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**Unlike some cruise ports, superyacht marinas remain open amid coronavirus fears. An expert says it's because yachts are more hygienic and less monitored than cruise ships.**

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Yacht charters are still being encouraged, with precautions. byvalet/Shutterstock

- [Superyachts](#) are safe because they're extremely hygienic, but their close quarters can increase the risk of spreading [coronavirus](#).
- [Yacht shows](#) have been postponed and yacht companies are issuing cautionary guidelines, but [yacht charters](#) are mostly business as usual right now.
- The main concern is Italy, a top [yachting](#) destination and the second-highest infected country with coronavirus.
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The [coronavirus pandemic](#) may be shutting down [some ports of call for cruise ships](#), but it's not stopping luxury yacht marinas from staying open.

No marinas have yet to be closed to yacht charters, Stefanos Makrymichalos, CEO of [superyacht firm IYC](#), told Business Insider. The major difference between cruise ports and marinas here is the average passenger count each sees hitting the docks on a daily basis. There are upwards of 12,000-plus cruise passengers traveling through major cruise ports a day, Makrymichalos said, while yachts on average host only four to 30 passengers.

"If you are passing by other guests in a marina it's outdoors, whereas cruise ship terminals and luggage pick up is indoors," he said, adding that there are also more regulations for commercial vessels than private ones. "Ports of entry for ships are being monitored while marinas are not, as there is no evidence of risk."

## **Yachts are hygienic, but have close quarters**

Compared to cruise ships, yachts are considered to be more hygienic thanks to crew members' diligent and thorough cleaning efforts, according to Makrymichalos.

“Each yacht is disinfected between [charter] groups on board, the air is purified on most yachts, and cleanliness standards are very high,” reads a newly issued IYC press release addressing coronavirus concerns. “Some of the yachts use special air filters that control [and] reduce the spread of pathogens.”

Poor hygiene practices are said to have contributed to spreading coronavirus on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship that went from having 10 cases of coronavirus to more than 700 over the course of its two-week quarantine and testing. An infectious diseases expert previously told Business Insider the ship was “completely inadequate in terms of infection control.”

The special nature of luxury yachts may offer advantages in limiting the spread of coronavirus, but it also creates disadvantages. Tight quarters and interactions on board can pose a problem.

“Seafarers and yacht crew are particularly vulnerable to contracting and/or spreading coronavirus due to the contained crew quarters and close contact between guests and crew,” Stacey Soutar, communications manager at the Professional Yachting Association (PYA) based in Antibes, France, told Business Insider.

## **Yacht shows are being postponed, but charters are still encouraged under precautions**

The World Health Organization officially declared coronavirus as a pandemic on Wednesday. While marinas are staying open and yacht charters continue to be encouraged, the yachting industry is still taking precautions.

The Japan International Boat Show has been cancelled, and the Taiwan International Boat Show, Dubai International Boat Show, and Singapore Yacht Show have all been postponed.

Yacht companies have also issued press releases or guidelines addressing coronavirus concerns. [IYC advised travelers](#) to keep an eye on travel advisories, and offered the option to purchase trip-cancellation insurance. Another charter company, Ocean Independence, has [developed an addendum to charter agreements](#), outlining a change to the charter area, rescheduling option, or a no-penalty cancellation of the charter if agreed upon by all parties involved.

And PYA issued [special preventative hygiene guidelines](#) for superyacht crew based on advice from the World Health Organization and the International Maritime Health Association to help prevent crew from spreading the virus on board.

### **Italy is a top charter destination and has the second-highest rate of coronavirus infection**

Charterers are voicing concerns about how to handle cancellations, but IYC has yet to issue a cancellation as none of its charter destinations have been compromised as of now, Makrymichalos said. The bulk of the charters IYC manages are in the Caribbean, The Bahamas, and the Mediterranean.

“Business in The Bahamas and Caribbean is healthy right now,” Makrymichalos said. “Clients seem to be a bit more cautious when planning their summer vacations in the Med.”

The biggest concern, he said, is Italy. With [12,462 coronavirus cases](#), the country is the second-highest infected area after mainland China, where the virus originated in the city of Wuhan. Other core charter countries in the Mediterranean, according to Makrymichalos, are France, Spain, Croatia, and Turkey. [Coronavirus cases in Europe are surging](#) -France and Spain each have around 2,200 cases of coronavirus, while Croatia has seen just 19. Turkey [has reported only one case](#) so far.

Soutar said that since Italy is a major yachting location, they're specifically advising yacht crew in the region to follow the WHO guidelines. However, she noted, the Italian yacht industry is currently the winter season.

She said, "Many vessels don't have their full crew onboard and many boats are anchored in marinas, so this lack of movement and activity is definitely helping prevent the spread of the virus amongst this region's crew."

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