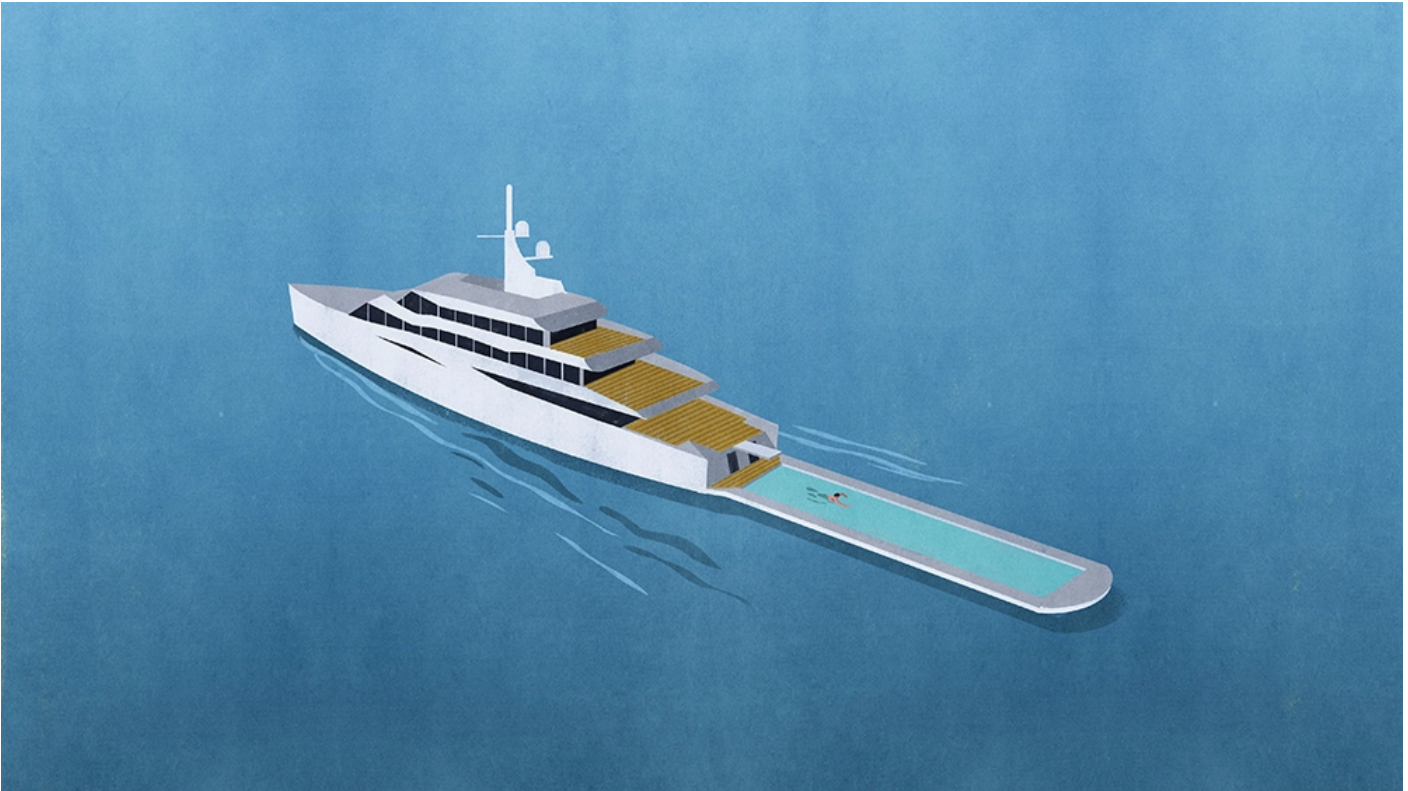


From a 462-Foot Gigayacht to Rafael Nadal's Power Cat: The Best Luxury Vessels

Whether large or small in build, these winners balance modern designs with luxe amenities.

By MICHAEL VERDON, HOWARD WALKER, JULIA ZALTZMAN



Shout

The Big Idea: Transom Demand

The beach club became mainstream on yachts around 20 years ago, when designers realized that the lowly tender garage would make a nice oceanside cabana instead. Beach clubs have since evolved into far more sophisticated spaces, thanks to open-hull sides and deeper enclaves, with gyms, spas, bars and, on larger yachts, even dive centers.

That desire for more private ocean access has moved beyond supersizing beach clubs to actually reshaping the stern. “There’s been a slow burn of bringing the inside out,” says J. David Weiss, an American designer who has created superyachts for Heesen, CRN and other builders. “The desire for access at the stern is important to owners, who want both openness and privacy.”

Weiss recalls designing what was initially a small pool inside the beach club of the 240-

foot *Yalla*, from CRN. Then, he says, “the owner wanted it as a significant destination, so it kept growing. It eventually lengthened the boat by more than 30 feet.” *Rebeca*, the first of Benetti’s Oasis 40M series, actually reduced interior space in order to apportion more real estate to the stern; its 900-square-foot open transom includes an infinity pool and rear “transformer” steps that lower into the water, with the opening sides adding at least another 10 feet to the 28-foot beam. Owner Tim Ciasulli discovered other benefits as well. “On most boats, you can’t sit at the stern because of spray or engine exhaust,” he says, but on *Rebeca* “you sit at water level but facing backward. The speeds are slow enough to let you really see the ocean—it’s like riding a big surfboard.”

Weiss believes the trend will only accelerate. “I’m working on a 223-foot project, and one of the most significant things the owners want is to expand the beach club,” he says. “There’s a huge appetite now for origami-like structures folding out of the superstructure.”

Gigayacht: Lürssen ‘Nord’



The most compelling—and closely guarded—launch this year was *Nord*, delivered to its owner after completing sea trials in the North Sea. It’s impossible to hide a 465-foot, eight-deck yacht equipped with two helipads, but builder Lürssen remained tight-lipped about the details. Dan Lenard, of Venice studio Nuvolari Lenard, which was responsible for the yacht’s interior and exterior, describes *Nord* as a “warship wearing a tuxedo” but likewise declined to elaborate.

Nord’s swimming pool, helipads and fleet of tenders are well-documented, and project manager Moran Yacht & Ship says the boat can accommodate 36 guests across 13

staterooms, plus 58 crew. Visually, the gigayacht is beautifully balanced, from its tiered decks to the rectangular bow to the blue-and-black super-structure counterbalancing the white hull. “Whether you like the design or not, it must strike you,” Lenard says. “*Nord* is a serious ship, first and foremost, but she also transcends the traditional language of yacht design. We have entered a new direction.”

Lenard’s words go beyond self-promotion. Whether interior images ever appear or not, if *Nord* is as well conceived inside as out, it surely lives up to the designer’s final description: “An explorer with the elegance of a gentleman’s yacht.”

Photo : Lürssen Yachts

Superyacht: ‘Geco’



Any owner who prioritizes socializing and water sports in his or her design brief jumps onto our radar, but *Geco*’s exceptional outdoor spaces were what carried it into the winner’s circle. Built by Admiral, part of the Italian Sea Group, the bespoke 180-footer is all about elevating la dolce vita to its highest level. At the stern, a grand open transom creates an extravagant aft-deck beach club, complete with sea steps, for authentic on-water living, including dining at the water’s edge. At the bow, the circular touch-and-go helipad hanging over the hull doubles as an entertainment or sunbathing area, while a large retractable TV delivers movies under the stars and a boho-themed lounge with firepit invites revelry from dusk to dawn. For a swim with a view, head to the sundeck pool.

Gian Marco Campanino’s interior mingles hardwood floors and crystal chandeliers with

contemporary décor. Admiral's in-house designer also penned a one-of-a-kind Buddha bar-lounge for both formal and informal dining. And since the owner is all about living large, he ensured *Geco* had a flotilla of water toys. The silver-hulled yacht reaches 18 knots, a respectable top end for a semi-displacement design, but in keeping with the spirited nature of the mother ship, its Evo 43 tender blasts to 40 knots.

Photo : Italian Sea Group

Explorer: 'La Datcha'



A serious contender for several Best of the Best awards, including best charter yacht, *La Datcha* is the second hull in Damen Yachting's SeaXplorer range. But the six-deck, 252-footer is a breakthrough bespoke design, with serious explorer features and the ability to navigate autonomously for up to 40 days. The first superyacht certified to carry two helicopters in one garage, *La Datcha* is a heli-skier's dream boat, but it also comes equipped with a three-passenger submersible, Wave-Runners and snowmobiles, as well as a scuba center with a decompression chamber. (For all that action, there's also a fully certified emergency room.) More than a warhorse, *La Datcha* has a highly social glass observation lounge that delivers exceptional views of rugged terrain, even in bad weather, and there's also a gym, Jacuzzis, a sauna, a massage area and a steam room, as well as a stylish main salon and professional galley. The backlit rubber walls on one staircase even change color, just for fun.

Since taking delivery, its owner has avoided the Med and Caribbean—where many hardcore expedition yachts end up, despite their capabilities—favoring Russia, Turkey, Egypt, the Red Sea, Seychelles, the Maldives, Singapore and Japan instead. More off-

the-grid stops are planned later this year.

Photo : Jeff Brown/Imperial Yachts

Sailing Yacht: ‘Halekai’



Pairing smart design with a timeless look, the Hoek-designed *Halekai*—Hawaiian for “home on the sea”—is the fourth Truly Classic 128-foot sailing yacht delivered by the UK’s Pendennis shipyard. But this yacht is quite different from its sisters. The owner, an experienced yachtsman who has previously owned several Hoek designs, wanted to sail around the world on a traditional-looking vessel, but he also wanted new innovations for long-distance remote cruising as well as superyacht and bucket racing. The designers reengineered areas belowdecks to make changing sails faster for crew, while also creating an easy transition from cruise to race mode when competing in regattas or outrunning weather. The yacht’s long, lithe lines are enduringly beautiful yet benefit from a proven hull.

New York designer Ken Fulk collaborated with Hoek on the interior, taking inspiration from Hawaiian history and culture. Quarter-sawn teak finished in matte lacquer (to show the grain) is paired with white-painted panels to give the cabin a traditional warm look. On the exterior, the spinnaker sports a large gold Hawaiian motif. *Halekai* offers the best of modern sailing: a classic shape that dresses up any anchorage, but with practical designs that make it a joy to sail.

Photo : Pendennis Shipyard

Interior: Baglietto 'Club M'



When Achille Salvagni learned that his next client was one of America's most influential luxury real-estate developers, he leaned into the pressure that came with that knowledge. The Rome-based architect has a string of winning superyacht designs, but the 130-foot Baglietto Club M is arguably his most successful.

Taking inspiration from the halcyon days of air travel, where plane cabins practically doubled as artists' canvases, Salvagni used high-contrast materials, including textured wood and polished brass, to create what he calls a "soft, serene envelope." *Club M's* walls and ceilings are clad in light leather, for effects both visual and tactile, while light-colored limed-oak walls, dark eucalyptus details and oak floors provide a natural feel. High-design touches come in the form of bespoke door handles, hand-knitted silk carpets, a floating staircase and sculpted Italian marble sinks, with the yacht's materials and shapes brought into harmony by the soft curves of its walls and the ceilings' gentle slopes.

Photo : Petrignani

Charter Yacht: 'Lana'



Beyond its impressive size, this 351-foot, hybrid-powered Benetti has so many details that it would require a two-week charter, minimum, to appreciate all its intricacies. Somehow, the designers entirely avoided cliché concepts: See how the 26-foot-long pool is positioned on the sundeck for unrivaled water views. Or how the nearly 1,100-square-foot main suite takes the term to a new level, with two terraces, his-and-hers walk-in closets and a full-beam bathroom with shower and tub.

Both elegance and opulence are found in the details. The master breakfast table features a crystal base and craquelé surface; the bedside tabletops are made from mother-of-pearl; and the bespoke table, with seating for 16, in *Lana's* 1,076-square-foot sundeck dining room, has a backlit honey-onyx base. Each of the seven VIP staterooms has its own color scheme, while the large spa on the lower deck includes a mosaic-tiled hammam, a gym and a massage room, adjacent to the beach club, which opens to the water on three sides. The teak foredeck is designed for yoga sessions, cocktails or practicing your swing (using biodegradable golf balls). When the coffee table on the yacht's upper deck isn't in use, it transforms into a firepit. *Lana* is the third—and probably last—of Benetti's gigayacht series, but in terms of inspired design, it's the crown jewel. The central agent is Imperial Yachts.

Power Cat: 'Great White'



Multihull builder Sunreef couldn't have asked for a better spokesman than tennis superstar Rafael Nadal, who took delivery of his 80-foot cat, *Great White*, last summer. While the niche for large power cats tends to be filled with boxy, vanilla-white multihulls, Nadal's new boat is one of Sunreef's most stylish ever.

With its azure-colored hull and custom features such as the foldout balcony in the main suite and sports-center televisions in the main salon, *Great White* is a showcase of contemporary yet understated styling. The salon's open plan highlights the multi-hull's main asset: significantly more interior space than a monohull of equal length. The area includes an eight-person dining table, oversize lounges and the large-screen TVs, a pair at 77 inches each. The main suite, located in the starboard hull, has a walk-in dressing room, sofa, queen bed and the foldout balcony. (There are three guest cabins plus two for crew.) The 80-footer has a pair of 1,200 hp engines, which deliver a cruising speed of 16 knots on the way to a top end of 23 knots. Berthed on Nadal's home island of Mallorca, *Great White* cruised the other Balearic Islands last summer, and it's anyone's guess where the tennis star will end up this year as the Med reopens.

Day Boat: Wajer 38/2



Few day-boat builders can compete with Wajer for timeless elegance, and this year especially, the firm stands alone, with its 38/2. The second generation of its popular 38-footer offers significant add-ons: At the stern, the new swim platform provides not only water access but a graceful tail that completes the profile's flowing lines. To keep its clean look, the builders engineered a hidden hatch for the ladder, with a Seabob housed in a lower compartment. Other upgrades include carbon details on the windshield and carbon-fiber suspension seats; reshaped, powder-coated black air vents; composite decks in Wajer's signature pattern; and new upholstery with lovely, intricate stitching. This 38/2 is an exceptional family boat, but given its ability to accommodate up to 16 passengers, it would also make the world's most graceful tender.

Photo : Wajer Yachts

Comeback: Azimut Magellano 25M



When the Magellano 74 launched in 2009 it had an intrepid, almost ship-like look. At the time, the 74-footer was a breakthrough, a long-distance cruiser that provided an alternative to the conventional trawler. Launched last September, the new Magellano 25M is a more stylish (and faster) reinterpretation of its 12-year-old sibling, with fluid exterior lines from naval architect Ken Freivokh and an interior designed by Vincenzo De Cotiis. “The 25M had to keep the line’s essential qualities,” says Freivokh, who also did the exterior of the original 74. “But it also needed the right proportions and timeless look.”

The 25M has trick features, like an active air-sanitizing system based on a NASA patent, while the “hotel mode” allows use of lights, appliances and air-conditioning with zero emissions. The 25-knot top end is also noteworthy, though the real differentiator is surely the modern interior by De Cotiis. It’s the first yachting project for the Italian architect, who created a balanced, light-filled salon by combining Verde Alpi marble, dark walnut and ribbed wood with décor that emphasizes soft, flowing shapes. He also brought an avant-garde touch to the salon, mixing resin with bronze to resemble precious stones. More good news: The 25M will soon be joined by a 30M with an even more modern look.

Beach Club: ‘LEL’



A spacious beach club has become a prerequisite for many owners, but you’ve probably never seen anything like the 163-foot Rossinavi *LEL*’s ingenious use of opening terraces, fold-down bulwarks and an extending swim platform to create a pseudo floating island aft. At anchor, the side and stern doors open outboard to create a wider-than-full-beam enclave directly at ocean level. Luca Dini describes his design as a “terrace overlooking the sea,” but it’s much more than that. Thanks to the sofas, cocktail bars, shaded space and water access, what’s typically an underachieving space on most yachts this size is transformed into a prized destination. With *LEL*’s terraced design, the main deck is also connected to the beach club via floating stairs, a two-floor layout that offers equal opportunities for privacy and camaraderie. The lower deck also features a garage where, on water-sports day, the yacht’s toys—Seabobs, paddleboards, diving gear, towables, water skis and wakeboards—come out to play. *LEL*’s other social areas, including a glass-encased veranda on the upper deck as well as a spa pool, seal its reputation as a yacht for outdoor-lovers.

Photo : Rossinavi

Modular Yacht: Tiara 48LS



In the last decade, foldout and side-deck transoms, along with other modular designs, have become all the rage for boats over 40 feet. But US builder Tiara decided to approach the trend from an entirely different angle: For its new 48 LS, which has a fold-down side that opens up the rear quarter, the designers also created a less-is-more seating arrangement that pivots 180 degrees, while also sliding fore and aft, to offer multiple layouts.

The highly engineered design is more than a gee-whiz feature on Tiara's biggest-ever outboard model. "It can alter the boat's layout dramatically within the same footprint," says Andrew Bartlett, design director for Tiara Yachts. Facing aft, the seating has a direct through line to the open stern, which Tiara's designers call a "teak beach." Facing forward, the seats are connected by a center table to the forward lounge, offering an ideal dining arrangement and an even larger rear area, which means non-diners have more space to enjoy the water. At anchor, with the side panel down and starboard-side door open, the teak beach continues to expand. And with triple 600 hp Mercury Verados pushing the 48 LS to a top end of 60 mph, the modular design is not only smart but lightning-fast.

Yacht: Princess X95



Princess Yachts' towering new X95 mini-superyacht achieves its class-leading interior space—as much as 40 percent more room than other 95-footers—by going up in the world. Designed with the help of Italy's Pininfarina studio, the X95 features triple decks (on a recent tour, every inch of space felt utilized) and, the pièce de résistance, a stunning top-deck Sky Lounge. With the wheelhouse far forward, there's room for comfortable lounges and a big-screen TV in the protected, light-filled space. Sliding doors open onto a rear deck the size of a dance floor. Perched on the bow at the same level is the yacht's Jacuzzi, with multiple sunpads; while underway, this area offers the best view in the house.

The main suite on the yacht we toured was forward on the main deck, an optional layout that delivers an exceptional 270-degree view along with privacy. (There's also a second main suite below-decks.) As for performance, the 29-mph top speed comes courtesy of 1,900 hp V-12 MAN diesels, with tanks big enough for 2,000 miles of cruising at 10 knots. The X95 shows what a yacht's upper limits can be when designers are willing to smash, not bend, the rules.

Photo : Princess Yachts

Foiling Yacht: Enata Royale Cabin



Foils are all the rage. They're on America's Cup yachts, round-the-world racers and even production sailboats for weekend warriors. Enata's new 31-foot Royale Cabin Foiler arrives at the top end of the market thanks to its bow stateroom, hardtop and more intuitive helm for owners who want to pilot the boat themselves. Seating is strong across the cockpit, but the coolest features, of course, are the foils, which deploy at just 12 knots. Flying five feet above the water, the Royale Cabin can hit 40 knots without feeling waves. Enata has tweaked the foils to enhance performance, and the boat's 132 sensors measure everything from foil height and rudder angle to the output of its custom-built 370 hp V-8 diesels. Perhaps most exciting is that the Enata started life as a sci-fi concept, and yet, in only three years, we're looking at a bona fide, high-tech, IRL weekend cruiser.

Photo : Enata

One to Watch: Valerio Rivellini



“Renaissance man” is a much-hyped label in the world of superyacht design, despite the fact that most rock-star studios have big teams behind the creative work. Among the top tier, Valerio Rivellini is a rarity: The Naples-based designer works in an inspired cocoon, and in polymath fashion his designs flow across categories, from a 23-foot reinterpretation of the classic Italian “gozzo” style, with rounded stern and modern cockpit, to a trio of superyachts to an electric bike built from repurposed wood.

“I love the mixture of styles and materials,” Rivellini says. “The ideal is a fusion of classic and modern, with a minimalistic exterior and technological heart beating inside.”

His simplified aesthetic and his training as a naval engineer helps create boats like the Evo R4, with its clean, sharp lines and 43-mph hull. But more than anything it was the R4’s technical feats—foldout rear sides and a transformer transom that can double as either a stairway to a high dock or an underwater dive platform—which had so many builders rushing to copy the 2014 creation. His soon-to-be-launched, 79-foot V8 design for Evo Yachts has the same sense of minimalism, with an open stern, a pair of large sailing-yacht steering wheels (Rivellini has competed in several round-the-world races) and a glass-encased interior.

His minimalist trademark of straight lines and open decks applies even to his 184-foot Extended Explorer and the yet larger, 230-foot Vita concept. For Rivellini, no matter the size of the boat, all designs follow a cardinal rule: “Even yachts this large must never lose contact with the sea.”