

## When it comes to shipping, leave it to the professionals

There might be a boat boom happening in the middle of Covid, but getting your precious vessel to Hong Kong is another set of challenges. Sevenstar Yacht Transport walked *APB* through some of the perils and pitfalls

STORY BY CHARLES MASSEY

**Covid has been** a great boon for the boating industry – people are stuck, they can't go on holiday and having a boat is becoming increasingly popular in Asia.

We are noticing a shift in yacht shipping patterns, directly and indirectly caused by Covid-19.

Yacht sales are booming with many first-time buyers entering the market.

However, getting your boat from Europe and the shipyards to Asia needs thought, particularly in the current climate.

For all practical purposes, there are two wings of shipping – liner or charter. Liner shipping is a container ship, which runs on a set route and it's quite convenient for carrying yachts because, while they have to take down the masts on sailing yachts, they are guaranteed to turn up on a certain date.

The other way is charter sailing.

Our company has its own ships around the world which have their own cranes. These ships will load your yachts, put them on the deck, and for sailing yachts the masts can stay up.

You need the volume to bring a ship in to do a certain route, so they don't run to a timetable. They run to where the cargo is.

We can also handle much larger yachts shipping in this way. Liner shipping is limited by the weight container cranes can lift. With our own vessels we have loaded yachts of 900 tons onto the deck and delivered to Hong Kong – and in these last two years the demand for larger yachts in Hong Kong has risen sharply.

What we have found in the last year is an increasing demand for our charter services using our own ships. We still use the regular container ships out of Europe, into Asia, carrying production cargo – that is the motor-yachts that are built every week in European factories that come down to Asia this way because it's fast and efficient.

However, the liner usage of container ships can fall out over two things. One is removing the masts for yachts and the second is the size of the boats. They can only generally take up the 50-odd ton boats ... and boats are getting bigger.

Our most recent shipment just arrived before Chinese New Year. We actually had 11 yachts on there destined for Hong Kong of which five boats were 30m and above – this is quite something and something that has never been done before to Hong Kong.

This comes with its own challenges, particularly with Covid.

The ships we use have their own cranes that can lift off various different cargoes – they're specialised heavy-lift ships. However, when you're lifting a yacht, you must have your own people in place to make sure it's

done properly.

Where we are unique as a company is that we have our own ships and the crew on these ships are already trained and experienced in handling yachts. They also have all the equipment onboard to deal with these yachts. At the moment it's all about having the right equipment, the right people and the right ships – we have all three of these in place in

Asia and around the world.

We have spent a lot of time going through procedures, especially in Hong Kong, for handling yachts, ensuring that necessary safety procedures are followed. We've had to write Covid protocols for crew and people getting on and off our ships.

The difference with us is we are not a freight forwarder. We're not a booking agent. We are the ship owner as well. So we have a lot more depth in the way we look at it and in the details we go through.

Safety and trustworthiness are the pillars of our company. This is a top priority throughout our whole business – from working with in-house engineers, DNV-certified loadmasters, our own materials and (custom) cradles to the transparency of our offers where there are no hidden costs.

Thanks to our track record, we can offer the lowest insurance premiums on the market.

Do people typically pay more for our services than they would with a standard freight agent? No. I'd say they'd probably actually pay less.

I would advise anybody to look very carefully at the yacht transport offer they have received. Does it include insurance. What is the company's experience and track record? Can they confirm the dates or are they wide open?

How we work is on actual performance – once we've given a commitment, we work very hard to make it work.

**“DO PEOPLE  
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