



AMBROSIA IS THE BIGGEST AND MOST LUXURIOUS SUPERYACHT IN ASIA, AND SUZY RAYMENT GOES ON BOARD FOR AN INSIDER'S GLIMPSE INTO A RARIFIED WORLD OF YACHTING.

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY** GIULIANO SARGENTINI, THIERRY AMELLER AND PAUL BRACKLEY

# SUPERYACHTS



*Unlike a cruise ship, where the destinations and cruising agendas are fixed, your schedule can be drawn up according to your fancy, and life on board is exactly as you wish*



Owning a superyacht is one of life's great luxuries, and probably rates higher on Maslov's hierarchy of luxuries than owning a private plane. A private plane may be an expensive toy to buy and run, but you don't live on it. Yachts, on the other hand, are much more than a means of transportation. Unlike a plane, which has a mere 3 or 4 crew, a superyacht requires anything from 12 to 20 crew just to operate the boat and be able to leave port.

Owners of superyachts tend to be very attached to their vessels, and often live on them for extended periods of time. And when the cost of the crews, marinas, maintenance and insurance – not to mention the fuel in the tank – are added to the purchase price of the yacht, the cost of owning a boat of this calibre can easily be the equivalent of the GDP of a small nation!

But there are, of course, many and huge advantages to owning your own superyacht. Unlike on a cruise ship, where there are fixed destinations and cruising agendas, your schedule can be drawn up according to your fancy. Life on board is exactly as you wish. It is the job of the captain and crew to ensure that you and your guests are well looked after, and life on board is entirely comfortable and pleasurable. With the

whole boat at your disposal, and its crew at your beck and call, the world is your oyster.

The number of superyachts in the world is growing, but there are still only around 2,500 all told, which makes this a very exclusive club to belong to. For many owners, the process of building a superyacht is just part of the fun – but this is an occasion when patience is definitely a virtue, since it can easily take two or three years (or more) to move from contracts to ] launching. Ambrosia III was "in build" for almost five years, but this is the owner's third yacht, and he was well aware of the process, and knew precisely what he wanted when it came to the finished product.

**THE YACHT**

All three Ambrosias have come from the shipyard of Benetti, a company renowned for producing yachts of great style and elegance. The shipyard is located in Viareggio, Italy, and launched the very first Ambrosia (45m, and now named Candyscape) in 1994. She was followed soon after by Ambrosia II, now Starfire, a 55m yacht launched in 1998. Ambrosia III took a little longer to build, as she embraced

**PREVIOUS PAGE:**  
Ambrosia III in full splendour

**OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
The piano bar and main saloon are perfect for entertaining; the 'Stargate' dining room, complete with astronomical ceiling

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE:**  
A fresco seating area; gourmet cooking; laying the table



some of the most modern technology available. The finished vessel was considered to be a “Benetti breakthrough” when she was launched, as she was the biggest yacht that the yard had produced at that time, as well as being the most technologically advanced.

Early in the design phase the owner had expressed an interest in utilising a newly developed diesel-electric propulsion (DEP) system. Although this is commonly used on cruise ships, Ambrosia is one of only four superyachts to have installed DEP. The compact Azipods produced by ABB were a revolution in the private yacht industry, eliminating the need for long propeller shafts, and placing the motors outside the hull. This means that Ambrosia III is an exceptionally quiet yacht; there really is no discernible vibration when under way. From a passenger’s point of view, she is so quiet and smooth under way that it would be entirely possible to wake up to find that you have arrived in a new port without even knowing that the boat had weighed anchor.

And here’s another thing: the DEP system only requires one of the four main generators to be operational in order to reach optimum cruising speed. Using just one generator to supply all the electrical demands of the yacht translates into big savings on a long voyage. Although the pod drives offer vastly

different handling characteristics from conventional propulsion systems, managing Ambrosia in a waterway or at sea is relatively straightforward, thanks to an integrated control system from ABB. The system provides precise and smooth speed control, thereby reducing stress on equipment and lowering maintenance costs. It is also designed to allow safe operation under almost all conditions - a sort of “programmable autopilot” for different sea states and weather.

But that’s not all. The high-tech theme on Ambrosia continues... There’s the Kongsberg dynamic positional system that works along with the pods to take full advantage of their remarkable manoeuvrability. This means that the boat can remain at a fixed location without having to anchor. Now add ‘security systems to the advanced tech list - Ambrosia sports a 30-plus video camera system, plus a night vision camera and searchlight security suite produced by surveillance specialists Gyrocam Systems. Housed under the radar arch the unit incorporates the top-of-the-range inertial guidance gyroscopes similar to those used to guide missiles around the world and hit very small targets, without outside navigational input. When used in conjunction with the GyroLight, the camera can focus on an object that is up to three kilometres away at night. Even the cabins are high-tech, boasting the most advanced

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**

The master suite; the gold plated spiral staircase with mural; handling the china carefully; guest room; attention to detail; glamorous lighting; looking after the crystal and silver

**ABOVE:**

The magnificent marble entrance



integrated audio-visual and environment control systems to be found on a private yacht. Absolutely everything can be controlled from the Cestron touch screen, from mood lighting to music, from temperature to TV.

However, technical excellence is merely one side of the story. The interior of Ambrosia is testimony to the artistic skill of Francois Zuretti, the designer who created “a masterpiece afloat”. Everything from the art deco entrance lobby to the spacious saloons is a feast of fine art and elegant styling.

Arriving on board, you enter through a marble and gold lobby featuring an intricate gold-plated balustrade and magnificent mural reminiscent of the 1930s cruise ship Normandie.

Forward on the main deck, the full-beam owner’s cabin features a central king-sized bed, and a bathroom partitioned into “his” and “hers” by a hot-water shower and Jacuzzi tub.

Aft of the main entrance, the dining room stretches all the way across the yacht and accommodates a table setting for 14. This glorious space continues straight into the main saloon and the piano bar, and dark cherry wood and cream accents feature throughout the interior design – even in the display cases, which house a stunning collection of fine art and crystal.

Down one level, the spiral stair leads to the guest accommodation, where there are four cabins, two doubles

with en-suite Jacuzzi spa baths, and two twins with en-suite hot-water showers. This level also leads to the crew mess, immediately accessible, but well-hidden behind closed doors.

On the upper deck is the bridge and the captain’s quarters, as well as more entertainment areas and a VIP stateroom that affords breathtaking views from its full-size windows. At the stern, on this level, is the world famous Stargate dining room, with a domed ceiling that accurately depicts the night sky. Myriads of fibre optic lights align themselves with whichever hemisphere the yacht is in – nothing short of awesome. The central table features a bas relief of the surface of the moon, and the floor comes complete with moonscape, and moonbuggy tracks.

Up above, there’s a helipad and outdoor sundecks with a spa pool, wet bar and barbecue. And inside, on this level, there is a home film theatre and a specialist medical room.

Water activities are well catered for; two very large garages with retractable tops house an air-conditioned 8.5 Vikal limousine tender, a 7.5 Tresco ultra-lightweight carbon-fibre tender, and two Kawasaki jet skis.

#### THE CREW

The boat is only one part of the story – the hardware, so to speak. To make it all function properly you need software: the

**OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Cleaning from top to bottom; the helipad doubles as a spa; alfresco seating under the camera

**ABOVE:** The bridge of Ambrosia or is that the Starship Enterprise?



Each year the ShowBoat International Awards bring together members of the luxury yachting community to recognise excellence and achievement in the industry, and to focus attention on the need to preserve the world's oceans and seas. In 2007, Ambrosia was an award-winner for remarkable innovation. ShowBoats International Editor-in-Chief Jill Bobrow said, "With this award we acknowledge the remarkable innovation and technology that characterises the design and engineering that goes into today's luxury yachts, as exemplified by Ambrosia." At the time, and at 65m, Ambrosia was the second-largest boat in Benetti's portfolio. To be recognised as the world's most technologically advanced megayacht was quite a coup. "Over the years we have received many awards for the styling and interior decoration of our yachts, but this is the first time that the shipyard has been nominated for 'Technology and Innovation'," said Vincenzo Poerio, CEO of Benetti.

crew. So what does it take to run a yacht the size of Ambrosia (65m) in the five-star manner that is expected? Running a yacht is a 24-hour operation. The boat never sleeps, and there is always someone on watch. From morning to night there are jobs that need to be done, equipment that needs to be maintained, and owners and guests to be fed, cared for and entertained.

At the heart of any boat is its captain. The bridge is his kingdom, and these days it looks just like the Starship Enterprise. The eight Furuno screens can be raised (or lowered) in a moment, ready to display all the important navigation, AIS, Satcom and communication systems. At sea the captain is on constant call – which is why his cabin is right next to the bridge.

The chief officer used to be called the first mate, but the job's the same. Logistics, crew coordination, following up on the owner's and captain's orders, and being on duty when the captain isn't. Immigration, visas, port clearance, and shipping bills are all part of the chief officer's daily chores, along with passage planning, and coordination with the chief engineer and chief stewardess, to be able to provide to both owner and captain a full picture of what is happening on board.

Responsibility for the running and maintenance of the yacht falls to the chief engineer and his assistants. These hardy souls

rarely see the light of day (unless, of course, on-deck maintenance is required). Their work place is the engine room and the monitoring station. Given Ambrosia's complexity and reliance on electronic and computer systems, this is a full-time job.

'Tween decks is the province of the chief stewardess – when you're serving Dom Perignon in Baccarat crystal, and setting the table with Christofle silverware and a J L Coquet table service, then a certain amount of care and attention is required; as is housekeeping and provisioning. For anything from a club sandwich to a 12-course dinner for a head of state, call the chef. And for anything else, the boatswain and the deckhands are there to help, chamois leather in hand. Their days are often spent cleaning the salt water from the superstructure, there is plenty fun to be had on the days when the water toys come out, or it's time to go diving.

Ambrosia III is not the end of the story for this multi-millionaire owner. His love of the sea stems from his days in Taiwan's navy. Ambrosia IV is already on the drawing board, and of course will be "just a little bigger", as is the way with most superyacht owners. But when it comes to substance versus style and elegance, it will forever be hard to beat Ambrosia III. If the creation of beauty at sea is an art, then Ambrosia III is a masterpiece. Contact: Paul Brackley, Central Yacht. +39 33 414 57808. 🦋

**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:**

The crew of Ambrosia; water toys; let's go diving; Chief engineer keeps the log; the engine room; launching the tender; engine maintenance

**OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW:**

Adastra's honey gold interior will be as spectacular as the outside

**ABOVE:**

Night lights at anchor