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Superyacht captain: It's a bit like being a 'glorified chauffeur'

By **Anouk Lorie** for CNN
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COURTESY PAUL COOK

Paul Cook, a former British Royal Navy warship captain-turned-superyacht skipper.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Driving boats at cutting-edge of technology can't be beaten, says superyacht skipper
- Captain Paul Cook has been to both poles and all around the equator
- Responsibilities include protecting crew during storms and from pirates
- Superyacht captains earn up to \$22,000 a month

London, England (CNN) -- Superyacht captains will never be ultra-wealthy like the yacht owners they work for but the lifestyle certainly makes up for it.

Rubbing shoulders with the world's elite, they spend most of the year sailing through some of the world's most enchanting spots.

What's more, they take home a six-figure salary for the pleasure of living on an exclusive yacht with all the mod cons -- a swimming pool, cinema and helicopter come as standard.

It's hardly surprising, then, that some people consider captaining a superyacht to be one of the best jobs in the world.

Paul Cook, a former British Royal Navy warship captain-turned-superyacht skipper says at times it's a bit like being a "glorified chauffeur" and at others it's like being the CEO of a small company.

After all, these enormous purpose-built craft can be anywhere from 50 to 170 meters in length and cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

Along with day-to-day upkeep, captains are in charge of keeping passengers safe through storms and protecting their almost priceless vessels from pirates.

Below Cook shares with CNN the highs and lows.

CNN: What made you want to become a superyacht captain?

PC: I grew up around sailors in England so I always wanted to work on the seas. And the thing is, I would love to own a superyacht, but I can't afford it. So, I figured that the next best thing would be to work on one.

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CNN: Do you think it's the best job in the world?

Paul Cook: Absolutely, without a doubt. You get the opportunity to drive a vessel at the cutting-edge of technology that looks and handles beautifully. That cannot be beaten. It's like being given the keys to a Bugatti Veyron.

Then there is the travel. I've been to both poles and all around the equator while living in a palace.

The other great thing is running a crew of all ages, who are there to work hard and make this machine come to life.

I would love to own a super yacht, but I can't afford it. So I figured that the next best thing would be to work on one.

—Paul Cook



CNN: Are there any down sides?

PC: Being away from home and my family. You never get used to that. And the challenge of providing exactly what the owner wants, while things like the weather are hard to control.

CNN: What exactly does your job entail?

PC: In some ways, it's a bit like a glorified chauffeur. In others, it's like running a company with over 20 employees. You have to do the accounts and be the main contact person for the owner.

And then there is security. The captain is in charge of finding the right security equipment and armed or unarmed guards to protect the yacht and people on board. Those are hard decisions, when you consider yachts are worth roughly \$1.4 million per meter and that's without the valuables on board.

CNN: How long have you been in the job?

PC: Four years. Before that I was captain of three warships in the Royal Navy for 25 years. I wanted a new challenge, yet continue being at sea.

The difference between the two jobs is that one is there to defend and protect countries while the other one is to avoid that conflict.

But many of the services provided on superyachts are similar to those provided in the Royal Navy. We once had the Queen on board in the Navy and other important figures.

CNN: What's the money like?

PC: It depends on the size of the boat and crew. But for some of the larger yachts, captains will earn over \$22,000 per month.

CNN: Just how glamorous is the lifestyle?

PC: Well, it's important to keep a distance between crew and owner and give a professional appearance, so no. You are also working at all times.

I have never become "friends" with any of my owners, but you do often get a sort of mutual respect and appreciation.

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