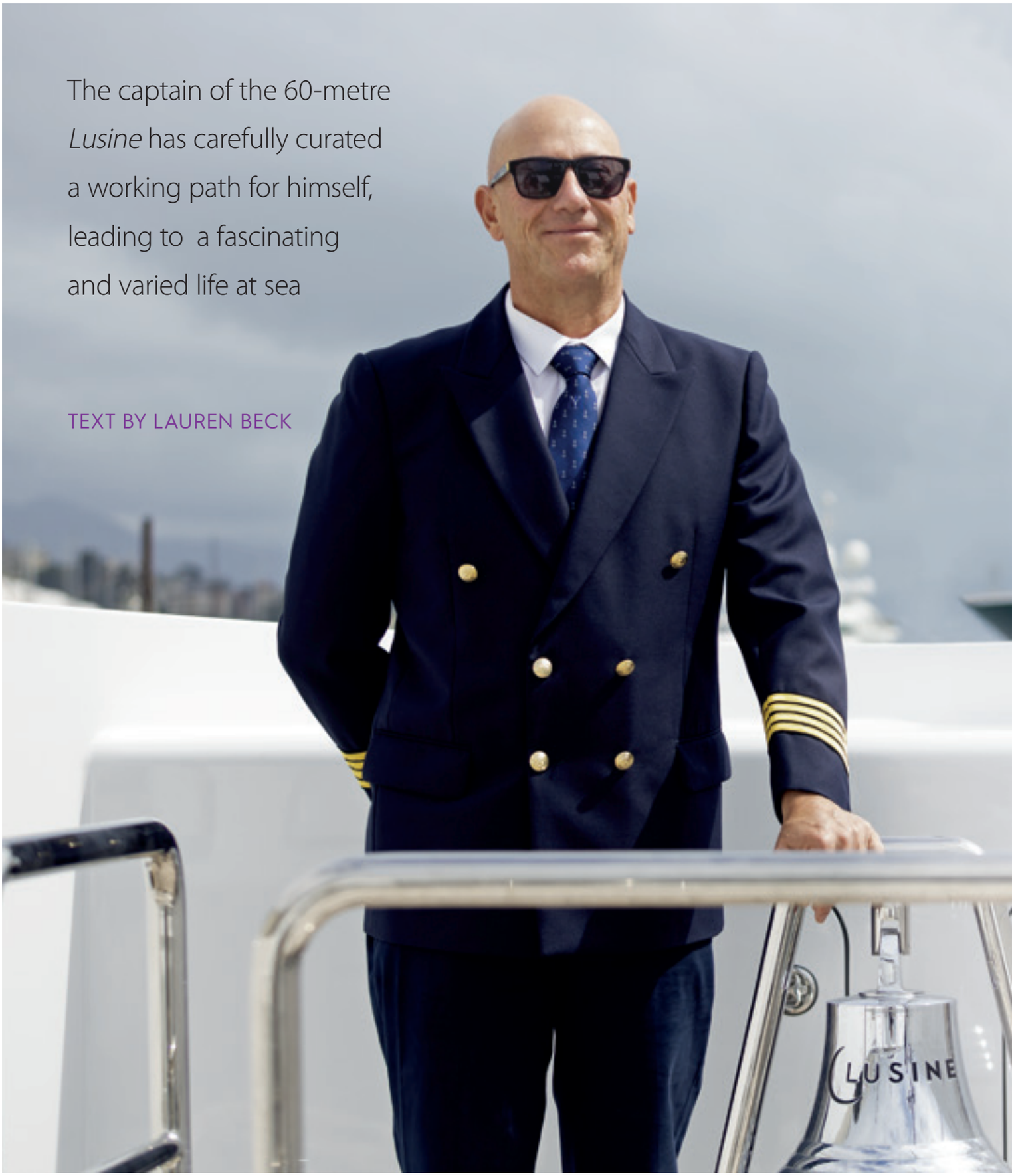
The captain of the 60-metre *Lusine* has carefully curated a working path for himself, leading to a fascinating and varied life at sea

TEXT BY LAUREN BECK





INTERVIEW: CAPTAIN ALESSANDRO FLORA

CRAFTING THE PERFECT CAREER

Captain Alessandro Flora is a deliberate man. He has meticulously crafted his yachting career, navigating his way from a small village in southern Italy to commanding a 60-metre superyacht. He embarked on his maritime journey without family connections or industry contacts. "I invented this job for myself," he says. "I'm proud of it."

While at university, Flora worked as a windsurfing and waterskiing instructor in the summer. Friends asked him to join in on a sailing yacht delivery — a decision that changed his life.

He chose some interesting jobs. His first season as a skipper was in 1989, following an Olympic kayaker one summer. The man attempted to kayak from Venice to Portofino in 52 days, and Flora followed in a 21-foot sailboat. He was green, he explained, so he wasn't captain at that time. "I advertised in a magazine that I was looking for a job, and he chose me because I had the same name as his daughter," Flora says. He worked two busy seasons on a 36-foot sailboat, then got a job as a deckhand and jack of all trades on a 40-metre schooner. His next job was helping deliver a new boat to its owner and then teaching him to drive it. This was his first foray onto motor yachts, where he has remained. "It's much easier to find a job on a motor boat," he says.

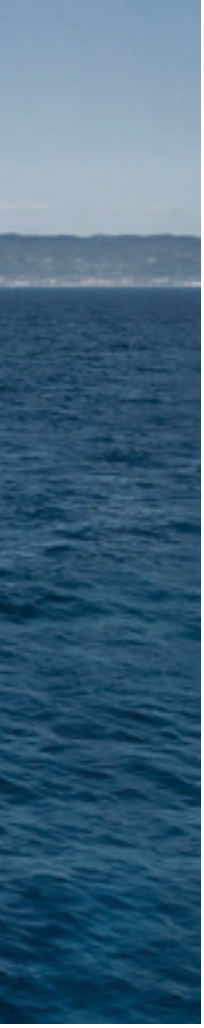


"It was a great experience, but every sunrise or sunset is great when you are at sea"

He took a chance and moved his family to France, where they were more isolated from family but better positioned for a yachting career. The path to his current charge, the 60-metre Heesen *Lusine*, was unexpected. Initially working in a management company ashore, he was asked to temporarily fill in on the 47-metre Heesen *Crystal Lady*. Little did he know this short-term role would evolve into a lasting adventure.

He became the build captain during the final construction phase, and completed the launch and delivery in 2010. He remained aboard *Crystal Lady* after his boss purchased her in 2016. They then took the boat to Australia. *Lusine*, which launched in 2022, is also owned by his boss, and Flora stepped aboard as captain in May 2023. *Crystal Lady* is based in Australia, while *Lusine* remains in the Med.

Flora has spent most of his yachting career in the Mediterranean, which allowed him to explore some fantastic locations. He particularly loves Greece and Croatia, especially Hvar. "It's amazing," he says. "It's one of the coolest parts of the Old Dalmatian coast, with small islands and a beautiful natural environment."



Flora will be cruising the Mediterranean again this summer, spending time around Capri, with a trip north to St. Tropez and Forte dei Marmi before moving on to the eastern Med and Croatia, Greece, and Turkey. The owner has close ties throughout the Med, so the boat tends to remain there. He would love to broaden those experiences, and his bucket list includes the polar regions and a return to Australia, where he spent just a week with the vessel handover. "It's so big, and there is so much beauty to see," Flora says.

"I started with this career because I liked it, not because of necessity; this is why every moment at sea is great." He remembers fondly his first Atlantic crossing on a 40-foot sailing boat in 1990. He was young and new to sailing. It was very basic, with just three crew on board. "It was a great experience, but every sunrise or sunset is great when you are at sea," says Flora.

While Flora is proud of his career, it has not come without sacrifice. "If you want to achieve bigger results and do your thing with the larger boats, you cannot have everything," he says. "I left my mother and father and came out on my own. So there is a price."

The job can also be challenging to navigate, especially when finding the balance between personal and professional. "This particular job requires professionalism and total dedication without compromises," Flora says. "It's not always easy to combine family matters and private life." Handling the bureaucracy and the crew can be a challenge, too.

"I made some choices," he says, "to grow up in this industry. And I did it. I'm happy with what I have achieved so far."

As for what's next, Flora prefers to focus on the present, and see which way the wind blows.

Rapid fire with Captain Alessandro Flora

Sunrise or sunset: ***Sunrise***

Classical music or hard rock: ***Both, depending on the moment***

Mediterranean or Caribbean: ***Mediterranean***

Tea or coffee: ***Coffee***

Night owl or early bird: ***Early bird***

Chocolate or vanilla: ***Chocolate***

Marina or anchored out: ***Anchored out***

Beach vacation or mountain getaway: ***Beach vacation***

Full-time or rotation: ***Rotation***

Sweet or savoury: ***Sweet***

Phone call or text message: ***Phone call***

Books or movies: ***Books***

Below 500GT or above: ***Above***

Small crew or large crew: ***Large crew***

Private or commercial yacht: ***Private***