

On-water prestige

Luxury yachts take the sailing experience nautical miles further

BY RAHITA ELIAS

FOR yachting enthusiasts, few joys can rival the feel of the sun on your face, the wind in your hair, and the feeling of utter freedom as your vessel rides the waves on a perfect, sailing day.

Luxury yachts take the whole experience several nautical miles further. Michael Breman, sales director of bespoke yacht builder Lürssen Yachts, says: "A luxury yacht is a seven-star private home that you can take away with you and wake up with a different mind-blowing panorama every morning!"

In Asia, he says, there is a preference for yachts up to 100-120 feet (30-36 metres) which can accommodate guests in style and cruise in tight areas. "It is only a matter of time before the sizes will increase, as has happened elsewhere in the world."

Reflecting the growing popularity of this sport is the strong attendance at the annual Singapore Yacht Show (SYC). Held in April this year, the number of visitors rose to 13,400 from 11,600 last year. The next show will be in April next year at One°15 Marina Club.

Andy Treadwell, SYC managing director, says the show focuses on "presenting the world's best-known brands through industry professionals who have the experience and knowledge to make potential buyers feel comfortable that they are making the right decisions".

He explains: "Visitors can spend time with the yacht builders and dealers at the show yachts to ask questions and take a look on board in order to get a real sense of what it is all about."

Despite growing numbers at the show, yacht owning is still quite a new phenomenon in Singapore and Asia. He says: "It is absolutely true that there are relatively few yachts in Asia in the context of the enormous wealth in the region and the known propensity to consume luxury products. But that's exactly why there is such a great opportunity."

"The on-water lifestyle is one that Europeans and Americans have long enjoyed, and we believe it is now time for the Asian population to experience the tremendous fun for all the family that comes with owning a yacht or luxury boat. It is very enticing for the new generation of moneyed lifestyle-seekers, and the Singapore Yacht Show provides one of the best introductions for those wishing to start their yachting journey."

He concedes that the global economic downturn has put a dampener on the market.

"The yachting industry has definitely been affected, which is not surprising. In a recession, the first thing to be put on the back burner is an investment in a new luxury lifestyle. Singapore, being a business hub rather than a yachting destination, we tend to see the effects here more than in, say Phuket."

On the bright side, he adds: "There is always someone who is doing well in a recession, and there are plenty of such people in Asia. The super-rich who can afford to purchase and run superyachts are virtually recession-proof anyway."

He points out that Feadship, the world's largest custom yacht builder, has managed to bag a number of new clients from Asia indicating that Asians tend to like fully customising their boats. Luxury catamaran designer and builder Sunreef Yachts, which unveiled its Supreme 68 model at SYC 2016, also found a buyer for this model at the show.

However, before jumping into your Lamborghini to go buy a yacht, bear in mind the old joke which goes: "A yacht owner is happy twice, when he buys a yacht and when he sells it."

Lürssen Yachts' Mr Breman, says: "I believe that if you buy well and invest in a quality yacht, then the saying will actually not apply. There will be sadness when the cherished asset is sold – unless it is replaced by a larger yacht!"

Raphael Sauleau, chief executive officer of broker Fraser Yachts, jokes: "On both those occasions, the owners are having to deal with their yacht broker, so we would like to think both days are particularly enjoyable."

Mr Sauleau adds: "In all seriousness, our job is to listen to our clients' demands and needs and guide them to the right yacht. We know the quality and reputation of the major shipyards and individual yachts. Once we

have found the right yacht we will guide the customer on the value and through the purchase process. Following the completion of the transaction we also offer full management and crewing services to assist the owners until the day they sell. In short, finding a reputable broker is a very good starting point."

After choosing and buying your yacht, you will have to find a place to park it. In Singapore, yacht clubs have berthing facilities. For instance, One°15 at Sentosa Cove has 270 wet berths, including 13 mega-yacht berths, and 60 dry berths. However, berthing facilities can be hard to come by.

According to the One°15 website: "As the marina has reached its maximum capacity for live-aboard boaters, the club will not be accepting any live-aboard requests for the time being. There is a limited number of transient berths available for visiting yachts measuring from 40 ft to 100 ft. Priority is given on a first reserved, first served basis. The purchase of a membership with the club does not guarantee permanent or long-term berthing in the marina. There is a waiting list for long-term berths measuring between 30 ft and 100 ft."

Mr Sauleau says that this is where a good broker can once again step in. "Our brokers also have a strong knowledge of marinas around the world, and can

guide clients through the purchase or rental of a suitable berth for the yacht."

So while owning a yacht can turn out to be a floating money pit, doing your homework thoroughly will help you avoid the many pitfalls. Ultimately, nothing beats the dream of sailing the seven seas in luxury.

"Owning a yacht is a true experience which will bring its owner unforgettable emotions. It is actually not unusual to see yacht owners starting with a small unit and then purchasing a larger yacht to allow them to share such experiences with friends and family," says Mr Sauleau. **W**



JOURNEY BEGINS

Turnout at SYC2016 (above); yacht berthing facilities

