

Super heavyweight

Superyacht expert and former yacht Captain to the rich and famous, Michael Howorth looks forward to this September's Monaco Yacht Show extravaganza in Monte Carlo, where those sail the highest seas will gather



From its humble beginnings as a boat show, The Monaco Yacht Show has morphed into one of the world's most glittering social gatherings of the rich and their superyacht toys. Hailed by industry experts as an essential, powerful commercial catalyst, the show now sees itself as a forum addressing societal and environmental issues just as much as a marketplace in which to buy yourself a superyacht.

Since its inception in 1991, the show has been promoting excellence across the entire superyacht industry. With its iconic reputation for exclusivity, excellence, and innovation, it has established itself as the ultimate

Above: Monaco Yacht Show: the most famous yacht show of all, with yacht brokers, exhibitors and networking opportunities in the most beautiful of settings

international meeting for the superyacht sector.

In its 2023 outing, the show featured a diverse exhibition showcasing 565 exhibitors and a fleet of 117 superyachts. Out of a total of 27,223 visitors it was estimated that 11,634 were potential clients. This year, the organisers are predicting a bigger turnout. With the tanking of the Russian market, those exhibiting must have their fingers

crossed that they are right. Rich Russians were the mainstay of superyachts before the imposition of sanctions. Now, most of the Russian superyacht fleet lies idle in ports around the world, either abandoned or left to taxpayers in those countries to foot their considerable upkeep costs.

Yet the demand for thrilling adventures and bespoke experiences continues to grow within yachting. Yacht owners ►



Below: *Aquarius* at the largest exhibition yacht show, Monaco Yacht Show – the 92m motor yacht by the Dutch shipyard – offers guest accommodation for up to 12 guests in 7 suites

and their guests want to drive all-terrain vehicles at the North Pole, embark on underwater excursions, explore secluded islands using swish tenders. They want to enjoy la dolce vita in the Mediterranean, indulge in personalised tours of historical and cultural sites along the coast, encounter wildlife while preserving their ecosystems, and even engage in scientific research during a charter.

This September will see the return of a thematic exhibition area dedicated to adventure, exploration, and leisure activities with a yacht. It will feature an extensive showcase

of superyacht tenders, luxurious off-road vehicles, cutting-edge water toys, high-tech gadgets and helicopters to the most remote corners of our planet.

Another event making a notable return this year is a tribute to the individuals who exemplify the character of the super yachting world. The Honours is an initiative that seeks to celebrate people who are inspiring change both within and through the industry. During its successful inaugural edition in 2023, the yacht owner and philanthropist Wendy Schmidt, YachtAid Director Zoran Selakovic, and superyacht First Officer, Jenny Matthews were each honoured with a Bowsprit award. The names this year's winners will be publicly revealed at the Honours ceremony on September 24th, preceding the Show.

In September, when show visitors attending, stop talking about the absence of the Russian buyer, expect the chatter to turn to the environment. Sustainability it seems, is at the forefront of all discussions, capturing the attention of the media, visitors, and exhibitors alike. Yacht designers are unequivocally converging towards two imperative guiding criteria in the construction of future yachts: sustainability and functionality. The pandemic led to a growing trend among clients who now view their yachts as full-fledged work and living spaces. Now technological advances are intersecting with an increased focus on sustainability, reflecting new onboard lifestyles with yacht owners seeking extended stays.

Designers, are aware of this new reality and are committing themselves to guiding their clients toward responsible navigation, enabling a holistic approach to the sustainability and functionality of tomorrow's yachts through eco-friendly innovations. Energy consumption reduction and the

adoption of environmentally friendly materials form the core of this approach, instilling a forward-looking perspective.

But the industry still has a long uphill struggle to dispel prejudices regarding yachting's impact on global marine pollution, which stands at 0.3%. A presentation at last year's show highlighted the correlation between this low figure (though still too high!) and the substantial investment made by the industry in developing sustainable solutions for cleaner navigation.

There is a growing trend of interest from new fortunes in yachting. Yacht brokers are reporting a significant transition in the profile of yacht clients, with a marked decrease in the average age of superyacht owners (50-55 years). A new generation of younger and sustainability-conscious boaters is investing in yachting, expressing a strong interest in eco-responsible technologies and ever more personalised sea experiences. monacoyachtshow.com ■

