

CHASING THE DRAGONS

FOR SOME, A YACHT IS THE WAY TO SHOW OFF ONE'S FORTUNE AND GOOD TASTE; FOR OTHERS, IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE WORLD IN A WAY NO ONE ELSE CAN. FOR THAT, YOU SHOULD BE LOOKING AT WHAT IS ON OFFER IN THE WAY OF EXPEDITION YACHTS. *By Frances and Michael Howorth*





The Mondo Marine 45 Explorer.

"EXUMA IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR CHARTERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A NEW BREED OF EXPEDITION YACHTS THAT LOOK SLEEK AND SEXY, AND CAN ALSO DO THE MILES!"

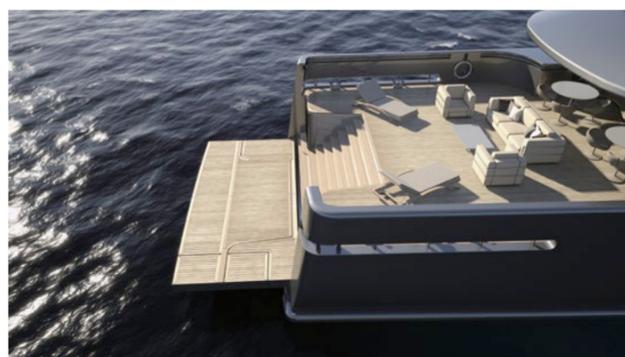


Exuma, by Perini Navi/Pochiotti

IN THIS, THE MODERN AGE OF GOOGLE EARTH, IT IS OFTEN HARD TO IMAGINE THAT THE EDGES OF SEAFARERS' CHARTS ONCE BORE THE WARNING LEGEND – *HERE BE DRAGONS*. It indicated that no one knew what lay beyond. Now, our planet can be viewed in detail on any computer. But, there is still a great deal of the Earth's oceans and coastlines to be explored, and for those wanting to venture a little further, an expedition or explorer yacht is a great way to chase those dragons.

Any yacht with an ocean travelling range can potentially sail around the world, but expedition yachts are *designed* for this task, and therefore are much more suited to long haul travel and independent operation. Described by many as the *off-road* superyachts of the sea, they have that same rugged feel as a Range Rover or a Hummer. They are not white three-deck wedding cakes, and they are not the right boat for everybody. But they are perfect for people who want to do things a little differently.

Will it be another party in a marina, or do you prefer the idea of finding rare turtles and sea wrecks in Indonesia? If you answer the latter, then an expedition yacht is what you should be looking at. They are ocean-capable, and able to explore exotic and distant coastlines or islands. And nowadays, they can be stylish enough to also enjoy pride of place at a luxurious marina. These are the yachts for people with minds of their own and personalities that match. It also opens



up the possibility of exploring more distant locations, such as Papua New Guinea, the famed Raja Ampat of Indonesia, remote South Pacific islands, or even Antarctica.

Some may see expedition yachts as ugly, and some early models were indeed a bit ungainly compared to their sleeker dayboat brethren. But there are seafarers who will admire the sea keeping abilities and the lines of a seaworthy boat. For owners, it may be enough to admire their practicality, the luxurious on-board spaces and the ability to go almost anywhere.

Successful Breeds

Successful examples of the expedition yacht come in all shapes and sizes and are built all over the world. Any list would include the capaciously large, magnificently massive and luxuriously constructed *Big Aron*. She was built for comfort with great style in 2004 by Royal Denship and features an interior design by Ole Rune. Fitted with Quantum Zero speed stabilisers, she was spectacularly refitted in 2006, and with five decks reserved for guests, she offers vast interior and exterior living spaces.

From New Zealand came the expedition yacht *Big Fish* built by McMullen and Wing, which has already earned her spurs by completing a Polar Circumnavigation of Antarctica, before going on to circumnavigate the rest of the globe. She made the headlines locally when 15 Buddhist monks gave her their blessing on Buddha's birthday, a ceremony inspired by the Hong Kong residency of her owner. *Big Fish* went on to win an Asia Boating Award in 2011 for Most Innovative Yacht Design of the Year, proving that an expedition yacht these days can be both tough and beautiful at the same time.

E&E, built in 2011, is 42-metre expedition yacht constructed in Turkey. Built out of steel with an aluminium superstructure by Cizgi Yachts of Istanbul, her high volume of 487 gross tonnage is testament to the skills of her designers at Vripak in Holland. For those who like them long and lean we should mention *Exuma* from the drawing board of Phillippe Briand. *Exuma* is now available for charters in Southeast Asia, and is a good example of a new breed of expedition yachts that look sleek and sexy, and can also do the miles.

Often, expedition yachts come about because buyers want a stable platform to cruise the world. One fantastic example of this is *Silver Cloud*, built by German yard Abeking Rasmussen. *Silver Cloud* was



The 42 EXP by Sanlorenzo

“LOWER FUEL CONSUMPTION FOR EXTENDED USE, THE PROVISION OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY, THE ABILITY TO CARRY EXTRA EQUIPMENT AND A WIDE VARIETY OF TOYS, AND SUPERIOR SEAKEEPING ARE ALL FACTORS THEY HAVE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS THEY DREW THE DESIGNS FOR THIS NEW SANLORENZO.”



The Arctic Whale, a 25-metre concept for Kingship by Eva Cadio

commissioned by an owner whose wife would get seasick easily. He thus worked with Abeking on the small waterplant area twin hull (SWATH) concept, in which torpedo-like tubes housing the engines are submerged below the waterline, dramatically reducing movement in waves. At 41-metres, *Silver Cloud* is not a huge yacht, yet it has travelled the world, making a circumnavigation that included stops in Japan, Pulau, Yap, and Papua New Guinea, all for exploration and diving in total comfort. The yacht is a true one-off – there is nothing remotely similar to it anywhere, though Abeking and Rasmussen did use the concept to develop a more sleekly styled version of *Silver Cloud*.

Increasingly Popular

With explorer yachts becoming increasingly popular, production and semi-production yacht builders have adapted quickly to the trend. One Italian builder is aiming to enter this market with a stylish looking yacht that tries to break the appearance mould of the classic explorer yacht.

The 42-metre Sanlorenzo 42 EXP offers a greater volume than the builder's more traditional 42 metre motor yacht. Lower fuel consumption for extended use, the provision of self-sufficiency, the ability to carry extra equipment and a wide variety of toys, and superior seakeeping are all factors they have taken into account as they drew the designs for this new Sanlorenzo.

Great attention has been paid to the environment and its conservation: the yacht is classified Green Plus and can remain at anchor for 48 hours without switching on the generators. Powered by twin MTU M63s, each outputting 1000 kW, she will have a speed of 15 knots. With a fuel capacity of 50,000 litres, the 42 EXP will have a range of 4000 nautical miles at 11 knots. Caterpillar engines are also available as an option. The reduced draught for coastal navigation coupled with long range and fuel efficiency are added appeal to potential owners, a surprising number of whom already own much larger superyachts, and yet are wishing to down size.

The standard layout comes with four guest cabins on the lower deck, and one full-beam master suite on the main deck. The captain gets his own cabin behind the bridge with the rest of the crew accommodated on the lower deck. Aft on this same deck is a beach club with bar, sauna and dive station. A fitness area, well-equipped gym and a counter-current swimming pool are all available for the owner for who hiking ashore is not exercise enough.

Another new design is the Italian Hydro Tec, from Sergio Cutolo. Still at the concept stage, his design for a 57 metre Explorer allows for smarter and more complete use of the onboard spaces, making it possible for the yacht to be equipped with a range of facilities that are usually more common to larger vessels. It includes a touch-and-go helicopter pad and stores tenders on either side of the main deck,



Tango 5 from Horizon Yachts



Silver Cloud's SWATH concept in action



The new 96 Darwin Explorer

“THE OWNER OF THIS HORIZON INTENDS TO CRUISE FROM THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS TO THE FAR REACHES OF THE INDO-MALAYAN ARCHIPELAGO, OFTEN IN REMOTE PLACES.”

Our Top Tips to consider when buying or chartering an Explorer yacht:

- Range is important, make sure she can get where you want without needing to refuel.
- Stabilisers are essential; spending lots of time at anchor in odd places means zero speed fins are a must.
- Built-in redundancy in machinery is vital; two watermakers are better than one.
- Freezer space and fresh food storage must match potential non-stop voyage length.
- Great crew quarters; if they cannot get ashore often, make sure their accommodation is above average.
- Communication facilities need to be state of the art to stay in touch.
- You need acres of bookshelf space for travel guides and pilot books for safe navigation but iPads from Apple are sensible replacements.
- Entertainment systems must be up to scratch. There is not a Blockbusters video rental store on Christmas Island.
- Cabins should have great big windows for that great big view when you wake up.
- Helicopters nice, submarines great, both perfect.

freeing up the aft part of the boat to become a beach club. There is even the possibility to set up an area dedicated to the carriage of a small submersible, which allows explorers to descend to depths of up to 600 metres in complete comfort.

Closer to Asia, Horizon Yachts of Taiwan are seeing interest shown in their EP series of expedition yachts. In 2012, the company launched its new flagship, a 45 metre explorer yacht that was also their first steel-hulled yacht. They claim “it features long-range cruising capabilities and exceptional performance and reliability enshrined in all the comforts and styling of a luxury yacht.” The first of the yachts, *Polaris*, successfully completed a five-day sea trial including extended 48 hour trip to the island of Peng Hu, off Taiwan, during which they put the yachts durability and operational performance to the test.

More recently, Horizon delivered *Tango 5* to a Singaporean owner. This yacht, at 115-feet, is also from the yard's growing series of sturdy, long-range yachts. The owner of this Horizon intends to cruise from the Andaman Islands to the far reaches of the Indo-Malayan

archipelago, often in remote places. Horizon responded to these demands by over-engineering the vessel, including additional infrared scanners to detect submerged objects at night. As is common on good expedition yachts, there is huge amounts of storage, with necessities like ample crew space and utility areas to enable extended times at sea.

Small but seaworthy

No one needs a superyacht to go exploring – smaller craft can do it just as well. The Italian shipyard Cantieri Delle Marche have a bevy of beauties they have designed for just that job. The Darwin 86 is a sturdy 26-metre, go-anywhere craft that is winning plaudits from owners of the first three to enter service. Hull number one was *Vitadimare*, and she was followed by *Percheron* and *Furst*.

Each owner has commented favourably on the volume the yacht offers and each has heaped praise on the yacht's sea keeping qualities both essential elements in the successful explorer yacht. All in all in recent months this Italian shipyard has sold a total of seven expedition yachts, the latest being a Nauta Air 86 for delivery into Thailand. The yacht is a modification of the original Nauta Air 80 designed by Massimo Gino, of the Milan-based design studio Nauta Yacht Design. Featuring sleeker styling and a more open feeling thanks to larger windows, the Nauta Air 86 will offer independent cruising with ranges of up to 3200 nautical miles.

The owner is seeking to cruise the Indian Ocean in safety. He said when buying the boat: “Unlike any expedition yacht I have ever seen in this size, this one has stylish lines making her refined and elegant looking while remaining a true blue water cruiser. I am totally satisfied and proud of the customization and I am sure this will make my first custom yacht extremely comfortable.”

Explorer yachts really do push geographical boundaries, making exotic, far-flung destinations real cruising possibilities. As a type of yacht, they are attractive to good crew, many of whom are adventurers themselves and are eager to work aboard yachts with exciting itineraries. For the owner, this manifests itself in the form of better crews working aboard and staying for longer periods. As any good management company will tell you, a happy crew is a good crew. For an owner, a good crew can make all the difference.

Yet in the minds of some, explorer yachts have earned themselves a name for being rough and ready, something that is very far from the truth. But if it is only a matter of the name, then perhaps there is a new class of yacht emerging – the luxury adventure yacht.

Chartering:

Big Fish: www.mybigfishcharters.com

E&E: www.camperandnicholsons.com

Silver Cloud: www.camperandnicholsons.com