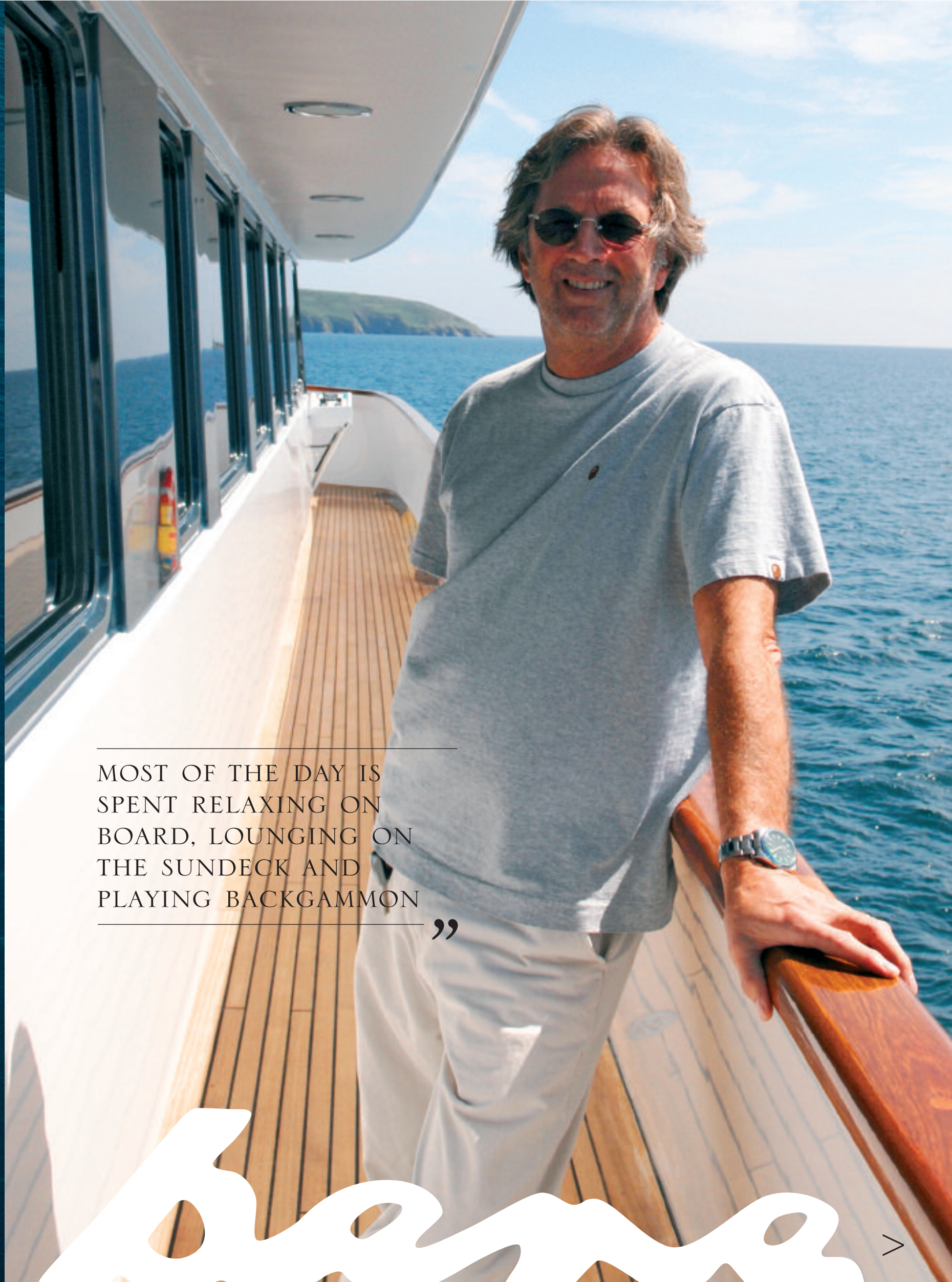




ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

ERIC CLAPTON MAY BE A ROCK LEGEND, BUT HE IS ALSO A FAMILY MAN IN SEARCH OF PRIVACY AND RELAXATION. FOR A MAN USED TO BEING ON THE ROAD, TO WHISTLE-STOP WORLD TOURS AND NON-STOP PRESS ATTENTION, VA BENE OFFERS A WELCOME KEY CHANGE.

VA BENE



MOST OF THE DAY IS SPENT RELAXING ON BOARD, LOUNGING ON THE SUNDECK AND PLAYING BACKGAMMON

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Va Bene

The story goes that music legend Eric Clapton chartered the yacht Va Bene for a month-long family holiday, fell in love, and bought her. Asked what it was about this particular yacht he says simply "I had one of the best holidays of my life. I had chosen Va Bene because of her great elegance. Now, apart from the pride I obviously take simply from owning such a beautiful boat, is the freedom it allows. I can go anywhere I like (weather permitting) and always be able to retreat to my own private sanctuary."

Va Bene was not a youthful yacht when Clapton took her on, but her distinctive lines betray an interesting pedigree. She was built in the Netherlands in 1992 by Kees Cornelissen. With previous owners including Bernie Ecclestone, Va Bene has long been a familiar sight in Monaco and at all the major social events in the Western Mediterranean. She also has an impressive track-record as a highly successful and sought-after charter yacht.

Former captain Nick Line, who now acts as shore manager to the yacht and project managed the refit, suggested to Clapton that he wait a while before refurbishing her. "When I bought the yacht, Nick suggested living with the interior for at least a year before making changes, to really experience what worked and what didn't. So when changes were made we got it right."

In the event, Va Bene received much more than a facelift. She also underwent a complete engineering overhaul and upgrade, along with a remodelling of the sundeck, all carried out at the Pendennis shipyard in Falmouth, England. The new interior was a team effort, led by H2 Yacht Design with Clapton playing an active role. "I was very impressed with Pendennis," he says. "They are tremendous craftsmen. I liked the idea of keeping the work in Britain and living in the south it was easy for me to visit and go over ideas."

THE IDEA OF THE REFURBISHMENT WAS TO CREATE A MUCH MORE FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

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There was a clear purpose to the project and apart from the essential technical refit, the rest of the refurbishment was to create a more family-friendly environment, whilst refreshing the whole interior. The result is a superbly comfortable and elegant yacht that genuinely reflects the way Va Bene's owner likes to use the yacht, as a family hideaway rather than a status symbol.

Take the master suite, which Clapton barely used before the refit preferring the VIP suite instead. It has been transformed into a personal retreat complete with spa bathroom. The adjacent office has been fitted with privacy glass and a pullman berth, converting it to a children's cabin.

Family is all-important to Clapton, who says that "the highlight of the day for the children is the beach and so locating a good beach if we are visiting a new area is the first order of the day. Most of our time though is spent relaxing on board, perhaps reading, lounging on the sundeck and playing games like backgammon."

Va Bene tends to cruise the Mediterranean every summer, spending the winter season in the Caribbean. "Above all I love Corsica," says Clapton, citing "its numerous secluded sandy beaches, lovely ports and rugged scenery." Clapton also has a home on Antigua, and likes to use the yacht in conjunction with the house.

As you would expect, given the personal affection he feels for the yacht, Clapton takes great care when balancing his own use with making Va Bene available for charter. "The actual running of the boat I leave to the captain and crew, but my wife Melia and I are very hands-on when it comes to the interior, from furniture, materials, colour schemes and artwork even down to the crockery and cutlery."

Looking at the calm, contemporary interior, flooded with light and furnished with deep tempting sofas, you can sense the quality of Eric Clapton's precious time aboard Va Bene. And, inevitably, begin to imagine your own.

VA BENE

LOA 47.8m (156.8ft)
Builder Kees Cornelissen, The Netherlands
Year 1992 (refitted 2007/08)
Cruising speed 14 knots
Guests 12 guests in 6 cabins
Crew 13
Winter 2008/2009 Caribbean
Summer 2009 Mediterranean
Charter rates from US\$238,000 per week

See pages 170-171 for further information on Va Bene.

Va Bene is under Burgess Charter Management.

Ask your Burgess charter broker for Caribbean cruising itinerary recommendations aboard Va Bene, as well as ideas for cruising the Eastern Mediterranean, where the captain also has extensive knowledge.

