

FAR OUT

For a select few superyacht owners, the big question isn't how the boat looks in the marina; it's how far away from the marina you can go.

STORY RYAN SWIFT

COURTESY LURRSSEN

Lurssen's expedition superyacht Northern Star

For many superyacht owners, the big questions around a purchase include how fast it can go (typically a younger, less experienced owner), how it looks in the harbour, and entertainment space. For a less showy, less extravagant type of owner, it's about the strength of the hull, seaworthiness and ability to operate far from support facilities for extended lengths of time.

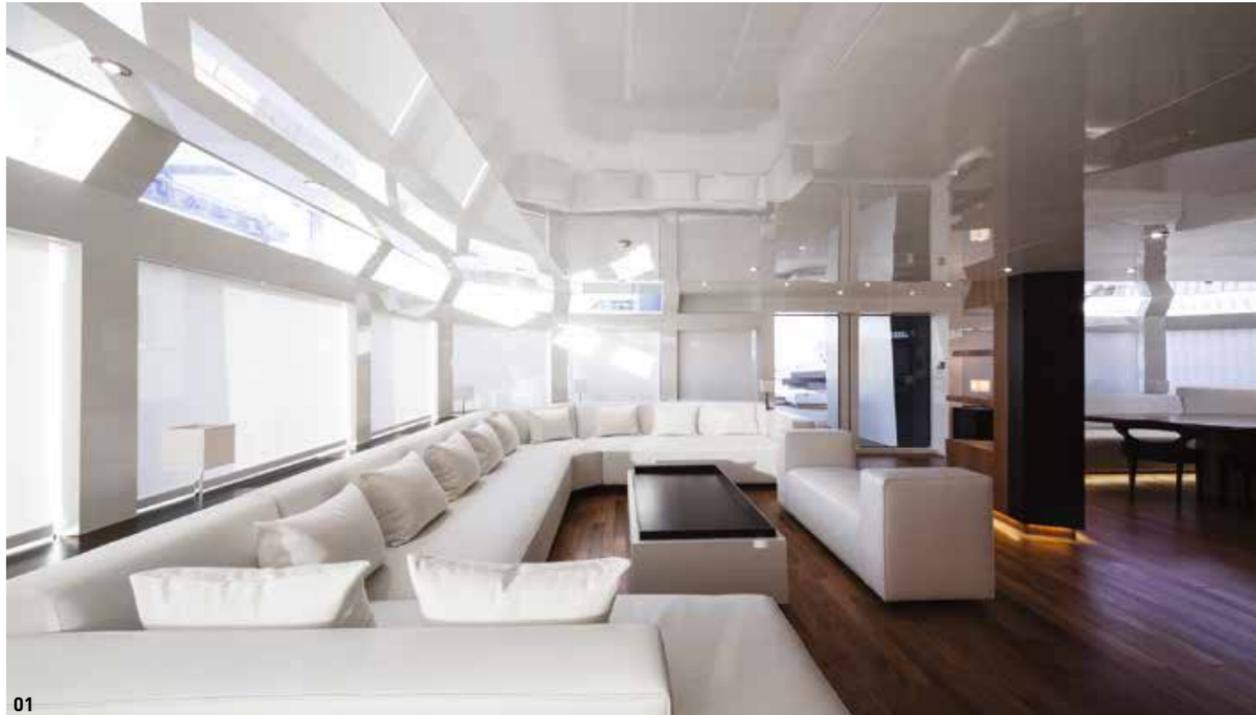
Known as expedition or explorer yachts, these yachts are often built with Ice Class hulls (meaning they can cruise in polar regions), safety coverings for the propellers and shafts, fuel tanks and storage space to allow for extended journeys, and the ability to cross oceans—a relatively subjective thing, but typically a range of at least 4,000 nautical miles is required.

Large superyachts offer ocean-crossing range thanks to their large tanks and huge volumes. Some striking examples of expedition superyachts at the very large end come courtesy of German superyacht builder Lurssen. Most famously, there is the 126-metre *Octopus*, commissioned by Paul Allen. When *Octopus* was launched in 2003, it was one of the world's biggest yachts; now it isn't even in the top ten. And yet, *Octopus* has become one of the world's best-known yachts, because Allen often lends out his yacht for scientific research purposes, for sea-faring expeditions, referring to his yachts as less a Bentley and more a Range Rover. There is even a ten-person submarine that can be launched from the underside of *Octopus*, letting Allen, interested guests or marine biologists explore the depths.

Allen is not alone with his interest in far-flung exploration. Other Lurssen superyachts that are considered part of the expedition category are *Polar Star* and *Northern Star*, both reportedly built for the owner of one of the world's biggest fishing fleets. Both superyachts have ice class hulls and long ranges.

With staggering amounts of money, such expedition superyachts can take guests to the most far-flung regions of the world and provide all the amenities of a five star hotel in the middle of nowhere.

But other solutions and ideas have emerged for those wanting to cruise the world in luxury. Among the world's largest expedition superyachts are a number of conversion boats. Such boats were originally commissioned to work on fishing fleets, perform scientific research or patrol stormy seas. Owners, working through their representatives or in connection with dedicated conversion yards, can find such boats turn them into fully kitted out luxury palaces, able to go anywhere.



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One of the most famous projects of this kind was the 71-metre *Enigma XK*, a conversion boat that was originally commissioned to be a Scottish fisheries patrol boat in the rough waters of the North Sea. The boat was converted at Atlantic Refit Centre at La Rochelle, France. The yard has big facilities to handle big projects, but works with contractors to keep costs down and help focus on individual projects. After two years of extensive work and just before her launch in 2015, the owner of *Enigma XK* was quoted as saying that he was particularly keen on exploring the world's great rivers, including the Congo, where no one had ever gone before.

Enigma XK is currently available for charter through Eyos Expeditions, a superyacht charter firm that specializes in exotic and remote locations, such as Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, the Canadian Northwest Passage and Madagascar.

Another refit yard closer to Hong Kong is HYS

Yacht, based out of Subic Bay, the Philippines. HYS Yacht specializes in finding de-commissioned Japanese fishing and research boats and converting them into luxury expedition yachts. Initial projects consisted of refurbishing and refitting older boats. HYS Yachts' ambition has grown in recent years, as has their fame. In 2010, they launched the refit expedition yacht *Dr No*, for legendary yachtsman Tom Perkins. Perkins, previous owner of *The Maltese Falcon*, had purchased two submersibles and needed a go-anywhere launch vehicle. *Dr No* fit the bill.

Aside from the refits and conversions, would-be expedition yacht owners can also look to the growing range of yachts available from the better-known names in mid-range (50-85 feet) trawling boats. Trawling yachts are favored by anglers and replicate some of the seakeeping features of fishing boats. Popular with Australian, New Zealand and American buyers, trawlers are normally designed for extended periods away from marinas.

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He trawler concept and extending it further, Nordhavn has slowly developed a range of long distance, smaller sized superyachts. At the top end is their 120-foot flagship. The first to be built was *Aurora*, launched from Nordhavn's yard in Xiamen. She travelled to Hong Kong to pick up their owners and a test crew, and in 2013, she sailed with owners aboard from Hong Kong to Vancouver, passing through Alaska's Aleutian Islands.

The Nordhavn 120 can manage up to 6,000 nautical miles on a single tank, and her naval architecture was designed to handle tough seas in the open ocean. There are other yacht builders making similar ventures.

Finally, buyers have some particularly stylish options to consider. Normal expedition or explorer superyachts have full displacement hulls, which means they move slowly but efficiently through the water. The slow speed is offset both by fuel savings, onboard space and comfort. They also tend to be seaworthy, able to handle bigger waves.



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01-02 The luxurious interiors of the Enigma XK

03 The 71-metre Enigma XK

04 Nordhavn 120 can manage up to 6,000 nautical miles on a single tank of fuel



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COURTESY BRIAND

A NEW BREED OF EXPEDITION YACHT HAS EMERGED, MUCH GREENER AND MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN EVER

In the past few years, a new breed of expedition yacht has emerged, much greener and more sophisticated than ever. These are best exemplified by the designs and builds of Philippe Briand, who works under the Vitruvius name of explorer yachts. In 2010, Italian shipyard Perini Navi launched the 50-metre *Exuma*, which has since been described as an “iconic” superyacht. Designed by Briand, *Exuma*’s hull was sleeker and leaner and aimed for distance by being extremely efficient in the water. Its range of over 5,500 nautical miles allows for very long range cruising.

The tenders that *Exuma* was designed to carry showcase the desire by the owners to explore much

more; there are two large garages that house a hovercraft and a completely amphibious jeep, which allows guests to get into a car, drive to shore, and then continue their drive on land until they are ready to head back to the boat.

Briand and Perini Navi have only launched three expedition vessels in all, though each one has garnered significant fame. The next yacht after *Exuma* was the 55-metre *Galileo G*, followed by the 73-metre *Grace E*. *Grace G* also has an incredible 9,000-nautical mile range (a typical 65-metre superyacht might have a range of about 5,000 nautical miles), thanks to her super-efficient design, and her hull is ice-classed,

05 The 50-metre *Exuma* houses a hovercraft and an amphibious jeep

06-07 The 55-metre *Galileo G* from Perini Navi



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opening up virtually every part of the world’s oceans to exploration by her owners.

Another stylish entrant that made big waves in 2010 was the 45-metre *Big Fish*, commissioned by Hong Kong businessman Richard Beattie from New Zealand shipyard McMullen and Wing. Boasting a 6,000 nautical mile range, *Big Fish* has cruised the South Pacific, Antarctica and the Far North. McMullen and Wing was building a follow up explorer yacht, the 50-metre *Star Fish*, but a shipyard fire in 2012 damaged the boat and left the yard near financial ruin. In 2014, someone apparently picked up the project, work has resumed, and McMullen and Wing have commissioned a new line of stylish expedition boats.

Whether it’s a tough-as-nails conversion boat, an extended trawling yacht, or a finely-honed, modern-day long range cruiser, superyacht buyers are spoiled for choice when it comes to exploration. The biggest question remains: where to go next? Ⓜ



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