The Great Southern Route

Creating and editing the captain-to-captain superyacht guide to Asia, Australia and the Pacific, 2007 to 2012

Project	The Great Southern Route, a superyacht cruising guide written by captains for captains
Role	Captain Richard Morris: Founder and editor of all three editions
Publisher	OCEAN Media, Sydney
Editions	GSR1 (2007), GSR2 (2009), GSR3 (2012)
Coverage	From Suez and Panama across the Indian Ocean, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific; up to about 95 countries and territories by the second edition
Distribution	Free to superyacht captains worldwide; launched at the Monaco and Fort Lauderdale yacht shows

Why it mattered

In the early 2000s the world's superyacht fleet spent its year between the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Australia, Asia and the South Pacific had some of the best cruising grounds on earth, but few yachts came. They were not short of places to go. What they lacked was a reason, and someone they trusted to tell them the route was safe, serviced and worth the passage.

Richard Morris, then running Sydney's superyacht marina, came up with the answer: a "stepping stone" guide that would take a yacht leaving the Med through Suez, or the Caribbean through Panama, and walk her across this side of the world one country at a time. He took the idea to a publisher, and edited it through three editions over six years.

The problems we solved

1. No trusted guide to this side of the world

The problem: Captains choose where a yacht goes, and they trust other captains. Tourism brochures and marina adverts did not tell them what they needed: clearance rules, agents, fuel, haul-out, charts, weather windows and hazards, country by country.

What we did: Richard designed the book around a Fact File for every country, with the officials, agents, marinas, yards and suppliers a yacht would need, and around Captain's Logs written by working superyacht captains about waters they knew first hand. He recruited the captain-authors himself, along with specialist contributors on weather routing, charts and Antarctica.

The result: A guide captains actually kept on board. One trade magazine called it "possibly worth its weight in gold".

2. Building a 60-country book from nothing

The problem: No one had ever gathered this information in one place. Much of it sat with small agents and port authorities in places from Djibouti to the Galapagos.

What we did: Richard ran an international call for information to agents, marinas and port authorities in about thirty countries for the first edition, offering a free listing in return for accurate content. He then sent draft Fact Files back to each country for checking, compiled the Admiralty chart folio lists, secured electronic chart licences and wrote model articles for other regions to follow.

The result: The first edition covered more than 60 countries. By the second it had grown to more than 350 pages and about 95 Fact Files, adding the Pacific coast of the Americas from Alaska to Cape Horn, south-east Africa, the Gulf, Japan and Antarctica.

3. Paying for a book given away free

The problem: A guide handed free to captains has to be funded by the destinations and businesses that want yachts to come.

What we did: Richard helped build the case for regions to back the book as Foundation Partners, and in later editions sold pages himself, closing partners and advertisers from the Americas to the Indian Ocean.

The result: Tahiti Tourisme became Foundation Partner for the Pacific, and the San Diego Superyacht Association Foundation Partner for the Americas. Agents, yards, marinas, logistics firms and engine makers across the region booked pages.

4. Keeping it going through the downturn

The problem: The second edition was planned in the middle of the 2009 global financial crisis, and the third in a weak market in 2012. Both came close to being cancelled.

What we did: Richard kept the content work moving while the commercial decisions hung in the balance, so that each edition could go to print on time once it was given the go-ahead. In 2009 he updated the Fact Files for about fifty countries in a single day.

The result: All three editions were printed and launched on schedule at the autumn yacht shows. The second edition landed in San Diego on the opening day of the city's 2009 Yacht Fest, on its way to Monaco and Fort Lauderdale.

5. Getting the book into captains' hands

The problem: A guide only works if it is on the bridge.

What we did: Richard took the book to the yacht shows in person, launched it at the Captain's Hideout at the Monaco Yacht Show, presented it in San Diego, and arranged deliveries to marinas along the French Riviera and to the Australian and regional networks. For the third edition a digital edition went live alongside the print launch.

The result: Agents reported yachts arriving because of it. One Palau agent wrote: "We've gotten quite a few referrals / arrivals from the mention of Sam's Tours in the 2008 edition."

6. Turning a book into a network

The problem: More yachts coming to the Pacific needed the region's ports and agents to work together, not compete in isolation.

What we did: Richard's 2007 presentation in San Diego urged the city's industry to form an association "just like we did in Sydney". Through the editions he built working relationships with agents and captains from the Seychelles to the Galapagos, and made the case that yachts would "enter the Pacific via Panama… rather than run the gauntlet off Somalia".

The result: The San Diego Superyacht Association formed in 2008 and became a Foundation Partner. The contacts the guide created became the agency network Australian Superyachts still uses to look after yachts across the region.

Timeline

When	Where and what
2003 to 2005	Idea developed; overview presented to the publisher and to the Australian superyacht industry body
2007	GSR1 researched and published; launched at Monaco and Fort Lauderdale; presentation in San Diego
2008	San Diego Superyacht Association formed
2009	GSR2, the largest edition, published and launched at San Diego, Monaco and Fort Lauderdale
2012	GSR3 published with a digital edition; launched at Monaco and Fort Lauderdale

In their words

> *"Possibly worth its weight in gold."*
>
> Dockwalk, on the first edition

> *"Truly impressive, one of the most thorough compilations of essential cruising information around."*
>
> Megayacht News, on the second edition

> *"We've gotten quite a few referrals / arrivals from the mention of Sam's Tours in the 2008 edition."*
>
> Sam's Tours, Palau

What this shows

The Great Southern Route was built on one idea: superyachts will come to this side of the world if someone they trust tells them how. Richard conceived it, wrote and edited it, recruited its captain-authors, sold it and carried it to the shows. The same knowledge of the route, and the same network

of agents and officials along it, is what Australian Superyachts brings to every yacht it looks after today.