

## What is BCAA, and why is it essential for the yacht charter industry

The first conference of the Boat Charter Agency Association (BCAA) was held in Biograd in October. The association was established relatively recently and its mission is to develop and maintain a fair boat rental market for clients, agencies and boat owners or operators. So we took the opportunity and talked to one of the board members, Mrs Lu de Boer, to find out the plans and why this is an important event for everyone involved in the yacht charter industry.

### **1. Lu, what is BCAA and how did the idea of founding this association come up?**

In September 2019, during a promotion trip of the Croatian National Tourist Board in which 12 nationalities from the charter industry came together, the demand for common knowledge arose. Less than a month later, Mr Staffan Francke took the initiative to open a special Facebook group just for the agencies.

This FB Group grew quickly in the early days, preferably more than 500 followers, but Staffan cleaned it up a lot and defined a few ground rules for new agencies. We currently have about 200 serious members from all over the world, but mainly from Europe.

### **2. What are the main goals that the BCAA wants to achieve with its work?**

Our main goal is better collaboration between charter companies and agents, thereby setting standards in B2B relationships that can ensure mutual growth and prosperity of agencies and fleet operators.

### **3. What is the association's structure, which can be a member of the BCAA and under what conditions?**

Members of BCAA are only agents. Those with a small fleet in their own country but earn their most significant income on brokerage are also welcome.

We are currently forming a board with nine members from different parts of the market. Our association is so much more than an information bank. We also plan to make some small adjustments to the membership in the near future.

### **4. What were the topics at the conference in Biograd, and what were the conclusions afterwards? Are you satisfied with your performance at Croatia Charter Expo?**

Due to Covid-19, we could not meet before, so this was also a nice opportunity to see some of the BCAA members. Biograd Boat Show was carefully and professionally organized, and we had a productive first day when we had our BCAA Congress. In addition, it also meant a lot to meet with the fleet operators and introduce to them our goal in the BCAA. Some were, let's say, "afraid" of our group initially, but most of them saw through our mutual goal, and we can say that Biograd was a huge success with many positive ideas for mutual broker-fleet operators future.

### **5. What do you think are the main problems in the industry at the moment, and do you have any concrete suggestions on how to solve them?**

Well, sometimes we feel that we are fighting the competition that should actually be our partner/friend. We are bringing charter operators OUR clients but at the same time, some of them use their contact details to reach them directly and offer them additional discounts on top of the regular price, undermining the work we do with the clients.

## **6. What are the reactions of charter companies to the work of your association? Have they praised you, or are they looking at you critically?**

Both, and this is no surprise because they don't know us yet as an association. But the reactions were certainly enthusiastic after finding out that we want to improve the entire market.

But let's REALLY see what we can do together to get more satisfied customers and LESS damage/claims mostly because clients are not prepared for what they can expect during their sailing vacation. There is still a lot of work in front of us all.

## **7. The 2021 season was, to put it mildly, 'crazy'. Both agents and charter fleet operators had a lot of work to do. What do your members say about the prospects for the 2022 season? Will the trend of high demand for sailing in Croatia continue, or are the guests still deciding at the last minute?**

Due to the Covid measures, not being able to travel, the bookings started late. This situation was new to everyone, but we got through it well. Let's hope that customers dare to make a decision sooner. This saves a lot of last-minute stress. We, as agents, expect an explosive 2022/2023. Because everyone who has not travelled in the past year now wants to go on a holiday, this will also depend on the massive price increase. Many can no longer afford this, so there will be a shift in the market. Sailing will fall under an even higher income group—people who do not have time for a course but can afford a sailing holiday. You get: "everything is for sale" customers. So the avid "middle class" sailor will no longer be able to afford this. This is also a good point to think about.

## **8. What are your plans for the near future? Will you carry out any additional activities in terms of raising awareness of more transparent charter businesses?**

Next week we are invited to the MMK Summit, after that the Christmas version ICE in Vienna. We are organizing a special BCAA agent day at Boot in Dusseldorf.

We hope to be able to work on OUR FUTURE together with the charter companies!

**9. At čarter.hr, we have a mission to advocate digitalization and optimization of business processes in yacht charter. In our opinion, agents are one step ahead of charter operators when it comes to digitizing business processes. This is because agents still have more straightforward methods and are focused mainly on the B2C market. However, we are interested in how satisfied are the agents with the level of digital channels of their partners - charter companies? Do you think there is room for improvement here?**

As in any other industry, there is always room for improvement. We think that the charter companies should focus on improving their core business, yacht maintenance and renting the boats of the owners in yacht management.

**10. Finally, how do you see the development and future of the yacht charter industry in general?**

It is really necessary to educate clients that renting a boat is nothing like going to a hotel where they enjoy the services in one place; they need to be advised properly. We wish to avoid unprepared clients and to take the business to the highest possible standards.

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