

Global Yacht Charters Eye Mideast as Next Yachting Hot Spot

Infrastructure development and destination marketing critical to region's superyacht hub hopes

Leading global yacht chartering firms believe the Middle East has a strong potential to become a preferred luxury yacht chartering destination, citing further expansion of the region's superstructure, particularly marinas, and a growing vessel support network as key drivers in putting the area on their – and their clients' – radars.

"Traditionally areas such as the Caribbean and the Bahamas, the West and East Mediterranean, as well as the Indian Ocean remain favourites for many clients with a large choice of yachts and tried-and-tested cruising areas," said Amanda Armstrong, charter broker at Burgess Yachts, a leading professional superyachting service. "Clients, however, are always on the look-out for new destinations and if the large superyachts become available there – and they will given the kind of infrastructure development taking place – as well as good accessibility from all over the world, then the Middle East will become very popular in the years to come."

Armstrong admits the Middle East is an extremely significant market for the company. "Charter demand from Middle Eastern clients has maintained a steady pulse and represents around 10-15 percent of our charter business. We are naturally keen to maintain our presence and increase our reach throughout this area," she continued.

"We have a number of clients in the Gulf and it is certainly an important and growing region for us. We also have a number of managed yachts that occasionally cruise the area. We are planning on expanding our operations in the Gulf; we already have one representative permanently based there and we hope to expand this over the coming years," said Charlie Birkett, CEO of YCO Group plc, a global leader in charter management and luxury yacht sales.

Luxury living is almost a byword for the Gulf and the multitude of landmark developments underway throughout the region is growing marina lifestyles. A fascinating series of marinas are taking shape, making the Arabian Gulf possibly the yachting industry's biggest growth market over the next decade.

Though many Gulf nations have a long and treasured seafaring heritage, the latest wave of waterfront developments has taken the region's marina lifestyle to a whole new level.

Abu Dhabi in particular is becoming increasingly popular among leading superyacht charter brokers. During the inaugural F1 Etihad Airways Grand Prix held at the Yas Marina Circuit, chartered yachts spotted during the race weekend included various Benetti and Azimut megayachts..

"The images of these fabulous yachts, from which owners, charterers and their guests followed the race weekend created lasting impressions that bolstered Abu Dhabi's aspirations to be a leading destination for superyachts in the region," said His Excellency Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman, Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA), headline sponsor of the 2nd Abu Dhabi Yacht Show, being held at Yas Marina later this month.

“Charter brokers are important partners for selling this region and ensuring their proper exposure and education is a priority. With marine leisure expected to play an increasingly important role in advancing Abu Dhabi’s tourism growth, we are keen to support initiatives – such as the Abu Dhabi Yacht Show – which will help companies explore opportunities for expanding or obtaining new business.”

Industry experts say that while people are looking for a change, would-be alternatives to the popular Mediterranean and Caribbean yachting destinations need solid offerings of convenience, diversity, culture and safety at comparable costs.

“High-end restaurants, resorts and shops, easy shore transportation, modern marina facilities, easy provisioning for yachts, comfortable and interesting cruising areas, safety, and of course cost are all factors that steer a final decision,” explained Armstrong.

The Abu Dhabi Yacht Show’s successful inaugural edition last year proved it had the clout to assemble a pantheon of the world’s highest net-worth individuals, drawn together by shared interests and passions. Captains of the industry will mingle with Middle Eastern royalty and the Gulf’s most famous faces at this month’s upcoming edition.

Some 24 of the world’s most impressive superyachts are confirmed for the show, and registered exhibitors have exceeded last year’s figures. “This is testament to how ADYS has become an important platform for industry players to gather, network and do business. We have put together a comprehensive programme, special events and activities where guests and exhibitors can discuss opportunities as well as issues and challenges that will help boost the region’s aspirations, in particular Abu Dhabi’s, to become a leading global yachting hub,” said Franck Dailles, Group Director of Informa Yacht Group (IYG), organisers of the event.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, ADYS will take place on February 25-27, 2010.

Aside from headline sponsor ADTA, Bentley has signed on as exclusive associate car sponsor and luxury Swiss watchmaker Ulysse Nardin is the event’s official watch sponsor. Other supporters include broadcast partners CNN and Al Arabiya, and The Times, Al Ittihad and The National as official newspapers.

END

Abu Dhabi Yacht Show

The Abu Dhabi Yacht Show (ADYS) is a show with a specific focus on superyachts and megayachts. With this unique, first-to-market formula, the ADYS sets a new standard in the world of yachting industry events and provide a world-class superyacht show distinguishing it from other yacht and boat shows across the globe.

The inaugural show in March 2009 opened to an enthusiastic reception and went onto impress exhibitors, industry experts, press and visitors alike over a course of three days. By general consensus, it provided a wealth of first-class business opportunities and catered to the highest industry requirements for quality, exclusivity and style.

ADYS 2009 saw sales of vessels in excess of US\$100 million (AED 365 million), confirming the growing importance of Abu Dhabi as a leading superyacht and megayacht destination, and establishing ADYS as the premiere event in the Middle East region for viewing the world's largest and most exclusive private yachts.

For more information and full exhibitor list, please log on to www.abudhabi yachtshow.com

The Informa Yacht Group: Global Leaders in Yachting Events

Informa Yacht Group (YIG) is the business division that encompasses all of the yachting and boating events owned by Informa Plc. Made up of many constituent businesses that include some of the longest-standing brands in world publishing, Informa is one of the world's leading providers of information and knowledge via a wide range of media. Informa is also the largest publicly-owned organiser of exhibitions and conferences, with some 12 500 events held annually in 46 countries world-wide.

YIG's mission is to become the world's leading organiser of yachting events and to provide our customers with ever more high-quality data and information, and with constantly evolving face-to-face marketing opportunities.

YIG provides the yachting industry's manufacturers, suppliers and sponsors with a truly international marketing platform through a global portfolio of Superyacht and other marine-industry events:

- The Monaco Yacht Show
- The Abu Dhabi Yacht Show
- The Superyacht Cup, Palma & Antigua
- The Superyacht Cup Special Edition, Cowes 2012
- The Phuket International Boat Show
- The World Yacht Racing Forum
- The Yacht Racing Design & Technology Symposium
- International Superyacht Coatings Conference

For further information on the Informa Yacht Group, please visit the website <http://informayachtgroup.com/> or contact:

Celine Fenet, Group Marketing Manager

Informa Yacht Group

E-mail: celine.fenet@informayachtgroup.com / Tel: +971 4 407 2434

Or

Farah Ibrahim

TRACCS

E-mail: farah.ibrahim@traccs.net / Tel: +971 4 367 2530

TRACCS 24/7 Media Hotline: +97150 9448389