

Photography - Jeff Brown

# ICE AND EASY

*A former Soviet icebreaker, Legend has come in from the Cold War and been transformed into a sumptuous 77 metre explorer. But she still can't stay away from the white stuff*

Words - Caroline White



*"I have been able to create a vessel that can go anywhere in the world, but also provide the luxuries that have become standard"*

*During her refit at Icon Yachts, Legend's stern was lengthened by 3.6 metres to build a new swim platform - and the 16 person spa pool, with waterfall. It provides a stunning location from which to view the yacht's cruising destinations*

**L**ightning strobescross the horizon as our tender slogs through the heave and chop of the Mediterranean just off Beaulieu-sur-Mer, towards 77.4 metre explorer yacht *Legend*. Whipping rain, cracks of thunder - it certainly feels as if the Côte d'Azur is lavishing its most melodramatic weather on this ultra-tough vessel. But it's not making much of an impression. The thing you notice, as you step on to *Legend's* stern platform from a rolling tender, is her rock-like stability. For her, this doesn't really count as weather.

*Legend's* adventures will begin with charters in Antarctica this Christmas, on to South America and Greenland in spring, summer in the Baltic and then back again to the frozen south for winter. Her owner, Jan Verkerk, says: "My plan is to follow the polar summers and allow *Legend* to provide a luxurious cruising platform for anyone looking for a real adventure."

Delivered this summer after a 12 month refit at Icon Yachts in the Netherlands, *Legend* started life in 1974 as an icebreaking tug from Dutch yard IHC Verschure. She was sold to a private owner and converted into a yacht - *Giant* - from 1999-2003, then laid up in 2005. Verkerk, who had spent years exploring the Antarctic aboard his classic yacht *Sherakhan*, saw a "gap in the market" for a true expedition yacht and the potential of this hull - thoroughly rebuilt - to fill it.

"She was built as a Class icebreaker - an icebreaker, not just Ice Class. This is something important. As is her reasonable fuel efficiency and her obvious safe and solid structure," he says. "I have been able to create a vessel that can go anywhere in the world, but also provide the luxuries that have become standard in the superyacht industry."

She certainly feels solid. Her 6.4 metre draught is nearly twice as deep as many yachts her length, and the same can be said of her ▶

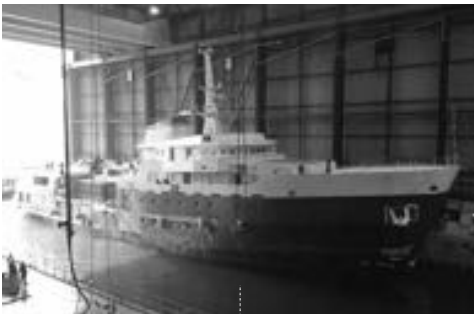
HISTORY OF A LEGEND



1974 - *Legend* was built at Dutch yard IHC Verschure and served as an icebreaker for the Soviet merchant marine for 26 years



2003 - She was bought by Swiss racing driver René Herzog and turned into a yacht - *Giant* - complete with distinctive red hull



2016 - New owner Jan Verkerk has put her through a 12 month refit at Icon Yachts and she is now a luxury, toy-laden explorer



weight. Aesthetically, she also balances Verkerk's portfolio nicely. "*Legend* was built for the Soviet Union during the Cold War and has seen active service. I like this part of her history and I believe that this shines through her personality. I say 'she' but with her powerful lines *Legend* really is a 'he'. *Sherakhan* is more of a classic, old lady. She was built just a few years before *Legend*, but in those years shipbuilding technology saw significant changes," he says.

While Verkerk admired the boat's bone structure, he was bold about the rest: by the end of the refit at Icon, 100 tonnes of new steel and aluminium had been added. Major structural changes put function first. "The boat had a canoe stern - round, closed - but the use of the boat really asked for a big swim platform, where you could moor the tenders and have a closer relation to the water," says Hans-Maarten Bais, creative director and naval architect at Diana Yacht Design, who was responsible for the exterior design and engineering of the rebuild. The answer was lengthening the stern by 3.6 metres, allowing for not only a new swim platform but also a massive 16-person spa pool - with waterfall - for when the ocean is not suitable for a dip.

And there were other fundamental challenges further forward. "There was a huge tender amidships, which really

broke up the boat into a fore-ship and an aft-ship," says Bais. The solution was removing a massive secondary mast from this space, adding an extra deckhouse and extending the forecandle deck back to join more substantially with the aft deck. There's still tender storage amidships - both on this deck and the one below - but the boat's two halves feel united. As Bais puts it, the change "brings back the balance".

Also added to *Legend's* adventurous kit was a commercial helideck on the owner's deck aft for a six-person Eurocopter EC135, along with its state-of-the-art fire extinguishing systems, an eight tonne helifuel storage tank and bunker systems. There will also be a smaller chopper, for emergencies, to be craned from the helideck to sit on the extended forecandle deck. Rotor blades will be stored neatly in new foredeck lockers and both helicopters vacuum-wrapped to keep them pristine on crossings.

The yacht packs in every toy a guest could hope for as well as the necessary extra staff - she can take an expedition crew of 10 (helicopter pilot, doctor, expedition leaders, naturalists and so on) on top of the 19 regular crew. Their accommodation is forward on the lower, main and boat decks - giving easy access to every level of guest >

*The main deck outdoor dining table can seat 20-plus guests on its stunning Rolf Benz-designed chairs. When the temperature drops, the main saloon offers ample dining space too*

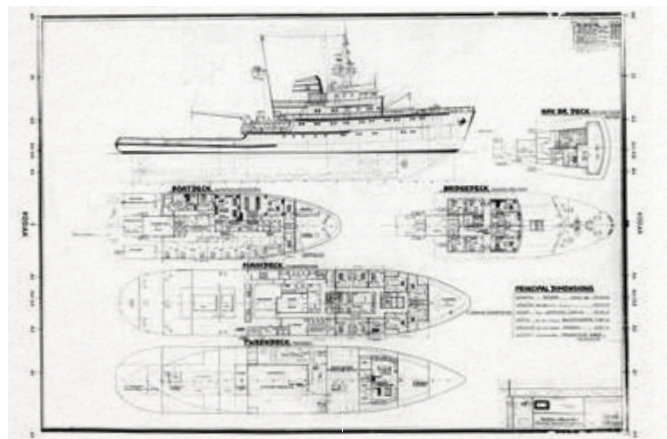
accommodation. The captain's cabin and the ice pilot's, meanwhile, are up behind the revamped wheelhouse. "The new bridge layout is intended to reflect the atmosphere of the old passenger liners," says *Legend's* captain Bernard Vivegnis, "so you have free-standing consoles rather than a steering desk up on the windows. It is quite nice as you can actually walk up to the window in front of the consoles and check the view. The consoles themselves group navigation, conning and communication in separate units in an efficient way so that the watch is always an easy task." There's also a conference corner to plan the next day's activities with the guests and expedition team.

Up front, the project extended the foredeck toy garage so it could accommodate two snowmobiles (fitted with trackers in case guests lose their way) and the ultimate exploration gadget - a three-person U-Boat Worx C-Explorer submarine. Lifted by a foredeck crane through a hatch in the ceiling and into the water, it can dive to 300 metres with two guests and a pilot, and do seven 45 minute dives a day. "I made a dive with it in the Norwegian fjords," says Thom Beerens, *Legend's* purser. "It's a really cool, strange experience, sitting there like you're in a car or an airplane. You see the water level rising, it gets dark, then you switch on the lights and see whatever's in front of you. We were suddenly looking at a shipwreck."

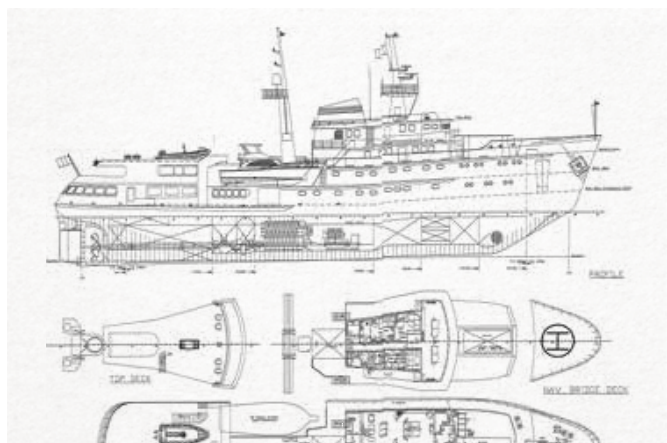
But to get her 26 guests to such fantastical locations, rather more prosaic considerations had to be taken into account - especially with a charter yacht that needs to meet standards for a passenger vessel. "The use as a PYC-classed vessel required major modifications of the staircases and fire-retarding bulkheads," says Jen Wartena, CEO of Icon Yachts. "Other safety systems required replacement of all ceilings."

The owner's experience of cruising extreme latitudes also served to bulk up the boat's safety credentials further. "Because the approach is to sail in Antarctica - the owner has a lot of experience sailing there with *Sherakhan* - and the aft windows were quite low to the water and massive, he didn't want to have the risk that a big wave could blow them out. So we made them smaller. The total area of glass is the same, we just extended the area of the windows and divided them into smaller portions. And we made the glass really, really thick so they can withstand the biggest waves."

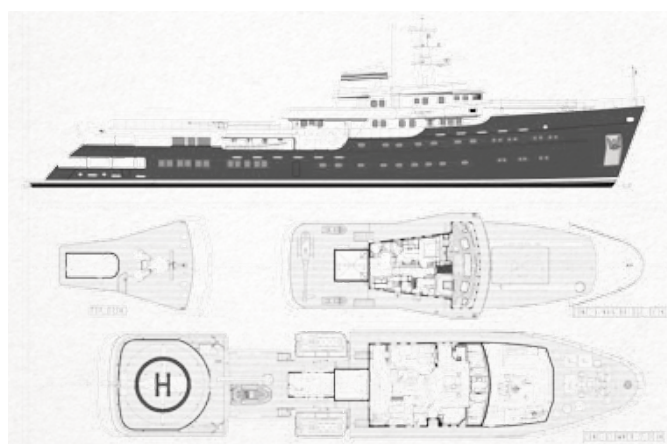
In terms of the engine room, as Wartena puts it, "the only things that are still the same are the beautiful and very powerful main ▶



1974 - *Legend* was built as a 73.5 metre icebreaker



2003 - As *Giant* she transformed into a private yacht



2016 - Icon Yachts' plans extend the hull to 77.4 metres



*“The boat had a canoe stern – round, closed – but the use of the boat really asked for a big swim platform, where you could moor the tenders and have a closer relation to the water”*



engines, gearbox, shaft and propeller. It is really impressive to see them, and is wise to keep them as part of the history of the boat."

They certainly seem to work well in concert with the capable hull. "The yacht handles nice and easy in any sea state," says Captain Vivegnis. "Her draught and inertia make for a very easy rolling that the stabilisers compensate for adequately. A following sea is sometimes more annoying as we have built new nice social spaces very close to the sea aft, so that is taken into account when planning a day's navigation. I brought *Legend* from Italy in 2014 without stabilisers. That was in January and Biscay was wild, but the ship handled well then. Now, with the refurbished stabilisers and new software, it has become a really easy ride."

It's also important to note that *Legend* will comply with the IMO Polar Code that comes into effect on 1 January 2017 and covers safety measures and environmental protections for yachts venturing into defined polar waters. She satisfies technical requirements for her category of navigation. The pending requirements are procedures, loose equipment and certification of the officers, but these will be taken care of by the beginning of *Legend's* first Antarctic season.

In terms of lifestyle, the layout has been thoroughly shuffled. "From the main deck up, the luxury interiors have been replaced - all new lounges, a VIP and owner's area as well as the new wheelhouse and captain's cabin," says Wartena. Only four of the original guest cabins remain and they have been comprehensively revamped. The owner and his Verkerk Yachting Projects planned the interior design with assistance from Beerens - selecting materials, creating sketches and mood boards. They passed these on to an interiors company for technical realisation. "Our main goal was that every door you open you say, 'wow,'" says Beerens. "We wanted to make a walk through the ship an adventure by itself. Even if we had clients on board for four weeks, in the third week they should still be finding new things. With the destinations we are going to, they stay on board much more than they do here [in Europe], where at night you can go out for dinner. In Antarctica there is no restaurant."

A sense of fun and excitement certainly comes through in the design but it is most apparent in the lobby forward of the main saloon. This is a whisky bar and (air treated) cigar room, with extensive libraries of both - although the books on the wall are only for show. The décor has a nautical glamour, with wood panelling, monochrome floor tiles >

*Above: the aft boat deck saloon is a striking entertainment area, boasting a bar, TV lounge and circular seating around a central Opti-myst artificial fireplace*

*Above: the whisky bar and cigar room, just forward of the main saloon, where the design accent is on fun. Right: the master suite, styled on Paris and able to be joined with the adjacent Amsterdam suite, has a central bed, a sitting room and a large bathroom*





The gym has pride of place on the main deck



Outside areas on four decks offer lots of space to lounge



The Balinese spa includes pool, sauna and massage rooms

centred with a compass star and sofas in a smart humbug stripe. "We're going to get a big chunk of ice from Antarctica and put it in a cooler with a glass vitrine," says Beerens. "So our clients can take a 30, 40, 50-year-old vodka or whisky, take 2,500-year-old ice with a hammer in their glass and drink it."

To port from here there's a 14 seat cinema that feels – in the spirit of glamorous adventure – like sitting in the first-class carriage of a classic train. To starboard there's a gym with gear by Life Fitness Parabody, including an inset treadmill for taller guests. On an explorer yacht it makes sense to promote this space from its traditional position lower down, since guests spending long periods on board will likely use it more than Med cruisers, who can opt for an evening stroll on shore. They'll appreciate the light and being close to social life on board. And, as Beerens notes, "one of the crew is a fitness instructor and two are masseuses". The latter will pummel muscles in the Balinese spa below the saloon, with its decorative woodwork, a central spa pool, sauna and massage rooms.

The large saloon is the cosiest area on board, with space to dine in company and warm up around an ornate fireplace. Up a level, the aft boat deck saloon is a modern, light indoor-outdoor space that gives the feeling of relaxing alfresco even when conditions won't permit actually venturing on deck. Inside, there's a bar, TV lounge, self-playing Mason & Hamlin piano and white modular seating around a central artificial fire. Out on the aft deck these shapes are echoed, with a circular barbecue grill taking the place of the fire.

The 13 en suite guest cabins include two VIP suites, five double and five twin cabins (some convertible) and a forward owner's suite ranged across the owner's deck. "Her accommodation is designed around big cities, with each room containing an element of the city it has been named after," says the owner. The colours and ambience inform the accent tones and materials – particularly evident in the VIPs Moscow (dark glossy wood and red leather upholstery) and New York (sweet little art deco bar). In cabins and throughout the boat there are artificial Opti-myst fires that run on steam, for cosy nights in frozen places. The master suite, Paris, features the muted tones of pale grey and warm woods. There's a central bed, a little sitting room, a big bathroom and it can be joined with the suite just aft (Amsterdam). And just aft again there's a kitchenette, where guests can help themselves to coffee in privacy. Like the boat as a whole there's a balance between cosiness and adventure, toughness and romance. As Wartena notes of the spa pool: "It must be great to bubble in this mega hot tub while sailing between icebergs, orcas and penguins." ■



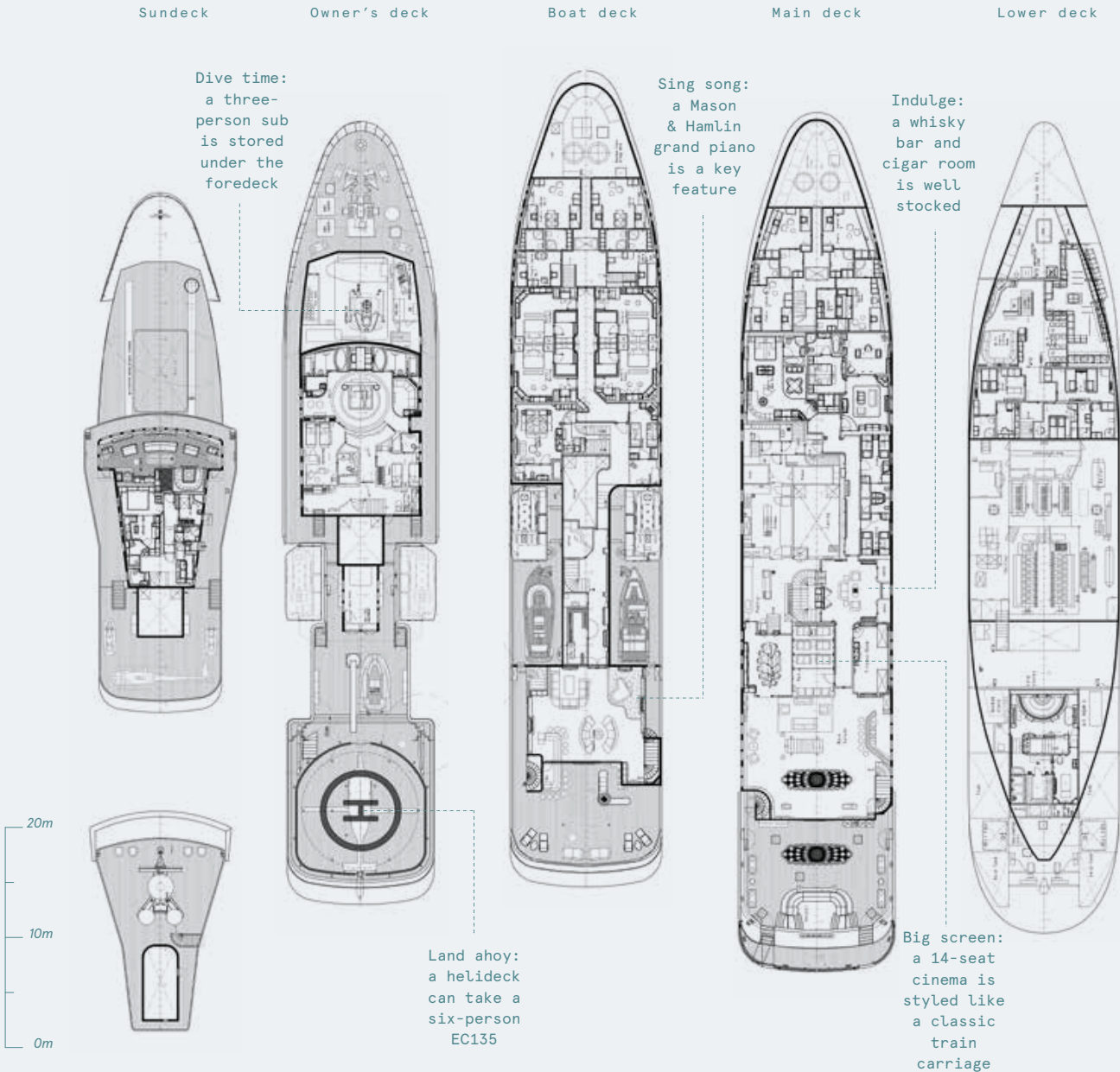
Above: the main deck saloon includes a traditional lounge area, with dark panelling and artificial fireplace. Right: a self-playing Mason & Hamlin grand piano is a centrepiece of the aft boat deck saloon



# S P E C S

## LEGEND

ICON YACHTS



**LOA** 77.4m  
**LWL** 73.09m  
**Beam** 13.5m  
**Draught (full load)** 6.5m  
**Gross tonnage**  
2,240GT  
**Engines**  
2 x Bolnes 3,400HP

**Speed max/cruise**  
16/13 knots  
**Range at 13 knots**  
7,640nm  
**Generators**  
2 x John Deere 370Kw; 1 x John Deere 220Kw  
**Fuel capacity**  
375,000 litres

**Freshwater capacity**  
175,000 litres  
**Tenders**  
1 x 8.35m Novurania Chase 28; 1 x 8.5m Long Island tender; 1 x 6.8m Novamarine RIB17  
**Owners/guests** 26  
**Crew** 19

**Construction** Steel hull; aluminium superstructure  
**Classification**  
Lloyd's 100 A1, Full SOLAS certified, Ice Class 1A  
**Refit naval architecture**  
Diana Yacht Design

**Refit exterior design**  
Diana Yacht Design, ME Consulting  
**Refit interior design**  
Legend Beheer  
**Builder/year**  
IHC Verschure/1974  
**Refit yard/year**  
Icon Yachts/2016 Harlingen,

the Netherlands  
t: +31 517 494600  
e: info@iconyachts.eu  
w: iconyachts.eu  
**For charter**  
From €455,000 per week  
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w: camperandnicholsons.com