

WANDERLUST

The spirit of adventure that spawned the **semi-custom expedition yacht** market is spurring shipyards to build larger models that can voyage to the ends of the earth



All yachtsmen become adventurers each time they leave the dock to cruise offshore. But some yacht owners make it their mission to explore waters less traveled. The passion this group shares for long-distance cruising to remote destinations has spawned a small but rapidly growing segment of the market called expedition or explorer yachts.

In contrast to those who prefer the safety and comfort of the beaten path, this breed of yachtsman often faces real dangers like violent storms, rogue waves and pack ice. They also must deal with the more mundane perils associated with

long-range passagemaking: unreliable shore power, lack of fresh water and unexpected groundings. Expedition yachts are designed and built to withstand these dangers, as well as to voyage for extended periods without refueling. As much as possible, each one is an island unto itself.

"In order to satisfy the requirements of those who choose the less traveled path, the yacht must fulfill the needs of comfort, safety, reliability and the ability to meet what [comes] in way of weather, be it fair or foul, hot or cold," says David Marlow, chairman of Marlow Yachts.

Expedition yacht builders achieve that reliability and seaworthiness through a variety of design and engineering features, some of which hearken back to the fishing trawlers of yore. Other builders incorporate advanced construction techniques. While the yachts typically share design characteristics such as a traditional, "salty" exterior with a raised pilothouse, Portuguese bridge and high bulwarks, the builders' design philosophies vary widely in other areas. Some of the yachts have a single engine for optimum efficiency, while others have twins. There is even difference of opinion about hull configuration.

"A planing-hull boat is not the right boat to go offshore in. All of our boats are full-displacement," says Jim Leishman, vice president of Nordhavn Yachts. "If you give up on planing speed, weight is no longer a liability. You can carry more provisions, more spare parts."

Marlow, whose yachts have semi-planing hulls, begs to differ. "With regard to performance, we believe that it is fair to say that the vast majority of »



STORY BY
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builders...today are of the opinion that the lighter boats are superior," he says. "The comfort level is vastly superior when the yacht stops fighting with the sea and joins with it in a waltz."

One thing all expedition yacht builders can agree on, however, is the character of their clients. "They want a really spectacular adventure," Leishman says.

"Our owners are typically much more independent souls compared to other types of yacht buyers," Marlow says. "We find they are far more active."

Many expedition yacht owners come from the sailing side, having given up battling with the wind and opting for the comforts of voyaging under power. But some have little prior yachting experience, according to Leishman. "They learn as a team together," he says. "After a year of coastal cruising, they take off across the ocean."

The semi-custom expedition yacht market is not huge. "As to the total size of the market, to be candid, there are not that many Lewis and Clarks out there, though the number does surprise us as a percentage," Marlow says.

Like other styles of luxury motor yachts, expedition yachts seem to be growing ever larger in overall length. "We have seen some softening in the smaller stuff, but we have seen a ramp-up in the bigger yachts," Leishman says. In keeping with their size increase, many of the new, larger expedition yachts are being offered with higher standards of certification.

Noted naval architects are also getting into the game. At the upper end of the market—verging on the custom arena—the 137-foot Newcastle Expedition Series yacht *True North*, launched last fall, features naval architecture by DeJong and Lebet along with exterior and interior styling by Luiz de Basto.

Maritime Concept and Construction in Hong Kong recently delivered the first hull in designer Ron Holland's new 45-meter expedition yacht series. "What MCC is offering with the Marco Polo Transocean Explorer series is a high-quality yet very cost-efficient solution for long-distance voyagers," Holland says.

What follows is an update on some of the major players in the semi-custom expedition yacht field. It includes builders whose mission it is to satisfy the never-ending desire to explore distant seas. While they cater to an international market, these builders all have at least one foot in the United States. This is a testament to the enduring U.S. spirit of exploration and adventure.

American Expedition Yachts

A new company, American Expedition Yachts (AEY), was founded in 2005 by a team of yachtbuilding veterans. Stuart Archer, who serves as vice president of sales and product development, spent eight years at Northern Marine before leaving to help form the new company. While AEY is currently developing a 110-foot motor sailer, its focus is on building single-engine, fiberglass expedition yachts from 70 to 100 feet.

"About three years ago, everyone had an expedition yacht in their arsenal," Archer says. "I was expecting a plateau, but there seems to be a following for the larger yachts."

The new company expects to begin construction on its first hull, an 85-foot long-range cruiser, this summer. The yacht will be laid up using a resin-infusion process in AEY's new shipyard near Anacortes, Washington. The design incorporates a traditional full-displacement hull. "They aren't weight-sensitive," Archer says. "You can add big tenders, even a helicopter, on the 85." »

American Expedition Yachts' design for a 100-footer includes a wide 25-foot beam and four staterooms.





Above: The first Calixas 105 blends ruggedness with contemporary notes.

Below: Next in Grand Banks' Aleutian Series is the 65 RP.

AEY also has a design for a 100-foot long-range cruiser on the boards. "Around eighty to eighty-five feet there's a break between being able to run it yourself and having a crew," Archer says, noting that many builders jump to 120 feet for their crewed offerings. "I think the 100-foot zone is fairly open," he says.

Calixas Yachts

Landlocked Austin, Texas, is the unlikely home of another new expedition yacht builder, Calixas Yachts (pronounced *Cali-X-as*). The company was founded in 2003 by software entrepreneur Montie Twining with noted naval architect Gregory C. Marshall of Canada. Calixas' philosophy is to build yachts on spec, believing there is a ready-made market for them, according to Arturo Barraza, who serves as owners liaison.

"The cycle time for custom yachts is so long nowadays due to lack of yard space," Barraza says. "And we felt that there was [growing] demand for this type of yacht."

Marshall has designed 80-, 105- and 145-foot series models for Calixas, with exterior lines that blend expedition and motor yacht looks. The first hull built, a 105, was recently launched in Taiwan and is now in the final commissioning stages (*ShowBoats International*, April/May). The company decided to start with the 105 because, Barraza says, "The industry has grown to such an extent that most of the people looking for a yacht nowadays consider 100 or so feet to be the entry level."

The 105 was built of resin-infused FRP using the SCRIMP method. Twin 474-hp Cat 3406E diesels give her a top speed of 12.8 knots and a cruise of 12.5 knots, with

a range of 1,625 nautical miles at cruise. Her interior, also designed by Marshall, accommodates eight guests and six crew, and includes a main-deck master suite.

A second 105 is already in build and three more are scheduled to start construction in the near future. "Hull No. 2 is reduced to twelve to fourteen months for construction for this semi-custom series, versus three years for a custom build," Barraza says.

Grand Banks

After more than a half-century of building trawler-style yachts, the Grand Banks name is almost synonymous with the expedition yacht market. At the upper end of the Seattle-based company's line is the Grand Banks Aleutian Series, which ranges from 59 to 72 feet. These yachts combine long-range reliability with motor yacht-level interior comfort, styling and speed.

Constructed of fiberglass at Grand Banks' state-of-the-art Singapore shipyard, the Aleutian Series yachts have modified-V hulls that give them speeds of more than 25 knots when powered by twin engines.

"One of the reasons we chose Tom Fexas for our original hull design is that we looked at the top five designers of >



fast yachts, and the top five designers of slower yachts, and Fexas was on both of those lists," says David Hensel, marketing communications director. "We felt the modified-V hull gave us both performance and fuel efficiency across the whole speed range."

The 59 Aleutian RP, which debuted at the 2006 Miami International Boat Show, is the latest model to launch in the series. Next year, Grand Banks will unveil the new 65 RP, designed to refresh and replace the older 64 Aleutian. The extra foot in LOA will increase onboard living space exponentially.

The Grand Banks design team also added several new features to the 65 RP, including a raised dinette in the pilothouse that will give guests breathtaking views while under way. There are three large staterooms below. Aft crew quarters are optional. With twin 853-hp Cat C15 Acert diesels, the 65 Aleutian's top speed is projected at 24 knots, with a cruise speed of 18 knots.

Marlow

David Marlow likens his Explorer Series yachts to works of art: "The laborer works with his or her hands. The craftsman works with his or her hands and heart. The artist works with his or her hands, heart and head. It is to this last standard that we set our bar."

The yachts in Marlow's semi-displacement Explorer Series, which range from 53 to 86 feet, are built at the technologically advanced Norseman Shipyard in Xiamen, China. "We are well on the way to becoming carbon-neutral," Marlow says. The yachts are constructed of fiberglass using the RIVAT (Resin Infused Vacuum Assisted Transfer) system and incorporate carbon fiber and Kevlar to keep them light but strong for optimum performance.

The Marlow Explorer 82 CMY's extended cockpit is well suited to the adventurous angler.

Following the successful debut of the Marlow Explorer 82 Cockpit Motor Yacht last summer, the company will launch its new flagship, the 86 CMY, in late 2007. This elegant yacht, which will be certified to ABS standards, has a large cockpit in addition to a roomy watersports platform. The four-stateroom interior layout includes a full-beam master suite amidships, where the ride is the most stable. The raised pilothouse layout allows for spacious main-deck living quarters, and the flybridge offers a wealth of space for entertaining. With 835-hp Caterpillar C15 diesels, the Marlow 86 CMY's top speed is projected at 18 knots, with a cruise of 16 knots and a 4,000-gallon fuel capacity.

Marlow says he is often approached about building an even larger Marlow Explorer. "In fact, we developed a 120-footer for the president of Tommy Hilfiger, David Dyer, who owned a 72 Marlow and loved it," he says. "We refunded the money with regret, determining that our best course was evolutionary." Stay tuned.

Molokai Strait

The new Molokai Strait 75 *Hercules* turned heads when she debuted at last year's Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, putting this builder even more squarely on the map (*ShowBoats International*, March). Molokai Strait, which is part of the American Global Yacht Group along with Outer Reef Yachts, breaks tradition with the rest of the semi-custom expedition community by utilizing all-steel construction.

"Whether you are cruising twenty miles offshore, crossing an ocean or bumping icebergs, nothing can compare to the safety afforded by a steel-hulled vessel," says Jeff Drucek, Molokai's managing director. ➤



Neil Rabinowitz



Above: Molokai Strait's 75-foot Hercules is made of steel. Below: The Nordhavn 86 is 14 feet longer than her largest sibling.

Molokai Strait also launched two 68-foot tri-deck models, and it has designs on the board for expedition yachts ranging from 53 to 126 feet. But the company isn't stopping there. "We have a lot of new designs ranging up to 200 feet," Drucek says.

Drucek recently announced plans to build a new "hybrid" series called Poseidon. "It is a mix between an expedition yacht and a motor yacht. It is a very aggressive motor yacht," he says.

Drucek expects the new series to appeal to yachtsmen who are looking for a long-range vessel but who aren't into the typical trawler yacht's looks. "We recognize it's a niche market. That's one of the reasons we took it to the next level and branched out into the Poseidon series," he says.

Plans are in the works for Molokai Strait to form a joint partnership with a quality European shipyard, where the new yachts will be built.

Nordhavn

California-based builder Nordhavn, a division of Pacific Asian Enterprises (PAE), is an energetic expedition yacht company with equally energetic clients. "Even our smallest boat, our 40, has gone around the world," says Jim Leishman. In late May, eight Nordhavns set off to Bermuda and beyond as part of Med Bound 2007—a follow-up to the well-publicized Nordhavn Atlantic Rally in 2004.

Nordhavn, which constructs its yachts in Xiamen, China, offers a range of full-displacement, fiberglass expedition yachts. Late in 2007, the company will launch its new flagship, the attractive Nordhavn 86.

The Nordhavn 86 is designed to be powered by a single 425-hp Luger 1276A2 diesel engine and has an impressive range of 4,000 nautical miles at 10 knots.

The new yacht features a six-stateroom layout and an enormous skylounge that is sure to become her owner's favorite space aboard. "The interiors of this yacht [series] are almost completely custom," says Leishman. "Dee Robinson designed the first one."

The Nordhavn 86 also has full ABS certification. "It's the first boat out of China to have it," Leishman adds.

But the 86 won't remain Nordhavn's flagship for long. Leishman recently announced plans to go up to a 120-foot expedition yacht series. "We've got the talent, and we've got a track record of delivering the boats on time," he says. "In our opinion, it will be a much better value than our competitors can provide."

Northern Marine

Pacific Northwest shipyard Northern Marine builds both motor yachts and expedition yachts in Anacortes, Washington. Its long-range cruiser series, which currently runs from 57 to 84 feet, was designed to fill the expeditionary side >



Tom Thurston (top)



Above: The Northern Marine 84 *Spellbound* is a great entertainer.

Below: Park Isle's new 73 is a Gregory C. Marshall design.

of the order book. The yachts are full-displacement, fiberglass vessels laid up using a resin-infusion process.

The new queen of the Northern Marine fleet, the 84 tri-deck LRC, was delivered in early summer. Appropriately named *Spellbound*, the blue-hulled vessel is the first extended version of the tried-and-true Northern Marine 80. "The most noticeable difference is on the pilothouse deck, where we created a 'mini skylounge' just aft of the wheelhouse," says Dave Mahalko, vice president of sales and marketing.

Spellbound has an owner's suite on the main deck, a layout accommodated by the yacht's tri-deck configuration. Below, there are two guest suites with queen berths and a third with twins. Views are optimized throughout the interior and the expansive exterior decks, especially the large boat deck on the yacht's topmost level.

But Northern Marine is not resting on its laurels. "We've got a new 86 tri-deck that we just designed," Mahalko says. "It's similar to the 84, but we extended the pilothouse even more. You could [add] a captain's stateroom." The design is

about to undergo tank testing. Mahalko predicts construction will start in the fall.

"We've had a lot of interest in the 86-foot size and in going to an even larger size," Mahalko says. With Northern Marine's yachtbuilding experience—the shipyard just launched its first 151-foot motor yacht, *After Eight*—the sky's the limit.

Park Isle Marine

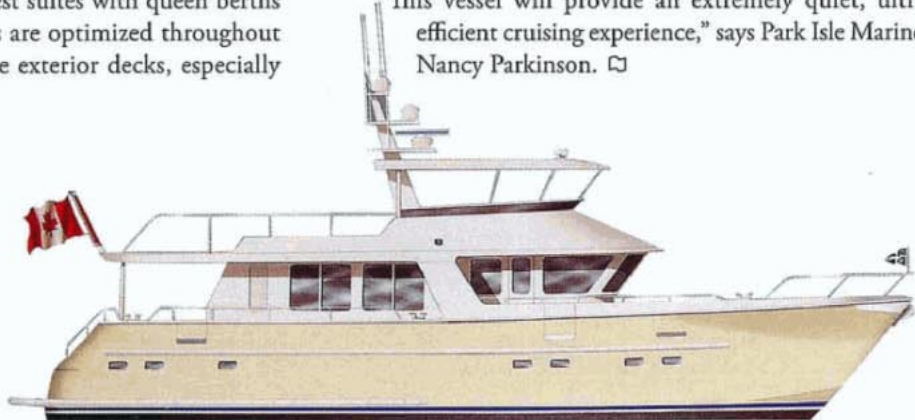
Canadian builder Park Isle Marine used a pair of well-known designers to develop its Royal Passagemaker series of full-displacement expedition yachts from 42 to 85 feet. The hulls are based on Ed Monk Sr.'s proven Seamaster design. Gregory C. Marshall drafted the exterior lines and interior layouts for some of the more recent models. Con-

struction takes place in the British Columbia shipyard, using FRP lay-up with a vacuum resin-infusion process.

The shipyard also has a custom metalwork division, which was scheduled to launch a brand new 73-foot aluminum expedition yacht in late summer. After the 73 was designed in 3-D on a CAD system, the files were sent to a CNC waterjet router that pre-cut the metal to expedite the build time.

This extremely fuel-efficient yacht has DC-voltage diesel electric propulsion. Two 5,200-kW gensets are connected via a power distribution center to twin 800-hp DC engines. The gensets are fully insulated by sound enclosures.

"This vessel will provide an extremely quiet, ultra-efficient cruising experience," says Park Isle Marine's Nancy Parkinson. ☐



SOURCES

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