will buy your boat at least 6 months before your departure, and sell it on average in the year following your

return). You must add insurance, the marina berth, maintenance, preparation, the inevitable repairs and the costs of buying and re-selling... Note the attractive solution offered by Kiriacoulis, a system which is half way between buying and chartering. The principle is to have a boat on a charter management



*A year-long voyage allows you to explore some incredible places which are often inaccessible to ordinary sailors...*



*More and more readers are daring to go to Polynesia for a full year...*

agreement with the company. The system is well-known: you buy a boat, which is given to the charter company to manage; the company uses it and pays you an income. The advantage is that you pay less for your boat than you would have paid for a new one, and you can enjoy one of the charter company's bases for up to 10 weeks per year, over a maximum of seven years.

Kiriacoulis' idea is to allow you to enjoy these weeks in one go, so you can leave for a sabbatical year, and only obtain a return on the boat over the following years. In concrete terms, here is how it works: you pay 55% of the price of a fully equipped boat plus 7%, giving 62%. The company then commits itself to paying the remaining 38%, and delivers a new boat to one of its bases. You leave for your sabbatical year aboard your new boat, which you return at the end of the year to one of the bases, in the West Indies, Greece, France... Kiriacoulis then takes responsibility for the boat and starts to use it to get a return on the 38% it financed a year earlier. Having used up all your sailing entitlement on your boat in one go, you can no longer use it. But the company has understood that you risk having withdrawal symptoms, and

nevertheless offers the possibility of using an equivalent boat in the fleet when one is free, as a last minute arrangement (from 8 to 16 days before the desired date), or a reduction of around 40% in the classic charter tariffs. The company moreover undertakes to reimburse the 7% you paid in addition to the ini-

tial 55% (this sum actually allows it to cover the first year's credit on the part it is responsible for, when it had no charter income)...

At the end of your voyage, you can decide to leave the boat in charter management, or put it up for sale immediately, to recover the major part of your capital... Several variants exist, notably with leasing, but the general operation is the same.

The advantage of this system is that you sail for a year aboard a new boat, for a very reasonable sum... A solution to be studied !

A SABBATICAL YEAR CAN BE ENVISAGED FOR A SUM OF FROM 30 TO 60,000 EUROS... DARE YOU?



*.....even though the West Indies remains a paradise for spending a sabbatical year!*



*Antoine, one of France's most famous sailors has been cruising around the planet aboard his cat for more than thirty years. An extended sabbatical year!*

must therefore meet the family's wishes and needs: enough cabins, capable of carrying the necessary load, but also suited to the crew's nautical skills. There is nothing worse than having to drag your heels on a heavy

to manoeuvre continually, adjust the daggerboards and play with the spinnaker guys can rapidly become tedious for a family crew... The choice will therefore depend for a large part on your crew and your itinerary. You must define it carefully so you don't make a mistake and spoil your dream!

**THE PREPARATION:  
ALREADY PART  
OF THE VOYAGE**

You're nearly there: you have chosen your departure date, the duration of your voyage as well as your destination. You have set your heart on the boat of your dreams, so all that remains is...to prepare

A REALLY BEAUTIFUL ADVENTURE, MADE UP OF CRUISING, WILD ANCHORAGES, UNIQUE ENCOUNTERS...

If you can't find a boat to charter, either because those on offer don't appeal to you, or because they have all been chartered (the offer is actually very limited), you will have to purchase. And here, there is an abundant supply of boats. New or second-hand, production boat or one-off, in plywood, sandwich or aluminium, fast or slow, with varying load carrying capacities, there is something to suit all tastes and all means (from 50,000 to 3 million euros!). It is therefore above all a question of personal choice. Nowadays, the majority of candidates for a sabbatical year opt for a production catamaran, more or less equipped for 'ocean cruising'. They are easy to find on the market, and resale after the voyage will be easier, as long as the boat is in good condition and the asking price is coherent. This is the part of the preparation which will require most

work, as the chosen boat will become the family home, for the duration of the cruise. It

boat if you and your family are sport cat racing fanatics. Whilst on the contrary, having



*From the smallest to the largest catamaran, all had the feeling of being happy as a family, for an exceptional moment. Three cheers for the sabbatical year!*



Fishing is one of the favourite activities aboard an ocean cruising boat... Take suitable equipment...

everything so that all goes well!

Before embarking on your adventure, it is advisable to undo your ties to the land. Why keep the car(s) in a garage for a year? Sell it (them)! And the house? If you need to finance your boat and your voyage, you have no other choice than to sell it, along with all the furniture in it. When you return, you will have to sell the boat quickly so you can house yourself again... Otherwise, the furnished let solution is the most attractive. However, you will have to find the rare treasure who will take care of your plants and the house, whilst paying you rent which will allow you to enjoy life in the West Indies. This requires method, judgement and above all, time! You're leaving for a year? That's fine, however life ashore doesn't stop. You will therefore have to find someone to look after day to day things, from taxes to bills, via relationships with the bank or the chandler, to obtain the spare part essential to the continuation of your dream life. In the opinion of the magazine readers, this 'private secretary' role particularly suits grandparents, unless in your circle of friends you have a volunteer who lives a few kilometres away, or a good friend, who you can always thank by inviting him or her to spend a few days aboard...

Whilst we are talking about preparation, let's not forget the safety side of things. A first aid course is the minimum requirement, and special care should be taken

when making up a comprehensive first aid kit. And if your route takes you to remote corners of the earth, you must be able to repair anything which can break down and spoil your cruise: a diesel mechanics course is therefore a good idea...

### AND FINALLY, HOW MUCH DOES IT COST ?

Between the purchase, the preparation and the re-sale of a catamaran, and all the associated expenses, or the charter of a boat, you must allow between 30 and 50,000 euros for a year in a boat of between 40 and 45 feet. Certain people will spend much less, by finding a good second-hand boat being re-sold at the purchase price, others much more, with over-equipped new boats...

For the rest, it depends of course on the way you like and want to live. Some readers have told us how they lived for a year on their boat, as a family, with a monthly budget of no more than 1000 euros for four people... It is more reasonable to count on 1500 to 2500 euros, so you can eat in a few restaurants and hire cars to visit certain of the nicest islands. Everyone lives according to their means and wishes, but afloat, we always spend less than ashore...

In concrete terms, a sabbatical year can cost between 30 and 60,000 euros... The price of a large saloon car, for a year's holiday with the children!

### THE RETURN

All good things come to an end, and this is of course also the case for your sabbatical year.

You have to come back and pick up a 'normal' life again. For some people, going back to work, back to the daily routine, after having experienced a full and complete life with the family is not always easy. Here again, the children are incredibly adaptable. In just a few days, they become landlubbers again and return eagerly to their old habits. For the adults, it's sometimes harder, and takes longer. Some people don't hesitate to write a book ('Histoire de Partir' - Nieutin family or 'Un temps pour un rêve' - Geoffroy de Bouillane) or make a film (La Jolie Boucle) to continue the adventure and 'come down' more gently. In any case, everyone admits to having learned positive lessons from their adventure. And above all to having the feeling that they had lived life to the full and returned with a host of memories which would remain in their heart of hearts for the rest of their lives. They did it! Now it's your turn...

### CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this article, we spoke about the many readers of Multihulls World who have taken the step... After having coped with their return, they are unanimous, even those who experienced lots of hassle: this interlude in their life had been EXTRAORDINARY. A special moment of serenity, a feeling of living life fully, and above all a 'plus' which, for most of them, allowed them to start a new life, much fuller and much richer than the one they had before they left.

So, pluck up courage and take the plunge: it appears that only the first step is difficult!



After the voyage, all that is left is the good memories...