

Advantages of a Maltese Yachting Holding Company: A Case Study

Yacht ownership extends far beyond the purchase itself, bringing with it a complex landscape of tax, regulatory, operational, and succession considerations.

By **Jonathan Vassallo**, 17th June 2026

When French entrepreneur Thomas Durand set out to acquire a yacht for personal and family enjoyment, his initial focus was on selecting the perfect vessel. However, yacht ownership extends far beyond the purchase itself, bringing with it a complex landscape of tax, regulatory, operational, and succession considerations.

From ownership structuring and flag registration to VAT efficiency and long-term planning, the decisions made at the outset can significantly influence both the cost and ease of ownership for years to come. Like many first-time buyers, Mr Durand quickly realised that without the right structure in place, a dream asset could become administratively and financially burdensome.

After evaluating several jurisdictions, Mr Durand was introduced to Malta as a leading maritime centre and to Dixcart Malta as a trusted partner with extensive experience in yacht structuring, administration, and maritime support services.

Why Malta?

Malta has established itself as one of the world's premier maritime jurisdictions, offering a highly [respected flag](#), a robust legal framework, and a business-friendly environment for yacht owners.

The Malta Ship Register is one of the largest and most reputable shipping registers globally, and the largest within the European Union. Supported by a well-established regulatory framework and experienced maritime professionals, Malta provides an attractive jurisdiction for both private and commercial yacht ownership structures.

In addition, Malta's strategic location in the Mediterranean further enhances its appeal as a leading international maritime centre.

The Recommended Structure

Following a detailed review of Mr Durand's objectives, Dixcart Malta recommended the establishment of a Maltese holding company to own the yacht. The Maltese company would serve as the legal owner of the yacht while Mr Durand and his family would continue to enjoy the vessel for private use.

The benefits of this structure included:

- Separation of personal assets from yacht ownership, helping to manage risk and liability.
- Efficient administration of yacht-related contracts, maintenance arrangements, crew management, and insurance.
- Greater flexibility should the yacht be sold or transferred in the future.
- Simplified succession and estate planning through the ownership of company shares rather than the direct transfer of the yacht itself.

VAT and Regulatory Considerations

One of the most important aspects of yacht acquisition is ensuring that VAT and customs obligations are addressed correctly from the outset.

Through careful planning, Dixcart Malta coordinated with our inhouse specialist maritime advisors and ensured that the ownership structure, registration process, and intended use of the yacht were aligned with applicable European and Maltese regulations.

By addressing these considerations before the purchase was completed, Mr Durand avoided potential future complications and ensured that the yacht could be operated with confidence and certainty.

An Additional Option: Yacht Leasing Facility

For yacht owners intending to use their vessel primarily for private pleasure purposes, a Maltese yacht leasing facility may also be considered, subject to individual circumstances and professional advice.

Under this arrangement, a Maltese company would acquire and hold the yacht, providing a structured framework for yacht ownership and operation. A key benefit of such leasing facility is that it can optimise the timing and management of VAT liabilities, reducing the need for a significant upfront VAT outlay at the point of acquisition or importation. This can enhance cash flow while ensuring compliance with applicable EU VAT regulations.

Furthermore, where the yacht spends time outside EU waters, the applicable VAT exposure may be reduced in accordance with the relevant use and enjoyment principles, potentially resulting in additional efficiencies throughout the ownership period.

For owners seeking both flexibility and certainty, this can represent an attractive long-term solution.

The Choice of Flag

The choice of flag is one of the most important decisions in the yacht acquisition process, as it determines the legal jurisdiction under which the vessel operates. This affects regulatory compliance, financing, insurance, operational flexibility, and the yacht's overall reputation.

While a yacht may be owned through a Maltese company, owners are generally free to choose the flag that best suits their needs. Nevertheless, the Maltese flag is frequently selected due to its strong international reputation, and the advantages associated with being registered under an EU flag.

The Maltese registry offers efficient registration procedures, competitive fees, recognition by leading financial institutions, and adherence to high international maritime standards. It is also widely accepted by port authorities and maritime administrations worldwide, supporting smooth operations across different jurisdictions.

For owners seeking a combination of prestige, operational efficiency, and regulatory certainty, the Maltese flag remains one of the leading options in the global yachting sector. After considering various registry options, Mr Durand ultimately selected the Maltese flag, also because of the convenience of having both the ownership structure and flag registration managed within a single trusted jurisdiction.

The Role of Dixcart Malta

[Dixcart Malta](#) acted as Mr Durand's trusted partner throughout the process, assisting with:

- Establishment and administration of the Maltese holding company.
- Importation of the vessel and coordination with Maltese Customs.
- Coordination with yacht brokers, legal advisors, and Maltese authorities.
- Corporate governance and compliance obligations.
- Registration of yacht under Malta flag.
- Ongoing company management and administration services.

By working with a single experienced provider, Mr Durand benefited from a coordinated process and a structure tailored to his family's needs.

"It has been an absolute pleasure working with Dixcart Malta on the structuring of our yacht ownership – they have been exceptional from start to finish.

The team at Dixcart has managed the entire ownership structure with precision, clarity, and complete professionalism." Thomas Durand

The Outcome

Today, Mr Durand enjoys his yacht with the reassurance that ownership has been structured efficiently and professionally. The yacht is registered under the Maltese flag and is held through a Maltese company, administered by Dixcart Malta.

By implementing a bespoke leasing structure, Mr Durand was able to significantly optimise his cash flow spreading VAT payments over time rather than incurring a substantial upfront cost on importation.

In addition, by ensuring that the yacht's movements were tracked and logged, potential VAT exposure during periods spent outside EU waters could be managed more effectively.

This case demonstrates how early planning and the selection of the right jurisdiction can significantly improve the ownership experience.

For international yacht owners seeking stability, reputation, flexibility, and expert support, can arrange a personalised and confidential assessment, by contacting [our team](mailto:ourteam@advice.malta@dixcart.com) at advice.malta@dixcart.com.