

The Recipe for Happiness

Francesca Webster sits down with the owners of the 40m Benetti superyacht *Happy Me*, to hear more about what brings them joy aboard their yacht, the combination of culture and their love of Croatia.



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It is not unusual, when speaking with yacht owners, to find that very few spend more than a few weeks a year aboard their yacht, even now when superyachts are able to double as home offices and many have impressive autonomous capabilities. One couple that bucks that trend however, are the owners of the 40-metre superyacht *Happy Me*, who enjoy, not a few weeks, but almost a week per month for the entire Mediterranean summer aboard their semi-custom Benetti. We recently sat down with the owners to hear more about the customisations made to their yacht, including the embroidered panels made by a collective of Vietnamese women, their love of adventure and passion for cruising in Croatia.



Tell us about your history with yachts and how you came to build a superyacht?

Husband: It all started with our love of being in nature. Being outside reminds us of our place in the world and being on the water is really the epitome of the outdoors experience – enjoying the day from sunrise to sunset, swimming in the sea and exploring hidden islands. That passion drove us to our first yacht charters more than 15 years ago aboard 55 foot motor yachts, but we were always disappointed that by 2pm captains and crew wanted to leave the anchorages and head into port.

We didn't get into chartering to sit stern-to in marinas. We wanted to wake up in private bays and jump straight into the water, but the crew had other priorities – which we also understood. We realised that to really have that autonomy and to go where we wanted to go, we needed our own yacht, so in 2010 we bought a 26-metre Princess in Croatia, which was the moment we met Captain Boris and Chief stewardess Nicky, who are still with us today.

Wife: Croatia became our second love and really offered us everything we could want in a yachting destination. By 2016 we were spending weeks at a time aboard and that experience really taught us what we loved (and didn't love), eventually leading to the decision to build our own dream yacht.



In 2020 your Benetti superyacht *Happy Me* was delivered, can you share some of those unique customisations?

Husband: For us the sundeck is the best place to be throughout the year, with the great views and best sunshine. Most superyachts feature an open sundeck, but because we start using the yacht in April and continue through to October, it can get windy and chilly so we decided instead to close the central section to create a protected area which is unique for this series. It's been such a success because it made that deck a lot more versatile and usable, and with heaters

inside you have a great spot to sit whatever the weather.

The second thing is that most yachts have at least one dining table on every deck, as well as in the main saloon, but for us this just seemed like an unnecessary use of space. We decided instead to use the middle deck as a sporty, fun space where we could play games with friends and entertain. We had a self-levelling pool table and a foosball table made, added a bar with beer taps and this is the space that we use all the time when onboard – whether it's just the two of us or we have friends and it is also loved by our charter guests.

Did you have charter guests in mind when you were designing the yacht, particularly as you designed the interiors yourselves?

Wife: It was our dream to create an active boat where we could have fun, so these choices were really personal decisions for us, but it happens that they are also loved by charter guests, especially because she is quite unusual. The most important thing for us was to create a space that felt like home, whereas most boats are fairly neutral in their interior design but we wanted to add our spirit to *Happy Me*.

I worked hard on her design because it was important to create something visually beautiful, but that fit with our life. We spent a long time considering the material choices, to make sure she was robust enough to withstand quite a bit of use, but also so that the crew had an easy experience with the boat. We really didn't want to come aboard and spend our time worrying about spilling things on the floor, so the balance between beauty and functionality was very important.

Husband: The interior configuration is also very tailored to our lifestyle, with the formal main saloon and then the more informal and entertainment area above. We have also created a massage room on the middle deck and have two therapists within the crew.

Can you tell us a bit about the embroidery panels that adorn many of the spaces?

Wife: I am half Vietnamese and I travel there often for work on a foundation that I run, alongside my husband. This embroidery technique is deeply embedded in Vietnamese culture and over the years I have much admired the artistry of the work. During one trip some years ago I visited the women who created these panels and spent some days with them learning about their craft and I was deeply inspired by their commitment to their work. It takes around 10 years to qualify in this technique, but if they want to create a face, it is another five years of training. This is something truly unique and I wanted to share this heritage with our friends and the charter guests, so perhaps they can also be inspired by this incredible work. And actually even the embroidery materials have been specially selected for their resilience to salty air to protect them while onboard the yacht!



What does a normal day onboard *Happy Me* look like for you and your guests?

Husband: We really use every part of this yacht, moving from deck to deck throughout the day and even sitting on the observation foredeck when cruising at night and taking in the stars. We love to listen to classical music in the main saloon, and rock music on the middle deck, while the sundeck is where we spend most of our time.

We also have the full spectrum of tenders and toys, including a 12-metre Technohull Explorer 40 tender with two Yamaha 425 hp engines that we tow behind the yacht. We decided to go for a proper tender so that we can explore hidden bays during the day, pick up guests from beaches safely and easily and tow wakeboards and water skis. We also have two of everything you could need for fun on the water; Jet Skis, e-foils, kayaks and eight bikes (just to name a few). As you can tell we really do love being outdoors and having fun, and all of these additional things are brilliant for charter guests.

If it isn't clear from all of the above, the owners of *Happy Me* take real joy in their yacht, working closely with their crew of 15 years and spending as much time onboard as they can. Croatia is their top destination and the yacht spends her time when not in use in the port of Trogir near Split. If you want to find out more about *Happy Me*, she is available for charter in Croatia this summer. ●



The traditional art of tapestry making, taking place in Vietnam where the yacht's artwork was created by craftswomen. The threads had to be specifically chosen for resilience against marine environments.

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One of the yacht's more unusual features, a self-levelling pool table located on the upper deck is much loved by her owners who enjoy playing against friends and family after dinner.



BENETTI YACHTS