



Wellness on the waves

Enrich mind, body and soul on a yoga sailing around the Sporades islands, writes **Rebecca Barnes**

Perching at the edge of the Cape Sounion headland, the ancient Temple of Poseidon is bathed in a blushing shade of tangerine as the sun rises and warms the air swirling around us on deck. We welcome the dawn by chanting a Gayatri mantra dedicated to solar deity Surya, a powerful and energising way to start the day.

We then lie down while yoga teacher to the stars, Anette Shine, stealthily moves around the top deck of the 166-passenger *Star Clipper*, bathing us in the harmonic and healing vibrations of a sound bath.

I'm not usually one for early starts, but this spiritual session is exactly what I've been craving on this yoga-focused sailing around the Sporades islands, stopping at some familiar and not-so-familiar enclaves including Skiathos, Lemnos and Poros.

Around the ship, my fellow passengers are welcoming the day in their own ways: a leisurely breakfast in the dining room, a quick dip in the pool, or watching the crew unfurling the sails in a mesmerising display.

A SAIL OF A TIME

Steeped in nautical tradition, sailing on a four-masted ship such as *Star Clipper* is a one-of-a-kind, slow-cruising experience – from the spine-tingling raising of that majestic canvas at sailaway accompanied by the rousing *Conquest of Paradise* by Greek composer

Vangelis, to climbing the mast and sprawling on the bowsprit rigging at the front of the ship.

There's also the chance to spend time in the water during beach stops, with snorkelling equipment, kayaks, paddleboards, surfboards and dinghies all available to guests. Those who prefer to stay on board can learn how to tie sailors' knots, visit the bridge or raise the mainsail following a quick lesson.

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With polished brass everywhere you look, spacious teak decks, two saltwater pools and thousands of square feet of sail, this 1990s-built clipper eschews high-tech designer styling in favour of an intimate, traditional and casually elegant atmosphere, elevated with modern amenities that clients expect, including Starlink Wi-Fi.

Just like the most valuable heirlooms, the ship is highly treasured: 90% of passengers on my cruise have travelled with *Star Clippers* before, and are passionate about the true sailing experience. And when the sea ➤

Selling
TIPS



**HOW TO SELL
A SMALL-SHIP
SAILING**

Think themes: We have multiple bespoke and themed brochures, including Rail & Sail packages, destination focuses and elevated, higher-value packages in our Captain's Collection brochure for those special occasions.

Small packages: Make the customer aware this isn't a regular cruise – these are smaller ships offering a hands-on sailing experience. Instead of Broadway shows and casinos, picture stargazing, mast-climbing and watersports.

Switch-sell: Don't rule this out for clients who are regulars with larger cruise lines. We visit smaller ports of call that aren't accessible to larger ships, allowing guests to see another side to a region they may already know well.

Fay McCormack
UK general manager,
Star Clippers



PICTURE: Pagepix



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Writer Rebecca Barnes enjoys the view after a yoga class on deck; yoga instructor Anette Shine; *Star Flyer* at dusk in the Greek islands

PICTURE: Holger Leue/leue-photo.com for Star Clippers



is a bit lively, it certainly feels authentic – especially if you're in a lower cabin and your porthole amusingly turns into a washing machine spin cycle.

This type of voyage will also chime with romantics as well as steadfast sailors – suggest they grab a pew at the aft of the ship while leaving port at dusk for a real romcom moment.

WELLNESS AWAITS

There's something about a slow sailing that encourages you to fully rest and recharge, which is why I was attracted to this wellness cruise in the first place – and it seems I'm not the only one, as Shine reveals she sometimes has up to 25 people attend her classes on Star Clippers' yoga-focused departures.

"Practising yoga and meditation on a small ship is intimate and personal; we are near the water and can hear the waves, which is the best music for the soul," she says. "In nature we recharge and recover, so being so close to the infinite sea is magical. We often see dolphins jumping next to us as we sail by sacred temples and unbelievably beautiful islands, which makes the experience even more special."

To boost my energy for activities on and off the ship, I fuel up with creamy Greek yogurt, nuts and fresh fruit in the mornings, and thoroughly enjoy the excellent lunches and dinners serving everything from just-caught seafood and grilled fish to on-deck buffets and even that old maritime tradition: a baked Alaska parade.

Some passengers partake in daily keep-fit and water aerobics classes, but I destress with a massage in the small 'spa', at pleasingly reasonable prices.

Being a small ship, there's little light pollution on deck, so we head to the bridge one evening for some stargazing with third officer Ali. Under an inky sky, we learn about the traditional art of celestial navigation, and are fascinated to learn that the ship's officers are required to study the constellations on a regular basis.

En route to Skiathos, part of the Sporades archipelago and the first Greek island I visited as a teenager, we sail at a leisurely seven knots. I'm pleased to see the bench overlooking the harbour where I sat many years ago is still there, so I revisit the spot for a mindful moment or two, away from the bustling old town and waterfront cafes. It's a chance to reflect on this best-of-both-worlds sailing – sustainable seafaring with time to truly rest and unwind, however you please, and all at your own pace. **TW**

BOOK IT

Star Clippers offers a seven-night Sporades Highlights yoga cruise with Anette Shine on *Star Flyer* from £2,080 per person. The price is based on two sharing a lead-in category 6 cabin on an August 15 departure, including full-board accommodation and port charges. Yoga departures include sessions on deck at sunrise or in the afternoon. agents.starclippers.co.uk