



PALACE ON WATERS



ERWIN BAMPS
CEO, Gulf Craft

Erwin Bamps, CEO of Gulf Craft, says that Oman's rich seafaring heritage is evolving fast, which makes the country a valuable market for luxury yachts

A BusinessToday Report



How do you define luxury? What are the qualities that make Gulf Craft the leading luxury yacht-maker in the GCC?

Boating enthusiasts in the region are increasingly looking to spend longer times in the water, and with that comes the added need for comfort, and of course, the capacity to share that magical experience with friends and family. This translates into sophisticated onboard technology, a comprehensive range of amenities, bespoke interior design, and spacious lounging areas – all of which play an important role in enhancing the cruising experience. The ability to fulfill whatever your heart desires while sailing away into the world's glittering waters – that, for us, is luxury.

However, at Gulf Craft, we recognise that every customer desires for something different, whether they are a first-time boater or superyacht aficionado, and our wide range of yachts and boats makes this possible.

In the last three decades, Gulf Craft has grown from a humble 17-foot boat builder to one of the world's leading superyacht manufacturers. In 2014, we were named one of the top ten superyacht shipyards by Boat International's Global Order Book, and our yachts and boats continue to win a number of coveted international awards.

Each one of our brands – from our enchanting Majesty Yachts and ocean going Nomad Yachts, to our Oryx sport yachts and cruisers and Silvercraft fishing boats and family cruisers – was created keeping in mind the bespoke requirements and boating aspirations of our international client base.

Our products are our ambassadors to the world, and our legacy and values as a company are deeply intertwined with the GCC heritage. I believe this is the spirit that has placed us among the leading superyacht shipyards in the world, and we will continue to keep raising the bar, all the while enjoying the journey in the process.

Which are your high-end models and what are their significant features?

Our Majesty brand of luxury fly-bridge motor yachts continue to serve the market's growing appetite for a truly royal cruising experience, whether it is through their elaborate craftsmanship, bespoke approach, or the attention to detail in both design and engineering.

Among the yachts and boats that were on display at our exclusive preview event in Oman was the Majesty 135, one of our largest craft. Characterised by its ability to maximise both space and natural light from the inside and out, the Majesty 135 offers a

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roomy and bespoke interior that emanates luxury from the vanity table tops made from premium quality marble to the lustrous silver leaf ceilings in the main saloon and the owner's stateroom. The novelty features onboard this superyacht are abundant – stretching from the use of state-of-the-art technology and environmentally friendly equipment, to advanced entertainment systems and ample lounging areas.

We also recently launched the Majesty 155, the largest superyacht we have ever built, and our first displacement superyacht, enabling sea travellers to enjoy ocean-going cruising without the need for refuelling. There are a number of attributes that make the Majesty 155 a truly stunning piece of work, from the details in craftsmanship to the powerful engineering. Owners of this superyacht will

experience a new level of luxury – from an ornately designed fountain on the sundeck, surrounded by a spacious seating area where passengers can enjoy breathtaking views of the water, and a fully-equipped beach club, to a beautiful waterfall that cascades from the sundeck into the Jacuzzi situated on the upper deck.

More than anything, the Majesty 155 represents our confidence and capacity to build ever-larger premium craft that are at par with the world's leading superyacht manufacturers. It is a symbol of the direction we are heading as a company and an indication of what's coming next.

Has the luxury yacht industry been affected by the recent economic downturns?

In the region, boating is not seen as a pure luxury

practice, it is an essential part of the local lifestyle. People here have boating in their blood due to the region's geographic position. They have a rich seafaring history that dates back to their ancestors. This is why this region has not been affected as much as other parts of the world in times of economic crisis. Yachting or boating is not seen as the ultimate piece of luxury or the first thing they cut when there is economic instability.

So in tough economic situations the question is not binary, whether or not someone is going to buy a craft, but rather how large of an investment they are going to make – is it going to be a yacht or superyacht. The Gulf region has a higher resilience towards boating when luxury spending is cut, and this is simply because it is not perceived as a luxury, but as an experience they hold close to their hearts.

How important is the Oman market for Gulf Craft? How was the response to your recent showcase?

The Sultanate of Oman is home to a rich boating heritage, one in which people have always been looking to the water as a source of food, business, and entertainment. However, Oman's key differentiator is its beautiful coastline and mesmerising islands. With gorgeous coral reefs and exotic marine life, the sultanate offers a rich on-water experience that is unique to the region. Oman's natural seascapes form its key asset, one that attracts people from the Gulf and around the world, and that entices both residents and visitors to explore the country's natural wonders.

As more marinas in Oman come into development, boating enthusiasts are able to enjoy the lifestyle aspect of water leisure, thus transforming what was once a fishing heritage into a quickly growing yachting culture. Today's boat enthusiasts are looking for a more luxurious home-away-from-home experience, in which the journey becomes the destination. And as their needs evolve and diversify, so do their boating requirements. This is what makes Oman a valuable market for us, and what has us returning to the sultanate year after year.

We received an excellent response from guests at our exclusive preview event, where it was evident that as the possibilities of water leisure in Oman expand, so does the desire to experience the lifestyle. ■



Each Majesty yacht has bespoke interior that emanates luxury, which includes state-of-the-art technology and environmentally friendly equipment, advanced entertainment systems, spacious bedrooms and ample lounging areas