

MONACO, WORLD CAPITAL OF YACHTING

By Nick Jeffery

Money Carlo is how Simply Red's Mick Hucknall describes Monte Carlo. The British pop star suggests that: "Money is like a religion here. I've never seen anything like it." That was five years ago, when the first "Monaco - World Capital of Yachting" article was published in the Monaco Yacht Show Summer Magazine, which began with an anecdote:

"Serial yacht builder and serious gambler Kenneth Clark arrived in Monaco for the 1903 winter season aboard his new steam yacht Katoomba II, built by G.L. Watson & Co. The casino was the main focus of his attentions but when Mme Heriot (mother of famous sailor Virginie Heriot) enquired if she might visit his palatial yacht he gladly invited her. Evidently impressed, she lightly remarked that she 'would give anything for such a yacht'. 'Anything?' enquired the gambler to which his guest answered favorably but added that she would want immediate possession. That night Mr Clark moved into the Hotel de Paris whilst Mme Heriot enjoyed her new 250-foot steam yacht."

Yachting Monte Carlo would be an equally apt description, thanks to its yachting heritage - it has its share of devoted missionaries looking to convert the newly wealthy (especially Russians), whose past sins may be forgiven if they donate enough to one of the brands in the industry. The combination of yachting and money provides a heady mix of ingredients that are thrown together in the cauldron of Monaco's Port Hercule (brought to a boil late September during the annual Monaco Yacht Show but simmering throughout the year).

New yachts (the "dishes") are proudly served in the same beautiful natural arena every year, the best examples usually being those where the owner has commissioned top designers (the "chefs"), ordered a custom boat ("off menu") and gone to a proven shipyard (Michelin-starred "kitchen").

To appreciate the creative experience, enter the new clubhouse of the Yacht Club de Monaco (the "Chef's table") and savour the energy that goes into your superyacht during the whole process. Brokers (the "waiters") can be quite charming too - do check if service is included before placing an order - and astute at assessing your budget before making recommendations. Organic ingredients are de rigueur, so it is worth consulting with the likes of Prince Albert II Foundation's "Wood Forever Pact" to check the origins of the teak deck. Ten superyacht designers have signed up as Partners of WFP, including Claydon Reeves, Michael Leach Design, Bannenberg & Rowell, Redman Whiteley Dixon, Adam Lay Studio, Raymond Langton Design, Humphreys Design, Ciarmoli Queda Studio, Espen Oeino, GL Watson & Co. England and Italy still have the lion's share of creative talent but Monaco is enticing them.

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The newly inaugurated Lord Foster-designed, five-deck, clubhouse is undoubtedly the place where it all happens now. Overlooking the harbor, with private berths in front, Riva launched its new flagship Mythos over the opening weekend and Azimut-Benetti held its Yachting Gala the following one. The inaugural Solar1 solar boat world championship in July, hosted by the Yacht Club de Monaco, complements Monaco's commitment to sustainability. The children's solar model boat race in YCM's swimming pool might inspire the next generation of designers.

With the Monaco Classic Week every two years, the competitive Primo Cup and many international regattas, the stunning Oceanographic Museum and aquarium built into The Rock, a Young Professionals in Yachting (YPY Monaco) association, Monaco provides plenty of nautical inspiration. Add security, natural good Feng Shui, a warm feeling of village community and family life (the crèche and education system in Monaco is second to none) and Monaco with its new YCM clubhouse, is quite surely the ideal environment and society for yachting creative types. If Monaco seems too squeaky clean and safe, then Nice – with its own port – is not far away for a risky, brainstorming night out! If it's all too much, and your boat is possessed by a glamorous new owner one morning, Monaco's real churches provide respite from the luxury brands.

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