

BOAT

International

REFIT SPECIAL:
HOW TWO RENOWNED
SUPERYACHTS GOT
THEIR NEW GROOVE

YOUR
ESSENTIAL
LUXURY
GIFT GUIDE



EXCLUSIVE

GO FOR GOLD

WHY RH'S FIRST FORAY INTO SUPERYACHTS LIKELY WON'T BE THE LAST

SCANDI MANIA

Fjords, falls, food... and many more reasons to explore Norway

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Vikal's 62ft former tender to *Octopus* is reborn as *MARSS*

OWNER'S FOCUS

"I've got a jet and I've got a helicopter... having a yacht is ten times better!"



BLUE YONDER



As I approach the recently refitted 231ft explorer yacht *Force Blue*, moored in the historic port of Nice, France, the dance of charter guest changeover is in full swing. The yacht's crane flies overhead with a sizable pallet of provisions, which is deftly lowered onto the ample working foredeck while the tenders are being stowed, decks washed and stainless steel shined. *Force Blue* has just disembarked guests who spent eight weeks on board, and her crew is busy getting ready for new charterers arriving that very evening. She's been consistent in attracting charter business, but this latest refit – which included a 23ft stern extension and updated interiors – makes her even more desirable.

“The key to the refit was to refresh the yacht and improve her charter capabilities,” says *Force Blue's* long-time captain, Ferdinando Tarquini. The previous summer, pre-refit, she racked up 13-plus weeks of charter, which she is set to surpass this year – it's only halfway through the Med season when I step on board, and she's already booked 12 weeks. As the captain tells me, the owners have yet to spend an extended period on board themselves since the refit. What mattered most was to maximize her charter potential.

Force Blue has a long and rich history. She was launched by Royal Denship in 2002 as 208ft *Big Roi*

to a design by Tom Fexas and Ole Steen Knudsen with original interiors by Ole Rune Design and Christensen & Rottbell. She had a subsequent redesign and several refits of varying degrees over the years. However, with tastes and habits evolving, this burly expedition vessel was due for a rethink of how she could best be appreciated by her many return charter clients.

With a lofty bow, an open forward deck storing a wealth of tenders and toys and a Portuguese-style bridge, *Force Blue* is clearly fit for exploration. And she has an 8,000-nautical mile range to back it up. The refit, which was carried out at the Lusben yard in Italy in collaboration with Cantieri Navali Giangrosso, aimed to maintain the exterior attributes that make her exceptionally seaworthy – such as her high bulwarks – while slightly toning down her workboat looks.

“The brief was to add a new transom and to deviate from the trawler-expedition style, for which we suggested painting the deckhouse in black and removing the fashion plates,” says Gianluca Sist, H2 Yacht Design's design director. “*Force Blue's* [new] exterior has the essence of a traditional yacht while showcasing a more contemporary style and details.”

The full effects of *Force Blue's* extension are best appreciated from the stern. A voluptuous cascade of stairs, leading down to a massive swim platform that wraps around on either side, has replaced a formerly straight transom. This has enhanced her aesthetics, functional capabilities and performance all at once. Pre-refit, a transom door folded down to create a small swim platform. “Now, when boarding *Force Blue*, the guests are welcomed by the grand staircase, which





Left and top: the generous new swim platform wraps around either side of the stern to allow space for the tenders to be tied up. Opposite page, top and

bottom: the main salon shows the classic style that dictated the interior redesign, with nautical blues and mahogany tables from Unopiù

Chenot from Switzerland and offers Chenot Method spa treatments. The full-time therapist on board, who oversees the spa and gym, is even Chenot-trained.

Candles line the black-tiled walls of the spa, ushering visitors into a realm of relaxation. There is a hair styling and make-up room, a separate massage room, a hammam and an “emotional shower.” On either side of the shower are alcoves with Chenot-derived pieces of specialty spa equipment: a heated table used for mud wraps and a hydrotherapy bath for improved circulation and jet lag recovery. Stairs from the salon also access the spa, so it can be enjoyed even when underway.

Aside from the new grand staircase, a second guest entrance, primarily used when the yacht is moored alongside, is a main deck starboard-side lobby that doubles as a lounge or casual dining room. “We created [this] new lounge area, close to the formal dining room, with a beautiful corner sofa in blue velvet, designed by me for this project, where guests can have dinner in a cozier space,” interior designer Michele Bönan says.





The design team converted the underused main deck lobby into a comfortable lounge. Left and opposite page, top: the VIP suite encompasses a bed to port and a lounge with convertible couch to starboard



All the guest cabins and their en suites have been redesigned and feature new upholstery, new carpets and new blinds

Artwork by Peter Beard – an abstract background overlaid with a portrait of cheetah cubs – overlooks the lobby-cum-lounge. The art on board is a melange of nature shots, 3D abstract pieces and scenes of Monaco. Off the lobby is a straight set of stairs leading down to the lower deck accommodation, a spiral staircase leading up to the owner's deck and an elevator that takes guests from the main deck to the sundeck.

The owner asked Bönan to create a sophisticated, elegant interior in line with the history and shape of the boat. This included upscaling the interior as well as improving the functionality of some areas, such as widening the gym entrance and creating a small pantry close to the outdoor bar on the bridge deck. "The owner wanted all the spaces on the boat, even when they are a working space or a back-of-the-house space for crew, to maintain the luxury interior standards of the rest of the yacht," Bönan says. Above all, he wanted to create a place where charter guests would feel at home.

"We worked on the refit with this thought: we would like for each client who does a charter to feel like they are the owner of the boat."

The general arrangement remained intact, so the challenge was designing within the constraints of the boat. "Working on an existing layout and trying to do a refit quickly to high standards is always the biggest challenge," the designer says. As the proud owner of a 1963 Benetti himself, Bönan is an admirer of classic yachts. This appreciation and experience helped him create a classically inspired interior on *Force Blue*.

The interior design blends classical materials and patterns, adorned in mahogany, striped wallpaper and Carrara marble finishes. The color palette reflects a blue-and-white marine theme with some red accents, mixed with natural materials such as the raffia used for headboards in the bedrooms.

"We have the luxury of Dedar fabrics, and a touch of timeless elegance is added by the glossy mahogany wood used for the furniture," says Bönan, who designed many



The owner's deck salon has multiple lounge areas so guests can enjoy quiet moments should the owner wish to share their space

“We have the luxury of Dedar fabrics, and a touch of timeless elegance is added by the glossy mahogany wood”



Above: the owner's suite includes a full-beam cabin and en suite. The post-refit color scheme is nautical with red accents. All of the carpets were designed by Michele Bönan Interiors

Above: the owner's deck salon. A dining table can be set up for private meals. A seven-seat movie theater (right and below) completes the owner's deck



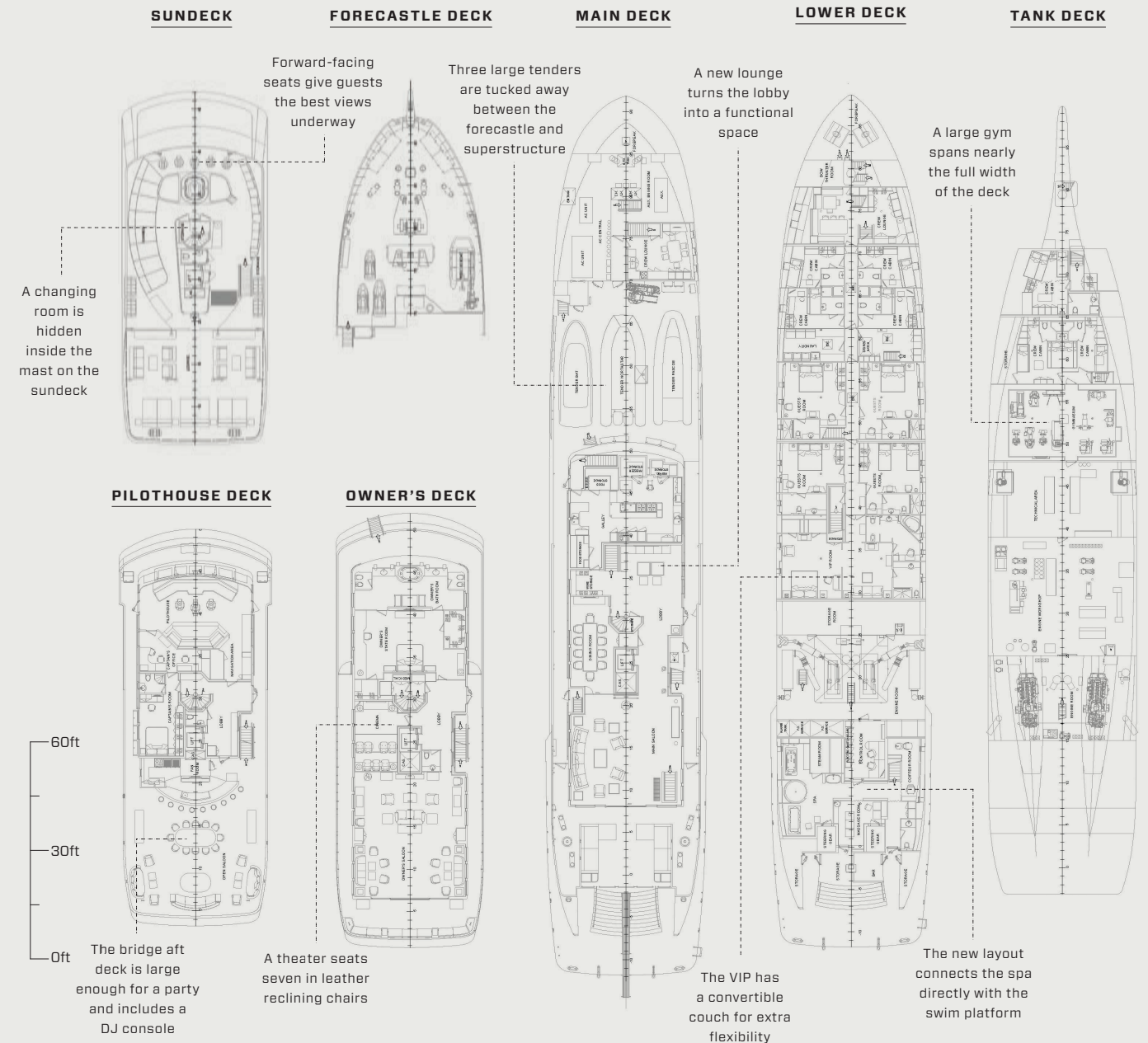


“The new stern connects to the well-being area and offers direct water access to jump straight from treatment to the sea”

SPECS

FORCE BLUE

ROYAL DENSHIP



LOA 231' 6"
LWL 200' 2"
Beam 37' 4"
Draft 9' 8"
Gross tonnage
1,325GT

Engines
2 x 1,850hp
Caterpillar 3512B
Generators
2 x 215kW
Caterpillar C9
Speed (max/cruise)
16/14 knots

Range at 10.3 knots
11,456nm
Fuel capacity
45,015 gallons
Freshwater capacity
11,888 gallons
Tenders
31' Northstar; 8.5m
Bat; 29' Pascoe

Owners/guests
12
Crew
21
Construction
Steel hull; aluminum
superstructure
Naval architecture
Ole Steen Knudsen

Exterior styling
Tom Fexas
Refit exterior styling
H2 Yacht Design
Refit interior design
Michele Bönan
Interiors
Builder/year
Royal Denship/2002

Refit yard/year
Lusben in collaboration
with Cantieri Navali
Giangrasso/2022
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