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COLD AS ICE

The second rebuild of this former icebreaker wraps guests in sumptuous luxury, but Legend still can't stay away from the white stuff.

Words — Caroline White Photography — Jeff Brown



Lightning strobes across the horizon as our tender slogs through the heave and chop of the Mediterranean just off Beaulieu-sur-Mer toward the 254-foot explorer yacht *Legend*. Whipping rain, cracks of thunder — it certainly feels as if the Côte d’Azur is lavishing its most melodramatic weather on this ultra-tough vessel, but it’s not making much of an impression. The thing you notice as you step onto *Legend*’s stern platform from a rolling tender is her rock-like stability. For her, this doesn’t really count as weather.

Legend’s adventures will begin with charters in Antarctica this Christmas, onto South America and Greenland in spring, summer in the Baltic and then back again to the frozen south for winter. Her owner, Jan Verkerk, says, “My plan is to follow the polar summers and allow *Legend* to provide a luxurious cruising platform for anyone looking for a real adventure.”

Delivered this summer after a one-year refit at Icon Yachts in the Netherlands, *Legend* started life in 1974 as an icebreaking tug from Dutch yard IHC Verschure. She was sold to a private owner in 1999, who spent four years converting her into the yacht *Giant*. Verkerk, who is well-versed in Antarctic exploration aboard his classic yacht *Sherakhan*, saw a “gap in the market” for a true expedition vessel and the potential of this hull, thoroughly rebuilt, to fill it.

“She was built as a Class-1 icebreaker — an icebreaker, not just Ice Class. This is something important, as is her reasonable fuel efficiency and her obvious safe and solid structure,” he says. “I have been able to create a vessel that can go anywhere in the world, but also provide the luxuries that have become standard in the superyacht industry.”

She certainly feels solid. Her 21-foot draft is nearly twice as deep as many yachts her length, and the same can be said of her weight. Aesthetically, she also balances Verkerk’s portfolio nicely. “*Legend* was built for the Soviet Union during the Cold War and has seen active service. I like this part of her history, and I believe that this shines through her personality. I say ‘she,’ but with her powerful lines *Legend* really is a ‘he.’ *Sherakhan* is more of a classic, old lady. She was built just a few years before *Legend*, but in those years, shipbuilding technology saw significant changes,” he says.

While Verkerk admired the boat’s bones, he was bold about changing the rest: By the end of the refit at Icon, 110 tons of new steel and aluminum had been added, and major structural changes put function first. “The boat had a canoe stern — round, closed — but the use of the boat really asked for a big swim platform, where you could moor the tenders and have a closer relation to the water,” says Hans-Maarten Bais, creative director and naval architect at Diana Yacht Design, which was responsible for the rebuild’s exterior design and engineering. Lengthening the stern by almost 12 feet allowed for not only a new swim platform but also a massive 16-person spa pool with waterfall — for those times when the ocean is not suitable for a dip.



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Among the changes made during the refit were a new stern platform and a pool on the main aft deck, which added almost 12 feet to the LOA.

BEFORE



And there were other fundamental challenges farther forward. “There was a huge tender amidships, which really broke up the boat into a fore-ship and an aft-ship,” says Bais. Removing a massive secondary mast from this space, adding an extra deckhouse and extending the forecastle deck back helped restore better connectivity with the aft deck. There’s still tender storage amidships – both on this deck and the one below – but the yacht’s two halves feel united. As Bais puts it, the change “brings back the balance.”

Also added to *Legend’s* adventurous outfitting was a commercial helideck on the owner’s deck for a six-person Eurocopter EC135 with state-of-the-art fire extinguishing systems, an eight-tonne (8.8-ton) helifuel storage tank and bunker systems.

There also will be a smaller chopper, for emergencies, to be craned from the helideck to sit on the extended forecastle deck. During crossings, rotor blades will be stored neatly in new foredeck lockers and both helicopters vacuum-wrapped to keep them pristine.

The yacht packs in every toy a guest could hope for as well as the necessary extra staff; she can take an expedition crew of 10 (helicopter pilot, doctor, expedition leaders, naturalists and so on) in addition to 19 regular crew. Their cabins are forward on the lower, main and boat decks – giving easy access to every level of guest accommodations. The captain’s cabin and the ice pilot’s, meanwhile, are up behind the revamped wheelhouse. “The new

bridge layout is intended to reflect the atmosphere of the old passenger liners,” says Bernard Vivegnis, *Legend’s* captain, “so you have freestanding consoles rather than a steering desk up on the windows. It is quite nice as you can actually walk up to the window in front of the consoles and check the view. The consoles themselves group navigation, conning and communication in separate units in an efficient way so that the watch is always an easy task.” There’s also a conference corner to plan the next day’s activities with the guests and expedition team.

The rebuild extended the foredeck toy garage so it could accommodate two snowmobiles (fitted with trackers in case guests lose their way) and the ultimate exploration gadget: a three-person U-Boat Worx C-Explorer submarine. A foredeck crane lifts the sub out through a hatch and lowers it into the water where it can dive to 984 feet with two guests and a pilot. Up to seven 45-minute dives a day are possible. “I made a dive with it in the Norwegian fjords,” says Thom Beerens, *Legend’s* purser. “It’s a really cool, strange experience, sitting there like you’re in a car or an airplane. You see the water level rising, it gets dark, then you switch on the lights and see whatever’s in front of you. We were suddenly looking at a shipwreck.”

But to get her 26 guests to such fantastic locations, the designers had to address more prosaic considerations having to

do with her role as a charter and passenger vessel built to PYC. “The use as a PYC-classed vessel required major modifications of the staircases and fire-retarding bulkheads,” says Jen Wartena, CEO of Icon Yachts. “Other safety systems required replacement of all ceilings.”

The owner’s experience cruising extreme latitudes (*Sherakhan* has cruised extensively in Antarctica) also helped bulk up the boat’s safety features. “The aft windows were quite low to the water and massive; [and the owner] didn’t want to have the risk that a big wave could blow them out. So we made them smaller,” says Wartena. “The total area of glass is the same, we just extended the area of the windows and divided them into smaller portions. And we made the glass really, really thick so they can withstand the biggest waves.”

In terms of the engine room, as Wartena puts it, “the only things that are still the same are the beautiful and very powerful main engines, gearbox, shaft and propeller. It is really impressive to see them and is wise to keep them as part of the history of the boat.”

They certainly seem to work well in concert with the capable hull. “The yacht handles nice and easy in any sea state,” says Captain Vivegnis. “Her draft and inertia make for a very easy rolling that the stabilizers compensate for adequately. A following sea is sometimes more annoying as we have built nice social

Since most meals are hosted on board, dining spaces were carefully planned, including a main-deck outdoor area with a table that comfortably accommodates 20 guests.



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The boat-deck salon is a modern entertainment area with a bar, TV lounge and circular seating around a central Opti-myst artificial fireplace. Opening to the aft deck, it gives guests an al fresco feeling while indoors.



*Above: Fun and nautical glamour shine through in the design of the whisky bar and cigar room, just forward of the main salon.
Below: A late Art Deco influence is evident in the master suite, named Paris, which can be joined with the adjacent Amsterdam suite.*

spaces very close to the sea aft, so that is taken into account when planning a day's navigation. I brought *Legend* from Italy in 2014 without stabilizers. That was in January and Biscay was wild, but the ship handled well then. Now, with the refurbished stabilizers and new software, it has become a really easy ride."

It's also important to note that *Legend* will comply with the IMO Polar Code that comes into effect on January 1, 2017, and covers safety measures and environmental protection for yachts venturing into defined polar waters.

In terms of lifestyle, the layout has been thoroughly shuffled. "From the main deck up, the luxury interiors have been replaced – all new lounges, a VIP and owner's area as well as the new wheelhouse and captain's cabin," says Wartena. Only four of the original guest staterooms remain, and they have been comprehensively revamped. The owner and his Verkerk Yachting Projects planned the interior design with assistance from Purser Beerens in selecting materials, creating sketches and mood boards. They passed these on to an interior design company for technical realization.

"Our main goal was that every door you open you say, 'wow,'" says Beerens. "We wanted to make a walk through the ship an adventure in itself. Even if we have clients on board for four

weeks, in the third week they should still be finding new things. With the destinations we are going to, they stay on board much more than they do here (in Europe), where at night you can go out for dinner. In Antarctica, there is no restaurant."

A sense of fun and excitement certainly comes through in the design, but it is most apparent in the lobby forward of the main salon. This is a whisky bar and (air-treated) cigar room, with extensive libraries in both, although the books on the wall are only for show. The décor has a nautical glamour, with wood paneling and monochrome floor tiles centered with a compass star and sofas in a smart humbug stripe. "We're going to get a big chunk of ice from Antarctica and put it in a cooler with a glass vitrine," says Beerens. "So our clients can take a 30, 40, 50-year-old vodka or whisky, take 2,500-year-old ice with a hammer and drink it."

To port, there's a 14-seat cinema that feels – in the spirit of glamorous adventure – like sitting in the first-class carriage of a classic train. To starboard, there's a gym with gear by Life Fitness, including an inset treadmill for taller guests. On an explorer yacht, it makes sense to promote this space from its traditional position lower down, since guests spending long periods on board will likely use it more than those who can opt for an evening stroll on shore. They'll appreciate the light and being close to

See more on the iPad edition





While cruising in the wild of Antarctica, the Balinese spa, with Jacuzzi, massage rooms and sauna, counters cold with warmth.



Above: An ornate fireplace is the focal point of the cozy main salon. Right: A self-playing grand piano by Mason & Hamlin makes the boat-deck lounge a piano bar.



social life on board. And, as Beerens notes, “one of the crew is a fitness instructor and two are masseuses.” The latter will pummel muscles in the Balinese spa below the salon, with its decorative woodwork, a central spa pool, sauna and massage rooms.

The large salon is the coziest area on board, with space to dine in company and warm up around an ornate fireplace. Up a level, the aft boat-deck salon is a modern, light indoor-outdoor space that gives the feeling of relaxing al fresco even when conditions won’t permit actually venturing on deck. Inside, there’s a bar, TV lounge, self-playing Mason & Hamlin piano and white modular seating around a central artificial fireplace. Out on the aft deck, a similar layout exists, placing a circular barbecue grill in the place of the hearth.

The 13 en suite guest cabins include two VIP suites, five double and five twin cabins (some convertible) and a forward owner’s suite on the level just below the bridge. “Her accommodations are designed around big cities, with each room containing an element of the city it has been named after,” says the owner. The colors and ambience inform the accent tones and materials, which is particularly evident in the VIP cabins named Moscow (dark glossy wood and red leather upholstery) and New York (sweet little Art Deco bar). In cabins and throughout the boat, there are artificial Opti-myst fires that run on steam, for cozy nights in frozen places. The master suite, Paris, features the muted tones of pale gray and warm woods. There’s a central bed, a little sitting room, a big bathroom and it can be joined with the Amsterdam suite just aft. And farther aft again there’s a kitchenette, where guests can help themselves to coffee.

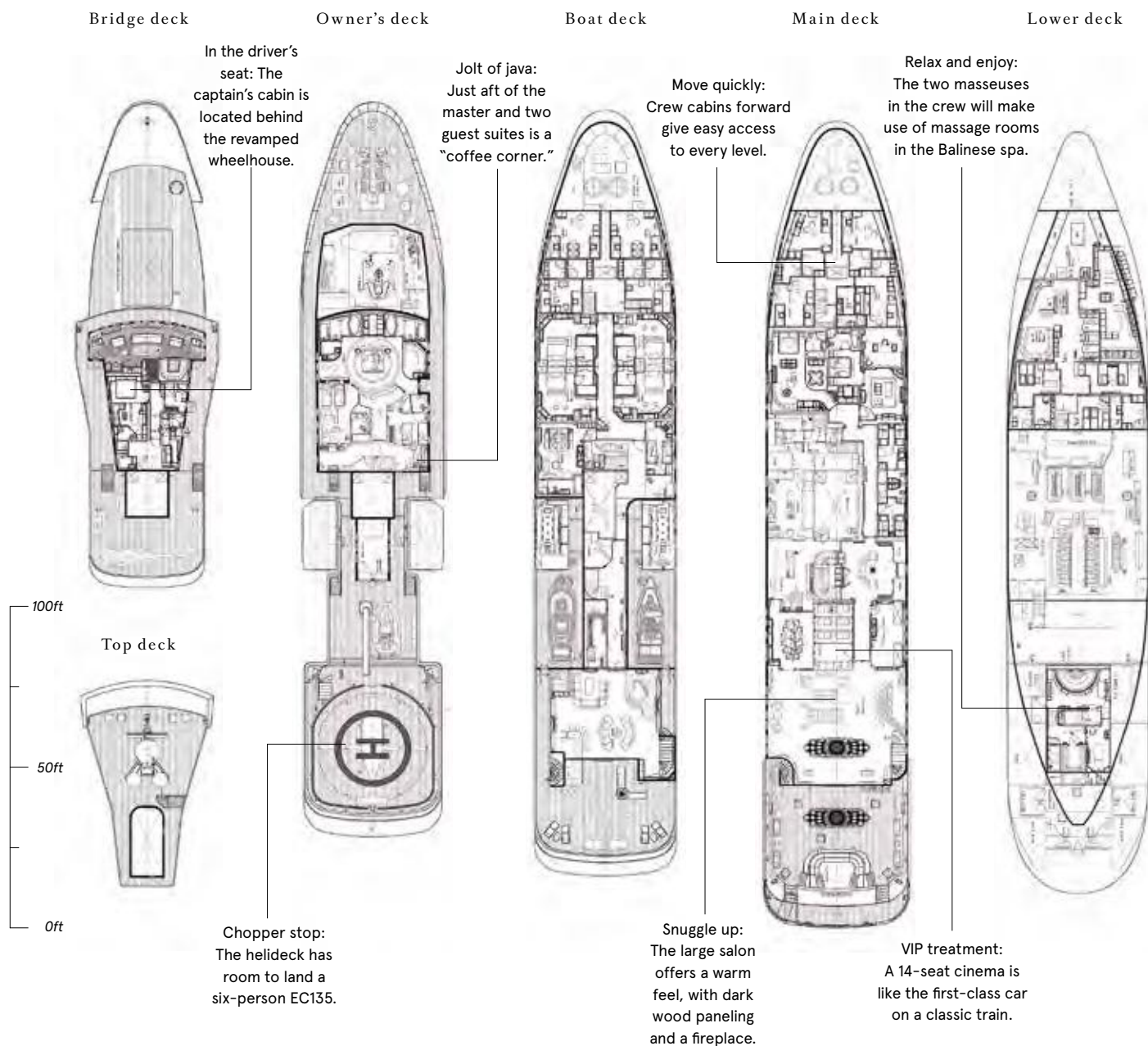
Like the boat as a whole, there’s a balance between coziness and adventure, toughness and romance. As Wartena notes of the spa pool, “It must be great to bubble in this mega hot tub while sailing between icebergs, orcas and penguins.” ■



The gym with equipment by Life Fitness (above) is an airy space, but not as much as the outer decks, where brisk breezes are all but guaranteed (top).



Legend – Icon Yachts



LOA: 253' 11" (77.4m)
LWL: 239' 10" (73.1m)
Beam: 44' 3" (13.5m)
Draft (full load): 21' 4" (6.5m)
Gross tonnage: 2,240 GT
Power: 2 x 3,400-hp Bolnes
Speed (max/cruise): 16/13 knots
Range: 7,640 nm at 13 knots

Generators: 2 x 370kW John Deere;
 1 x 220kW John Deere
Fuel capacity: 99,065 U.S. gallons
Freshwater capacity:
 46,230 U.S. gallons
Tenders: Novurania Chase 28, 28' Long
 Island tender, 22' Novamarine RIB17
Owner and guests: 26
Crew: 19

Construction: Steel, aluminum
Classification: Lloyd's 100 A1, Full SOLAS
 certified, Ice Class 1A
Refit naval architecture:
 Diana Yacht Design
Refit exterior styling: Diana Yacht Design,
 ME Consulting
Refit interior design: Legend Beheer
Builder/year: IHC Verschure/1974

Refit yard/year:
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