

Revealing the new Aquarius:

What it takes to improve on “nearly perfect”

With extensive photography, video, and background material, Royal Huisman now shares Project 408, the new 65m / 212ft Aquarius. Built for returning owners who described their previous, Royal Huisman Aquarius as “nearly perfect”, the brief was not to reinvent, but to enhance comfort, performance, and space. Shaped by an experienced team and lessons learned, Aquarius opens a new chapter in superyacht elegance.



THE TEAM BEHIND AQUARIUS INCLUDES OWNERS' PROJECT MANAGER GODFREY CRAY, CAPTAIN JAMES TURNER, DYKSTRA NAVAL ARCHITECTS, MARK WHITELEY DESIGN, AND SUPERYACHT BUILDER ROYAL HUISMAN

**“This Royal Huisman ketch eliminates compromise
to exceed her owners’ expectations for speed and comfort”**



The ultimate compliment clients can pay a shipyard is to return for a second vessel. But when these owners labeled their first yacht “nearly perfect”, the bar measuring excellence is set very high. This is precisely the story behind Royal Huisman’s second Aquarius delivered in 2025. Its meticulous brief called for the same elegance and family comfort as the world cruising ketch delivered to her experienced husband and wife owners in 2018, but with more volume and accommodations, and even more spirited sailing performance.

The brief called for an additional ensuite stateroom in the guest complement and one more double crew cabin. The owner's gym and media room would be enlarged. Beyond that were requests for a larger engine room and service areas and more storage to support longer passages. To accomplish this, volume would need to increase by 45 percent. Drawing a successor with greater length and beam was not the challenge.

But ensuring this new 65m / 212ft edition would be faster and more responsive would mean the design and build team would be pulling out all the stops for a yacht with retro looks but rocket-like performance. The owners were clear that the perfect yacht for their lifestyle would also be capable of regatta success.



THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION AND LESSONS LEARNED

Having paid close attention to the development of their first custom build, including several shipyard visits during construction, and having been so pleased with the outcome, the owners found reassembling the original team for the next boat to be an easy decision, with owners' project manager Godfrey Cray, captain James Turner, Dykstra Naval Architects, Mark Whitely Design, and superyacht builder Royal Huisman back for another round.

With the teamwork brief, the team, and the design strategy for the larger boat now established, the second Aquarius benefited from a highly credible list of 728 ideas compiled by the owner's captain and the crew. Based on their experience sailing with the family for six years, the list identified practical interior changes for daily living, smart maintenance improvements, and requests for more galley space, systems, and storage. Rather than an abstract wish list, these lessons learned in actual use dovetailed with the ambition to improve on "nearly perfect. We like the balance of a ketch rig but recognized our first yacht sacrificed some performance," they said.

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THE BLACK TOPSIDES ARE RELIEVED BY A SILVER COVE STRIPE
TO COMPLEMENT THE GREY-PAINTED RONDAL RIG

At first glance, it is hard to tell the previous Aquarius and the new Aquarius apart. The 56m / 184ft yacht and her 65m / 212ft successor look almost identical from a distance, exactly as requested.

THE FOLD-OUT SIDE
BOARDING PLATFORM
OFFERS EASY ACCESS



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Initially, Godfrey Cray, the design team, and Royal Huisman briefed the owners on contemporary exterior design trends. However, seeing other styles only reinforced their love for a classic spoon bow and an overhanging stern, a black hull, and gleaming teak deckhouses.

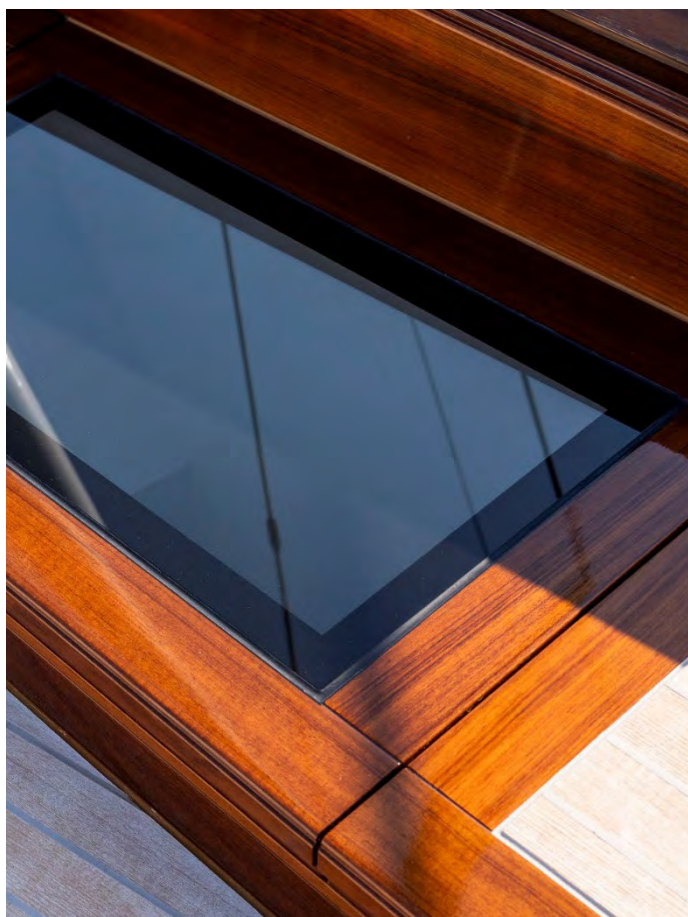


"We loved our first yacht, which was 'perfection' in our eyes. "

— The owners of Aquarius



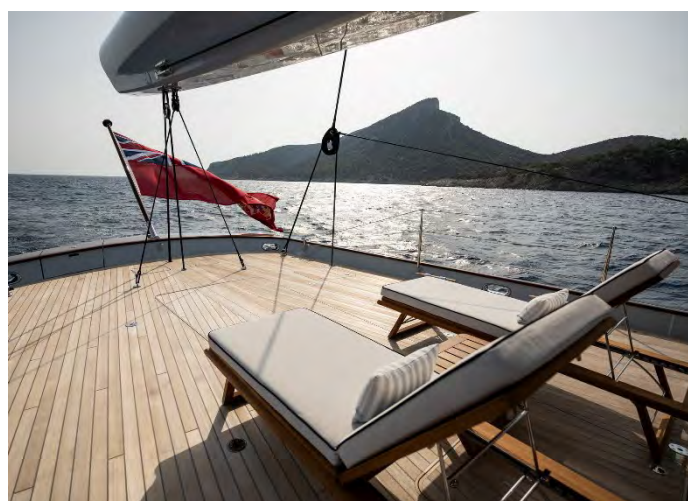
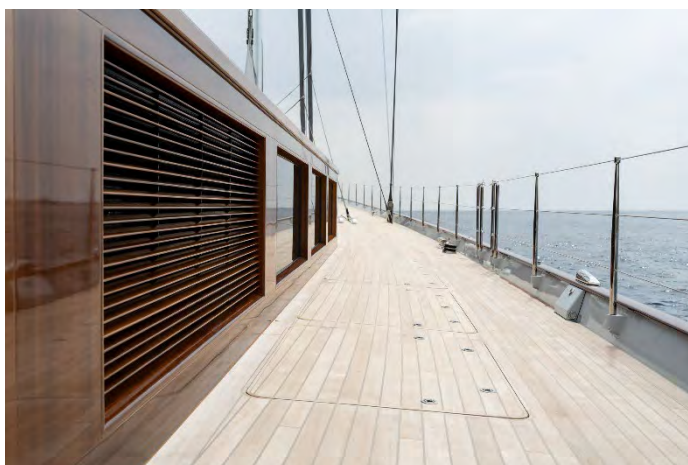
Yet, Erik Wassen of Dykstra Naval Architects notes that the new Aquarius is neither a replica of a classic yacht nor simply a scaled-up version of the previous. Compared with traditional-looking Dykstra projects, he points out she is much more modern in profile, yet still a romantic, retro-style. Her deck is far less cluttered with funnels and fittings than those of vintage yachts. Cray vetoed “bling,” such as decorative metal fittings over deckhouse skylights and other polished, non-essential metalwork.



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The result enhances the chic factor and reduces maintenance, allowing the crew to concentrate on sailing and serving guests.





DIALING UP SAILING PERFORMANCE

While not conceived as a Grand Prix racing yacht, this world cruiser built of lighter, stiffer and corrosion-resistant Alustar® aluminum alloy tipped firmly in the direction of speed and excellent performance. Early in the design meetings, the owners had to make the call – a mast low enough to transit the Panama Canal or performance. Without hesitation, their reply was "we choose performance."



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Her massive Rondal custom carbon fiber ketch spars, furling booms with performance outhaul feature, impressive structured luff sail plan by Doyle Sails, and Carbo-Link's elliptical carbon rigging make that intent clear.





As is typical with performance sailing yachts, the mast height exceeds the hull length. But consider that Aquarius has a single-piece main mast of 67.5m / 221 ft, followed by a 61m mizzen / 200ft. This grants plenty of sail area, but the split rig creates space between the main and mizzen, allowing a furling mizzen staysail and an optional gennaker to add significant horsepower for racing or light-air cruising.

Replacing check stays with runner deflectors improves the deck layout. mast bend and sail shape. She has an impressive upwind sail area of 1,958m² / 21,076sqft and her downwind sail area is 4,671m² / 50,278sqft.





Controlling this much sail is no small task, and when racing, each mast has its own crew calling hoists and trim. As captain James Turner says, the yacht is "a lot more sporty" than her predecessor. Aquarius is treated to a full suite of 16 Rondal captive winches with pulling loads up to 18 tons.



ALONG WITH STEERING ASSIST
COMES SMART GEARING



All winches are located below deck with lines guided to the exits using blocks and sheaves, maintaining tension to prevent tangling. Rondal's feeders, positioned at the deck exit or at the exits of both booms, direct the line towards the winch. They are designed to guide and tension the line but not to increase pulling force – that's the winch's role.



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Rondal is the only company worldwide to deliver a fully integrated sailing system from one source. Instead of combining separate components from different suppliers, the shipyard's sister company designs and engineers the complete package together with the design and build team.

The system-level approach guarantees efficiency, reduces wear, and maximizes safety and performance under sail. The result: a safer, lighter, and more efficient yacht with one clear control system for the crew.





Aquarius underwent her initial commissioning and sea trials during winter in the North Sea, equipped with only the essential sails required for cruising and delivery. Once in the Mediterranean, additional race crew joined the yacht in Palma de Mallorca to test the rest of the sail inventory, especially the racing sails. Each sail and its configuration within the plan had to be properly set, its hardware checked, and loads calibrated in the onboard systems.





The full sail inventory adds two gennakers, a spinnaker staysail, a mizzen staysail, a mizzen gennaker and Code Zero headsails. Godfrey Cray puts this into perspective:

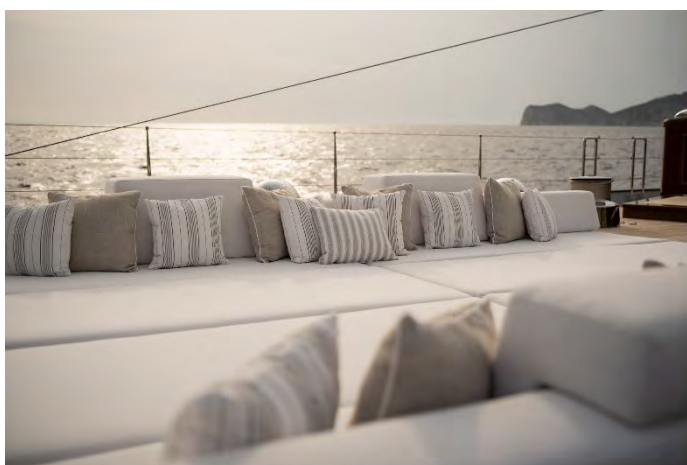
"The commissioning was effectively like setting up two sloops. It is the main and headsails for a 65m / 213ft yacht, and then with the mizzen, mizzen staysail, delivery jib and mizzen gennaker, you have the gear and power of a 50m / 164ft yacht sailing behind it."





DESIGN CHANGES FOR RELAXED LUXURY

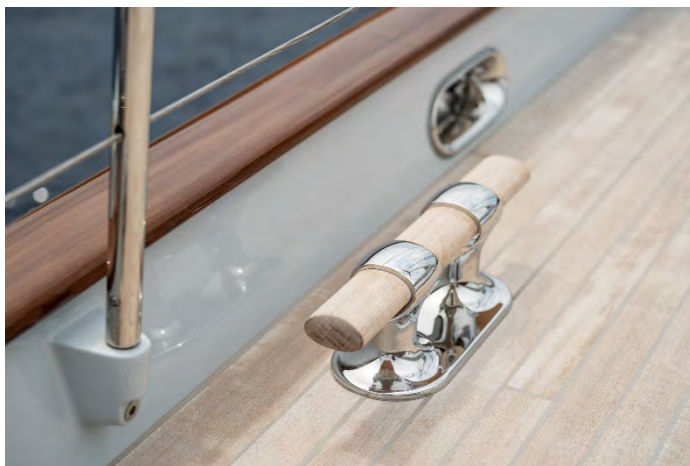
A 9m / 30ft increase in overall length combined with more hull depth and increased beam delivers 45 percent more volume than her predecessor. This provides a far more workable crew area, mess and galley. The galley itself is now 67 percent larger.



The main cockpit, owners' cockpit, and both deckhouses were scaled up proportionally.



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MINIMIZED DECK CLUTTER. THE CONTINUOUS CAPRAILS,
INBOARD STANCHIONS WITH HIDDEN FOOTLIGHTS
REFLECT CAREFUL ATTENTION TO DETAIL



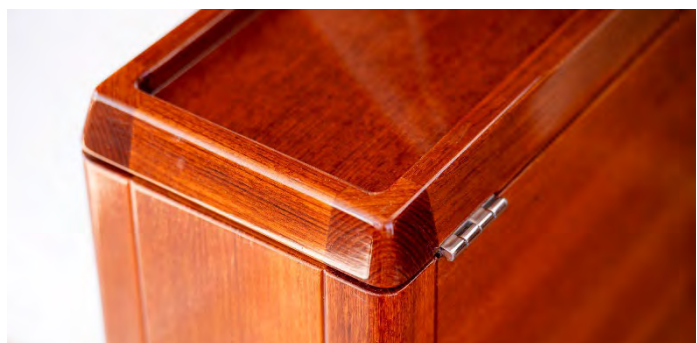
"We feel the extra length the most when we stand at the bow and look sternward! The foredeck is massive and the length is most apparent when looking aft from the bow."

— The owners of Aquarius

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THE SOCIAL HUB OF THE YACHT
ON DECK IS THE MAIN COCKPIT



PRESS RELEASE



THE MAIN COCKPIT TABLES
CAN BE RAISED AND EXPANDED





The main deckhouse was reevaluated for a more lounge-oriented experience and more flexible formal dining.





The owners' deckhouse was reconfigured by repositioning the steps from their cabin to the aft deck. Instead of the traditional split-banquette style, it now offers a cozy U-shaped seating area to starboard plus a TV cabinet and a fridge, making it more of a proper deck salon rather than a place to drop foul-weather gear on your way below.



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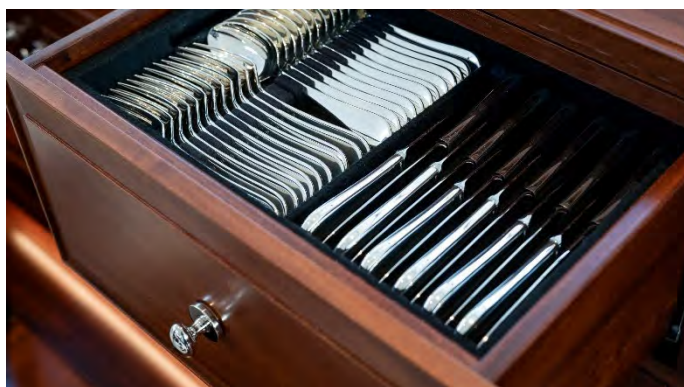
The yacht's main salon is 62 percent larger. Now the entire social seating area can be on starboard, and conversation no longer interrupted by the centerline traffic flow.

The entire yacht speaks of relaxation, with most upholstery specified in outdoor fabrics for easy care and fade resistance.





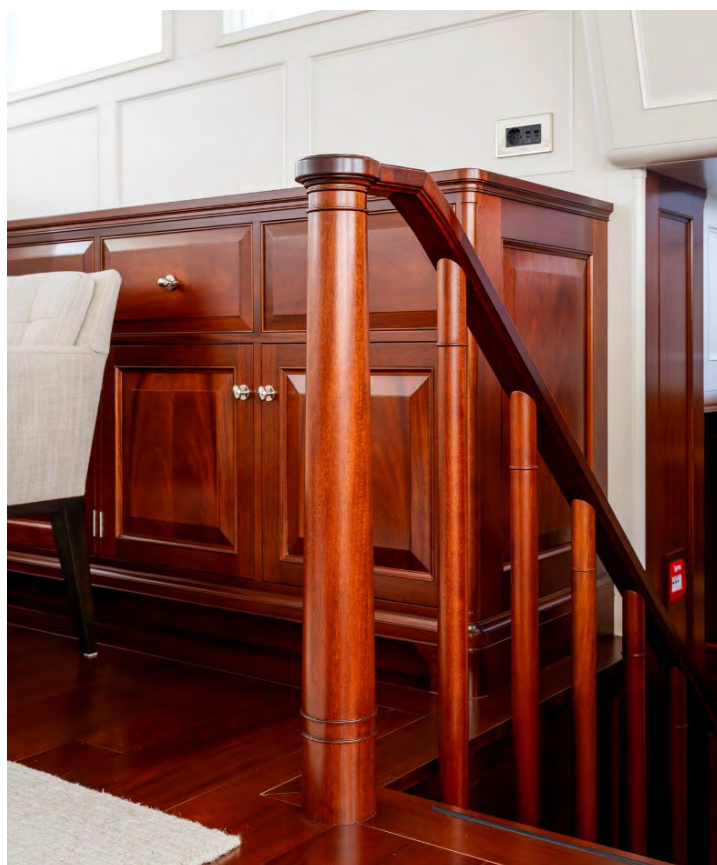
Dining on port comfortably accommodates 12 guests at one large table, or the table can be split into two smaller tables and even lowered to coffee-table height, turning the entire space into one large living room. There is much more storage and a larger bar cabinet.



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Design emphasis is on horizontal lines that visually elongate the spaces, contributing to an even greater sense of spaciousness aboard the nine-meter-longer yacht. The high-low expandable tables were used to turn the deck salon into an impromptu dining room with a view on evenings when it was too cool to dine in the cockpit while cruising in Norway. Note how the theme of the double chair rails resurfaces on the staircase newel post and handrail.





The greatly expanded media room or cinema promises to be one of the yacht's highlights.



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Together with the gym, the media room creates a natural buffer between the crew area and guest spaces. The massive keel trunk on centerline is cleverly hidden between the cinema and galley.



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The ensuite guest cabins increased in size as well as number, with a double and a twin cabin forward of the salon and two double cabins aft.



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THE FORWARD STARBOARD GUEST CABIN
CONVERTS FROM A TWIN TO SLEEP FOUR,
WITH A PULLMAN BERTH AND A RECESSED
BED LOWERED FROM THE CEILING





At the back of Aquarius is the owners' stateroom, where the extra hull length allows the entire suite to be on one level rather than stepped to accommodate the hull shape.



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FOR THE PREVIOUS AQUARIUS, FULL-SCALE MOCKUPS WERE USED TO PERFECT LAYOUTS AND FINISHES BEFORE CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING TWO VERSIONS OF THE OWNERS' STATEROOM. THE PREFERRED OPEN ARRANGEMENT WITH POP-UP TV WAS SELECTED



FOR THE NEW AQUARIUS, THE PROVEN EXPERIENCE OF THE PREVIOUS EFFECTIVELY SERVED AS THE FULL-SCALE MOCKUP

PRESS RELEASE



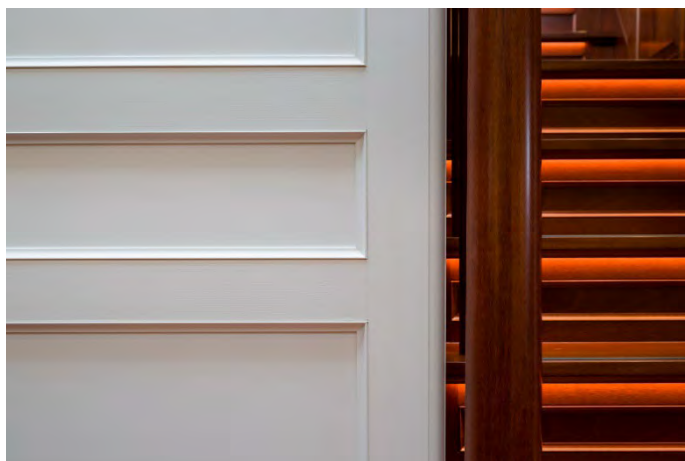
The consistency of the yacht's design palette and Mark Whiteley's attention to detail carries through to the owners' portside bath. Marble counters pair with painted white overheads and swietenia, or American mahogany, in a satin finish and nickel hardware. Instead of the large bathtub featured on the previous Aquarius, this time the owners requested a larger walk-in shower and more counter space.



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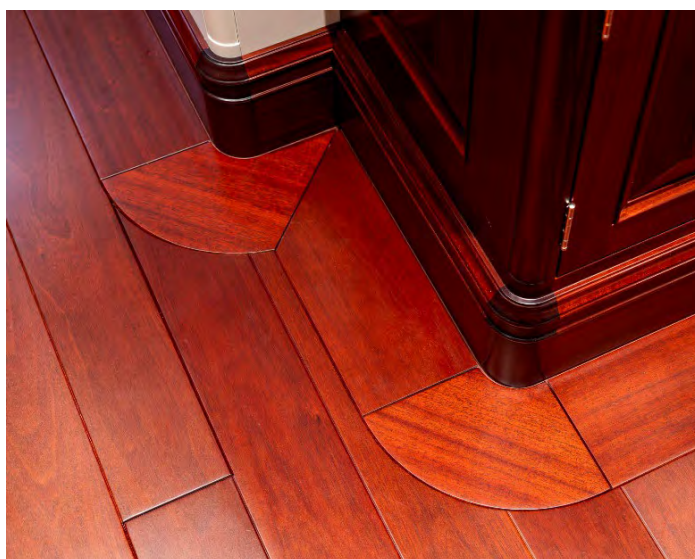
A side-by-side comparison of the two yachts shows many similarities in their refinements while adhering to Mark Whiteley's original "New England Relaxed Elegance" decor scheme of cream walls and swietenia wood cabinetry. Stairways have become a touch more graceful and the posts have a softer shape.



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The floors are clear-finished wood planks, with runners and area rugs adding color and coziness. Paneling adds charm. With the hand-painted wall and ceiling finishes, satin varnish on the Swietenia wood cabinetry, and details using simplified raised panels, we consider it a light classic contemporary interior. The joinery is quite crisp but obeys classic proportions," said Mark Whiteley.





RAMPING UP PERFORMANCE

The previous Aquarius has a 58-ton fixed keel drawing 4.8m / 16ft, which delivers a significant righting moment. But for the new Aquarius with 40 to 56% more sail area compared to the previous, deeper draft would be necessary for stability and to avoid leeway under sail. A fixed keel of sufficient depth would put many cruising areas and marinas off limits. The solution to offset the force of her massive sail is a lifting keel of 76 ton.

It draws exactly the same amount of water, 4.8m / 16 ft in the up position for harbor access, yet it can drop to 7.6m / 25ft for top performance. The naval architects made sure the intrusion of the lifting keel box did not distort the interior, while the maximum beam was carefully controlled to maintain essentially the same length-to-beam ratio that had proved successful: 4.5 for the previous Aquarius versus 4.7 for the new Aquarius.



PROVEN SEMI-HYBRID TECHNOLOGIES AND
A 134KW BATTERY BANK FOR PEAK SHAVING

Aquarius takes advantage of Royal Huisman's fully tested innovations and system upgrades with a continued focus on quality, reliability and safety. For dependability and worldwide service when cruising, the owners requested straightforward mechanical systems.





The yacht features Royal Huisman's semi-hybrid technologies for power generation and management. Power Take-Offs (TPOs) on the main engine and generators mean that, much of the time, only one engine needs to be engaged. The system comprises a 900kW MTU main engine for propulsion, with a 110kW alternator/shaft generator mounted on the gearbox to supply hotel loads when the yacht is motoring.

Two fixed-speed generators also charge a 134kW battery bank for peak shaving, which means it is unlikely the second generator will be needed where there are spikes in electric demand. The generators are matched to energy usage over 24 hours, not to the maximum possible demand at any one moment.

The benefits include optimum energy efficiency and flexible power generation. The increase in length, beam and hull depth, offers room for larger systems in the engine room and technical spaces and easy access for proper maintenance.



Her high-modulus carbon rig and state-of-the-art sail-handling systems by Rondal ensure thrilling performance and effortless handling. "The yacht is incredibly well balanced; her sail plan, keel, rudder and hull are all in sync," notes Godfrey Cray.

Sailing trials proved that she is the exquisite powerhouse her owner requested. Armed with just her cruising sails, she was clocking 15 and 16 knots on a reach. Following her delivery to the Mediterranean, where light air performance is make-or-break for a yacht, she proved she could sail at 10+ knots in just 7 knots of breeze.





The yacht has a single rudder controlled by the first installation of Edson's new electric steering-assist system. A sensor measures the torque the helmsman experiences, and the amount of assistance is adjustable with five power settings. In standard mode, it absorbs up to 50 percent of the steering wheel load while still providing sufficient feedback.



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"Even turned up all the way, you still get feeling on the wheel," said captain James Turner. "The owner loves it." Along with the power assist comes smart gearing. "With just six turns from lock to lock, it's easier to steer the boat more accurately, which means sailing faster," said Cray. Two-time Volvo Ocean Race winning skipper Mike Sanderson, who helmed during the 2026 St. Barths Bucket, called it "the single biggest boost for performance on the boat".





FIRST REGATTA UNDER THE KEEL

Last spring, Aquarius traveled to the Caribbean for the St. Barths Bucket, where the 36 members of the combined racing and boat crews managed four days of practice before squaring off against two other big ketches, 67m / 219ft Hetairos and 59m / 194ft Maximus. Heading into the third day of racing, the yachts were tied at 6 points each. And then the weather gods intervened, sending too much wind, and the final race was canceled. Aquarius dropped to third place on “Count Back”.





Godfrey Cray says it will only take a one- or two-percent improvement to achieve the owner's goal of winning the next Bucket, and none of that involves new hardware. Finding the extra performance will be a combination of little things; sail selection for the venue, dynamic control of the rigging, sail tune and optimizing the differing upwind and downwind modes. This combined with effectively organizing 36 race crew.



"We put in a very convincing performance," noted captain James Turner, recalling that Aquarius had been ahead of the more seasoned Maximus on several occasions. "We will be back for the 2027 Bucket. We have unfinished business."

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"For Aquarius, the brief was not simply to build bigger," says Royal Huisman's CEO, Peter Naeyé. "It was to preserve the character the owners loved, while adding the volume, performance and technology refinement their next chapter required. That is exactly where a fully custom Royal Huisman yacht proves its value: every detail can be tested, optimized and made personal, without losing the spirit of the original idea."

Traveling 20,000 nautical miles in her first 18 months, including two transatlantic crossings, the St. Barths Bucket and hosting her family on cruises from Norway to Sicily, Aquarius has proven herself to be a yacht of exceptional balance: timeless in appearance, thoroughly modern in technology, and deeply personal in every aspect of her execution. For Royal Huisman, she is also a clear expression of what returning clients make possible: a custom yacht shaped by trust, experience and a shared commitment to keep improving.

"With an advanced engineering and production team in-house and the design coordination possible with our sister company Rondal for designing and building not just the spars but also the integrated sailing system and more, owners are assured of seamless operation. This also translates to smooth service support after delivery," concludes Peter Naeyé. "This is what makes Royal Huisman the home of the world's finest custom yachts."

END OF PRESS RELEASE

EDITOR'S NOTES

PERSPECTIVE OF THE OWNERS' PROJECT MANAGER

As he was for the owners' first Royal Huisman build, Godfrey "Goddy" Cray was the owners' project manager for the second. Godfrey Cray is a New Zealander, who has competed in four Whitbread Round the World Races and has also been an America's Cup team member. Goddy has managed the build of 17 sailing superyacht projects, beginning with the 48.5m / 159ft Georgia, begun in 1997. The latest Aquarius is his third project at Royal Huisman.



THE AQUARIUS CREW ON THE BULB OF THE LIFING KEEL
AND GODFREY "GODDY" CRAY (AT THE END OF THE FIN)

What makes for a great superyacht project? Good designers, a good shipyard and owners with a clear vision who can make well considered and timely decisions. If you have these 3 things the project is set up to succeed. He explains that after the owners had taken delivery of the first Aquarius in 2018, and knowing it was perceived by them as not quite large enough, it was not long before he began considering what a new and larger Aquarius might be like. "Talking to the naval architect and interior designer, and some to the shipyard as well, I said, 'let's see what inspirations we can come up with, because I know he will want another guest cabin, he will want a bigger gym, more crew space, and this and that.'



So, we did a bit of a design loop, and we came up with a vertical bow, massive sail area with a bowsprit, and a lifting keel. It would have been a nice-performing boat. I was going to fly to St. Barths in 2020 to show him the plans, but covid came along and that canceled the St. Barths Bucket and all travel, really. I sent the drawings to the owner instead. He replied that he was intrigued, but it would be another year before he could concentrate on it.

Two weeks later, he came back and said, 'I can't wait that long. Let's just get on with it.'"



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THE CAPTAIN'S PERSPECTIVE

Captain James Turner has been living and breathing the Aquarius program for over ten years. He oversaw both Aquarius newbuilds at Royal Huisman and, together with several members of the Aquarius crew, has logged a collective 125,000 nautical miles including four St. Barths Bucket regattas. "Much of the consideration was for ideas from my team, particularly in the service spaces and crew accommodation," says James.

"The first thing we had to define was the number of crew it takes to operate the yacht, and therefore the number of bunks. Next, we looked at other areas, such as the galley, the laundry, and the crew mess. When you know you need 11 crew, you need to be able to seat them in the crew mess.

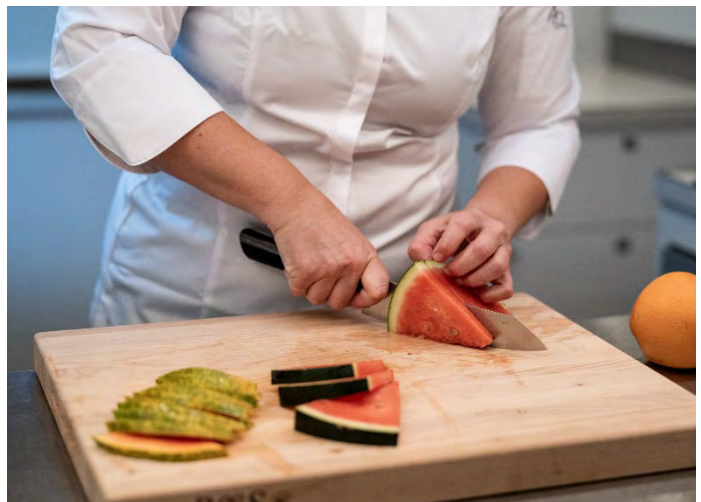


PRESS RELEASE



A 9M / 30FT INCREASE IN OVERALL LENGTH COMBINED WITH MORE HULL DEPTH AND INCREASED BEAM DELIVERS 45 PERCENT MORE VOLUME THAN HER PREDECESSOR: THIS PROVIDES A FAR MORE WORKABLE CREW AREA, MESS AND GALLEY. THE GALLEY ITSELF IS NOW 67 PERCENT LARGER.

On the previous boat, we had two shifts for meals." The crew's 728-item suggestion list also included nuances based on how the owners live. "We needed a bigger galley. After service, for example, they will come down to the galley and speak with the chef, and they want somewhere to stand and converse without feeling awkward, as if they are in the way."





Also on the list was dividing the laundry from the galley and making the forward section quieter for off-watch crew who may be sleeping.

Some of the items on the list came from modifications the crew made over the years of operating the previous yacht. Interestingly, more than 70 percent of the crew from the first Aquarius moved on to the new one. "It was a product of us learning how to use the yacht, and us understanding how the owners like to use their yacht, plus all the small quirks of equipment, machinery, and general preference.

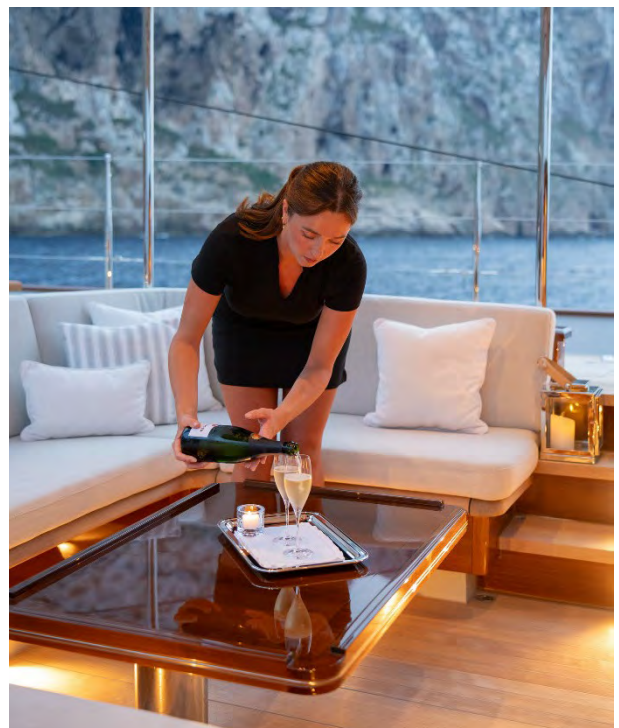


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The owners loved the old boat; it was beautifully designed and beautifully built, but although they had three previous sailing yachts, it was their introduction to custom superyachts. This is the finished product, as it were. A lot of consideration went into those aspects. We already had a canvas to work on, and we just had to join the dots, without compromising."

The owners were on board for six weeks during the yacht's first 2026 summer season, joining the yacht just 12 days after she left the shipyard. Noting that the owners' team and crew had poured four years into the new Aquarius, expectations ran high, according to captain James.





"When the owner first got behind the wheel, we had a building breeze of 16 to 20 knots, a strong sea breeze off the coast of Italy. We hoisted sails and bore away onto a reach. He was hitting speeds of 16.7 knots on his first outing.

The smile and delight on his face was... I had this sort of flood of just relief, really, coming over me. It was so rewarding to see that. This weight just came off my shoulders," James said.

Asked how close the yacht came to hitting the target, the captain says: "I really struggle to think of anything that the owners are displeased with."





In late spring 2026, following a brief stay at the shipyard for service support, the owners opted for a change of scenery by cruising Aquarius in Norway and exploring the pristine nature and fantastic diversity of deep-water ports, steeped in history and tradition. Showing that she was perfectly adaptable to high-latitude cruising, dining on deck simply moved into the 61 percent larger deck house. Here gourmet meals were served up with fabulous fjord views but without a side order of blankets. By July, Aquarius was in the Med for a packed summer season in Italy and the Balearics and nearing 20,000nm since delivery.





THE OWNERS' PERSPECTIVE

"Both ships are impressive sailing yachts, but the new one accelerates faster, and with its drop-down keel, it performs better upwind. She sails beautifully, with perfect balance, speed and stability. I love being at the wheel when we are sailing between 12 and 16 knots! When asked if I would do anything different were I to begin a new Aquarius, my answer is, 'Nothing!'"



Q&A with the owners of Aquarius:

What was your motivation for ordering this yacht?

“We loved our first Royal Huisman yacht, but we wanted something more spacious and more powerful.”

What specific elements did you ask the designers, naval architects, and the builder to incorporate?

“We wanted the new yacht to resemble our former yacht in almost all design details, except we requested a 65 meter yacht, with the ability to sail faster.”

Were there features or elements you specifically wished to avoid?

“There were none.”



How will you primarily use the yacht?

“We will use the yacht primarily for vacation cruising and for some racing.”

What led you to choose this particular design and build team?

“We loved our first yacht, which was ‘perfection’ in our eyes.”

Were there any challenges that needed to be overcome or resolved in the design and build of this yacht?

“We tried to see if we could get length and speed without sacrificing Panamax mast height standard, but in the end, that was not possible.”



Yacht owners have many options when it comes to obtaining a yacht to suit their purposes, from refitting a brokerage yacht to buying and finishing a semi-custom/production yacht, to building a fully custom yacht. Why did you choose your particular path?

“We have great confidence in Royal Huisman’s quality and reliability, and having been so satisfied with our first yacht, it was an easy decision to have Royal Huisman build the second.”

Now that you have had a chance to experience the new Aquarius, how closely does the yacht meet the vision you set out to realize?

“We spent a month aboard this summer and the yacht meets or exceeds our expectations and vision.”

How do you describe the brief for the appearance of the yacht? Why was a classic-looking exterior your choice?

“We wanted a yacht to look elegant and timeless; graceful, but powerful.”



Have the yard and the team succeeded in delivering the balance of system simplicity and robust operational reliability you and your project manager were aiming for?

“Yes.”

Where are you seeing the biggest changes, when comparing the two vessels you built with Royal Huisman? For example, is it the interior volume, the performance under sail, the increased deck areas or something else?

“Improvements in deck space, volume, and performance have all been achieved.”

What are your favorite areas to spend time in when aboard the yacht?

“We love the owner’s cockpit and deckhouse.”

From a family and guests’ perspective, does everyone – whatever their age – get everything you hoped for out of Aquarius?

“Yes.”



You have had the one shortened regatta experience at the Bucket so far but do you anticipate more competitive sailing in the future?

“We are committed to next year’s bucket, but we have made no commitments beyond that. We were very pleased with how the yacht performed in its first regatta.”

Where do you sense the increase in size the most? Is it the nearly 30 more feet of length on deck or in the increased volume below?

“We feel it the most when we stand at the bow and look sternward! The foredeck is massive and the length is most apparent when looking aft from the bow.”

Have the larger gym and media room lived up to your expectations?

“Yes.”

How was the cruising in Norway? Now that you have a yacht with more self-sufficiency, do you anticipate more off the beaten path destinations?

“We loved sailing Norway and anticipate exploring new destinations in the years ahead.”



THE DESIGN LOOP

When the first Aquarius was in design, the owners initially considered a yacht around 60m / 197ft to match the interior wish list. But for a couple stepping up from a series of much smaller Hinckley sailing yachts, that seemed too much, so the project was refined to 56m / 184ft. Between the time the first Aquarius by Royal Huisman, now Apsara, was contracted at the end of 2014 and delivered in January 2018, however, the needs for their dream family yacht grew along with the size of their family. What had been enough space wasn't anymore. Yet the owners wisely chose to continue the build, enjoy the yacht, and gain experience. They explored the world: Aquarius visited New Zealand, cruised the Pacific, and competed in the St. Barths Bucket Regatta three times, earning podium finishes on all occasions.

Reassembling the first design team was a no-brainer. With a rough idea of the interior requirements, Godfrey Cray and Erik Wassen of Dykstra Naval Architects tested several hull and rig iterations, but none would deliver both performance and Panama Canal clearance for easy access to the Pacific Ocean. The fixed Bridge of the Americas on the Pacific side of the canal limits mast height to 58m / 190ft at any tide, or 62.5m / 205ft at low tide with special permission. However, the design team learned that a sloop with a rig height of around 64m / 210ft had transited under the Bridge of the Americas in a heeled state with about 20 tons of water bags hanging from the top of her mast. This seemed like a positive workaround.



THE YACHT'S UPWIND SAIL AREA IS 1,958M² / 21,076SQFT
AND HER DOWNWIND SAIL AREA IS A REMARKABLE 4,671M² / 50,278SQFT

Achieving the required increase in interior spaces led the team to an overall length of 61m / 200ft with a plumb bow, bowsprit, submarine anchors, lifting keel, and a main mast of 64m / 210ft. However, a final check with the port authority in Panama informed the team that heeled-state transit under the bridge was no longer being considered.

"I explained this to the owner, who replied, 'I don't want to compromise the sailing of the yacht, so just put the right rig height on it, the right sails on it, and let's build a really good boat.'"



"He has a very clear vision of what is a good boat and what is not, and it was a good decision," Godfrey Cray says. The team returned to the spoon bow, which made the yacht longer, resulting in a 65m / 213ft length. "The main mast is 67.5m / 222ft, and the mizzen rig is 61m / 200ft, so we have plenty of sail area. She is a long, sleek yacht, and she sails well." When Cray says plenty of sail area, he is not overstating.



PERFORMANCE HARDWARE

The yacht's sail-handling and sailing systems were in continual development with Rondal, Doyle Sails, and Royal Huisman. Rondal conducted extensive simulations to determine the ideal rig settings for various wind and sea conditions. This process allowed the team to refine the rig for cruising while preserving the responsiveness needed for regattas. This holistic approach to a yacht with high load challenges ensured streamlined commissioning as well as functionality for peak performance and reliability in racing or cruising.

Designing and engineering the complete package together, including spars, rigging, winches, feeders and deck hardware avoided mismatches, excess weight, and complex interfaces. Everything works in harmony, resulting in a safer, lighter, and more efficient yacht.

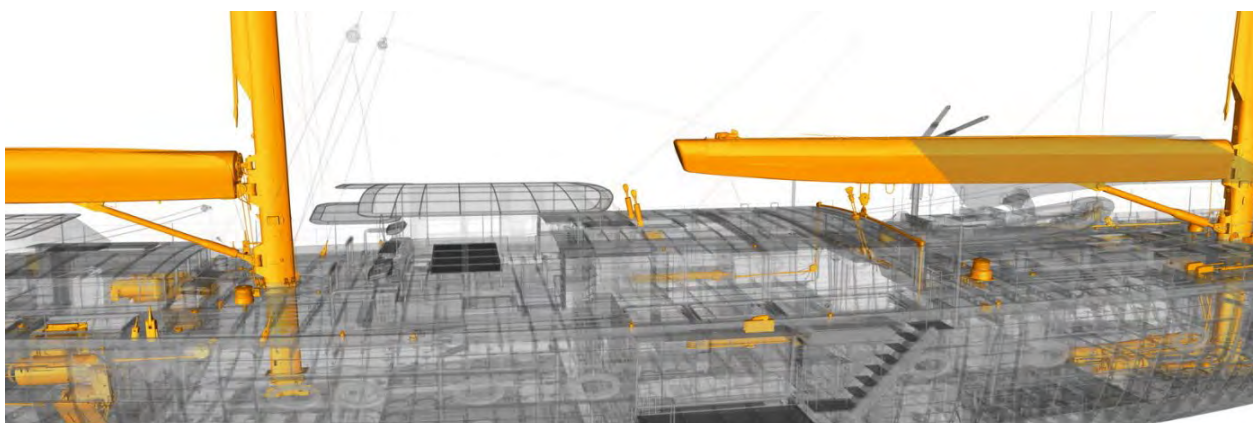




The rig and split sail plan were envisioned to enable the yacht to be pushed hard in racing conditions with a crew of 30, then safely cruise and deliver with a minimal number of permanent crew who can manage the boat with a single clear sail control system.

The yacht takes advantage of Rondal's high-capacity captive winches. Engineered for both speed and heavy loads, the winches offer line speeds up to 85 meters per minute. Paired with line feeders matched to the drum speed, the system gives tangle-free operation.





THE INHOUSE ENGINEERING TEAMS OF THE SHIPYARD
AND RONDAL IDENTIFY AND RESOLVE ISSUES
BEFORE CONSTRUCTION BEGINS.
NOTHING IS LEFT TO CHANCE

The masts are held in place with Carbo-Link airfoil-shaped, rigid carbon-fiber rigging, which saves weight by eliminating the need to terminate the shrouds with massive turnbuckles. Its aerodynamic shape reduces drag slightly and tends to be quieter when the boat is at rest. To tune the mast, Aquarius uses deflectors instead of check stays to control mast bend, and they are more effective because they pull laterally rather than downward. For cruising or when reefed, the mizzen deflectors lock into position and don't need adjusting.



The topmast running backstay also has deflectors. Goddy notes that the little bits and pieces, each with slight improvements in weight or aerodynamics, add up to "quite an improvement." The incredibly respected consulting spar designer Steve Wilson was integral in the whole spar design process. Any carbon superyacht mast these days is custom designed for the righting moment, yacht dimensions and chainplate widths.

We went into quite a big study with Doyle, and they are using the same modeling software as Rondal, so it is a really integrated package," said Goddy. There are about 35 sensor points throughout the rigs. The forestay, the Code Zero stays, the stays for staysails, the runners and the mainsheet all have load sensors by Rondal programmed for perhaps 25 or 30 different sail combinations ensuring safety as well as thrilling performance and effortless handling.



BESPOKE COWL VENTS AVOID SNAGGING OF SHEETS ON THE FOREDECK

Her sail inventory includes fully roached main and mizzen sails with integrated reefing systems, a structured luff blade jib and performance staysail, and a heavy-duty delivery staysail.



A smaller mizzen jib for cruising helps to balance the yacht in all sea conditions. For performance, the wardrobe increases by adding two gennakers, a spinnaker staysail, a mizzen staysail, a mizzen gennaker, and cableless Code Zero headsails.

Speaking of the goal of enhanced performance, Goddy said: "One of our biggest gains is the experience and knowledge of system design and improvements that are coming from the previous Aquarius. The yacht is incredibly well balanced; her sail plan, keel, rudder and hull are all in sync."



MAKING IT ALL WORK

Aquarius takes advantage of fully tested in-house innovations and system upgrades, such as climate-control management, with a continued focus on quality, reliability and safety. One of the main drivers for extra volume, Mark Whiteley agrees, was increasing the space dedicated to crew. On the previous yacht, one single crew cabin had been worked in, which affected the space for the gym, crew mess, galley and service areas.

Today's Aquarius keeps and enlarges the gym, but also offers five double crew cabins plus a captain's cabin for the 11 crew it takes to operate a yacht of this size. The laundry now has a dedicated space on portside, separate from the starboard crew mess and galley, and its noise is well insulated from the crew cabins to ensure more shut-eye for off-watch crew. This entire area grew by 67 percent. Among the must-haves was the ability for the entire crew to be seated at the same time for meetings or meals.



Many of the features in this area and the mechanical spaces came from that 728-item crew list, ranging from reconfiguring access to the hydraulic cooling pump to aligning HVAC drip trays for better drainage while heeling.





Keeping a boat with a black hull comfortable for summer sailing is a task all its own. Working with a supplier, Royal Huisman instigated a different approach to keeping a black-hulled yacht cool and humidity in check during summer. It's a robust system with 27 air handlers and three fresh-air makeup units, where dehumidification begins.

Although there are a lot of units, they are smaller and cool faster. This summer's heatwave in Italy was the ultimate test, said captain James Turner. Although the air temperature off Capri was 35°C for much of July, the captain notes the interior was cool with only 50% humidity.



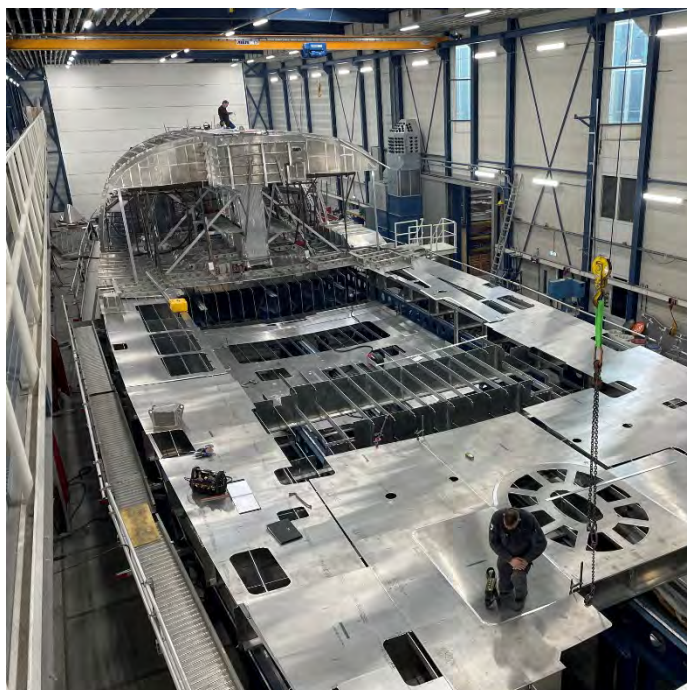
PRESS RELEASE



ROYAL HUISMAN IN VOLLENHOVE, THE NETHERLANDS:
THE HOME OF THE WORLD'S FINEST CUSTOM YACHTS

SAVING WEIGHT

Designing and building a world-cruising yacht is one thing, but the owners also wanted to repeat the 2019 and 2022 St. Barths Bucket-winning performance of the previous Aquarius. To do its part to satisfy this request, Royal Huisman undertook a design study and finite element analysis of the hull structure based on the shipyard's Featherlight methodology.



UPSIDE DOWN CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALUSTAR®
ALUMINUM HULL. NOTE THE DECK SKYLIGHT
AROUND THE MIZZEN IN THE OWNERS' STATEROOM

PRESS RELEASE

By mapping and optimizing areas of high and low stress, the amount of aluminum for frames and hull plating was reduced by about 10 metric tons. The studies showed that varying frame structure reduced overall weight without compromising strength. In structural areas, Royal Huisman used Alustar® for Aquarius, a premium aluminum alloy with a higher strength-to-weight ratio.



A SPECIAL MOMENT: THE TURNING OF THE AQUARIUS HULL



PREPARING FOR TRANSPORT AND LAUNCH

Hull plating thickness was also reduced in areas at low risk of deflection. Building with strict attention to weight control revealed that the yacht was coming together at less actual weight than the design calculations, and this saving was used to add weight to the keel to further enhance stability.





ACHIEVING THE LOOK

For British designer Mark Whiteley, the project began with design studies to reinterpret a yacht that was the owners' first full custom design and one they had been deeply involved in shaping. The result reads as traditional, but there are no strict period features, such as those of the 1920s or 1930s, associated with it. In fact, with the hand-painted off-white wall and ceiling finishes, satin varnish on the swietenia wood cabinetry, and details featuring simplified raised panels, Mark considers it a "light classic contemporary interior."



PRESS RELEASE



The swietenia, a mahogany species, is quite crisp, with sharp reveals rather than rounded moldings, but it adheres to classic proportions. Bevels give the panels reflection and shadow without the fussiness of raised-and-fielded panels. The double chair rail detail is a fresh invention and newel posts on stair railings have been simplified. The hardware is all nickel. Interior decoration relies mostly on framed photos taken during the family's travels, adding an intimate touch to the spaces. Fabrics throughout are light, with splashes of soft colors in the style of a New England summer house, a look amplified by tongue-and-groove overheads. Loose carpets and runners provide warmth, comfort, and color, but are easy to roll up and store, or replace.



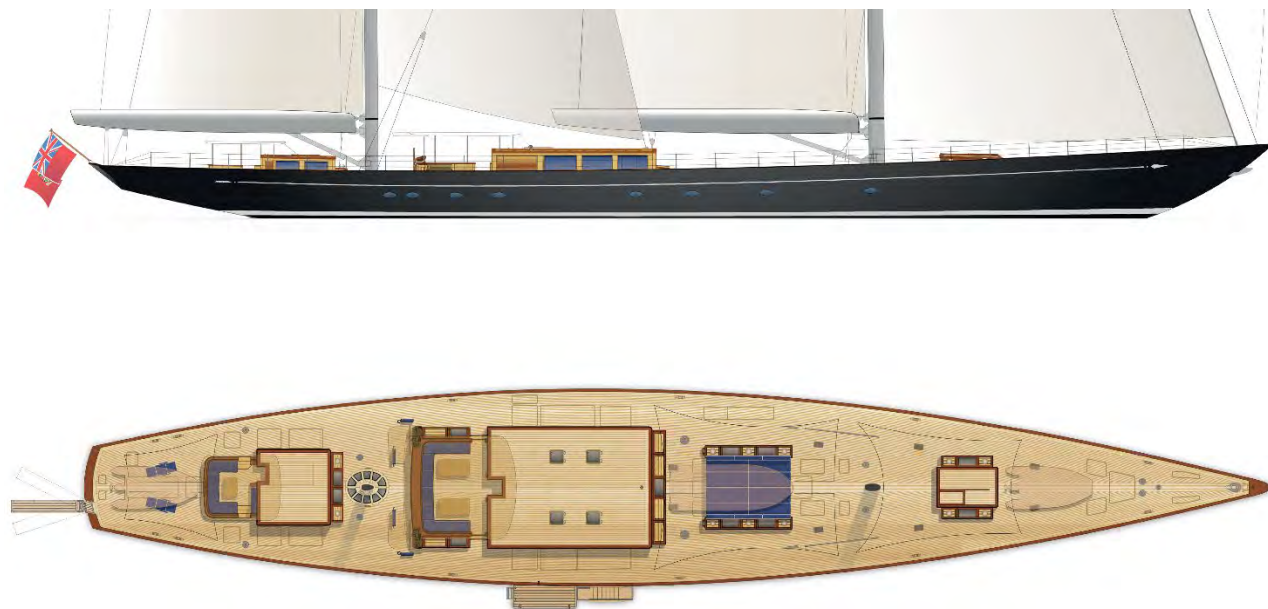
PRESS RELEASE



TWO-PART BOARDING SYSTEM: THE PLATFORM ITSELF FOLDS OUT OF THE HULL, SEPARATE FROM A GANGWAY THAT DEPLOYS FROM AN ADJACENT HATCH. IN THE EVENT OF A ROUGH SEA, THE PLATFORM CAN'T SLAM UP AGAINST THE STAIRS, POTENTIALLY DAMAGING THEIR DECK LEVEL ATTACHMENT POINT

PRESS RELEASE

GENERAL ARRANGEMENT



THE MAIN 6.6M / 22FT TENDER STORES ON DECK AMIDSHIPS. IT CAN BE LAUNCHED VIA BOOM ATTACHMENT POINTS. THE CREW TENDER STORES ON THE FORE OR AFT DECK. IN ADDITION, AQUARIUS TRAVELS WITH A CHASE BOAT, WHICH CAN BE SHIPPED IN A 40FT CONTAINER.



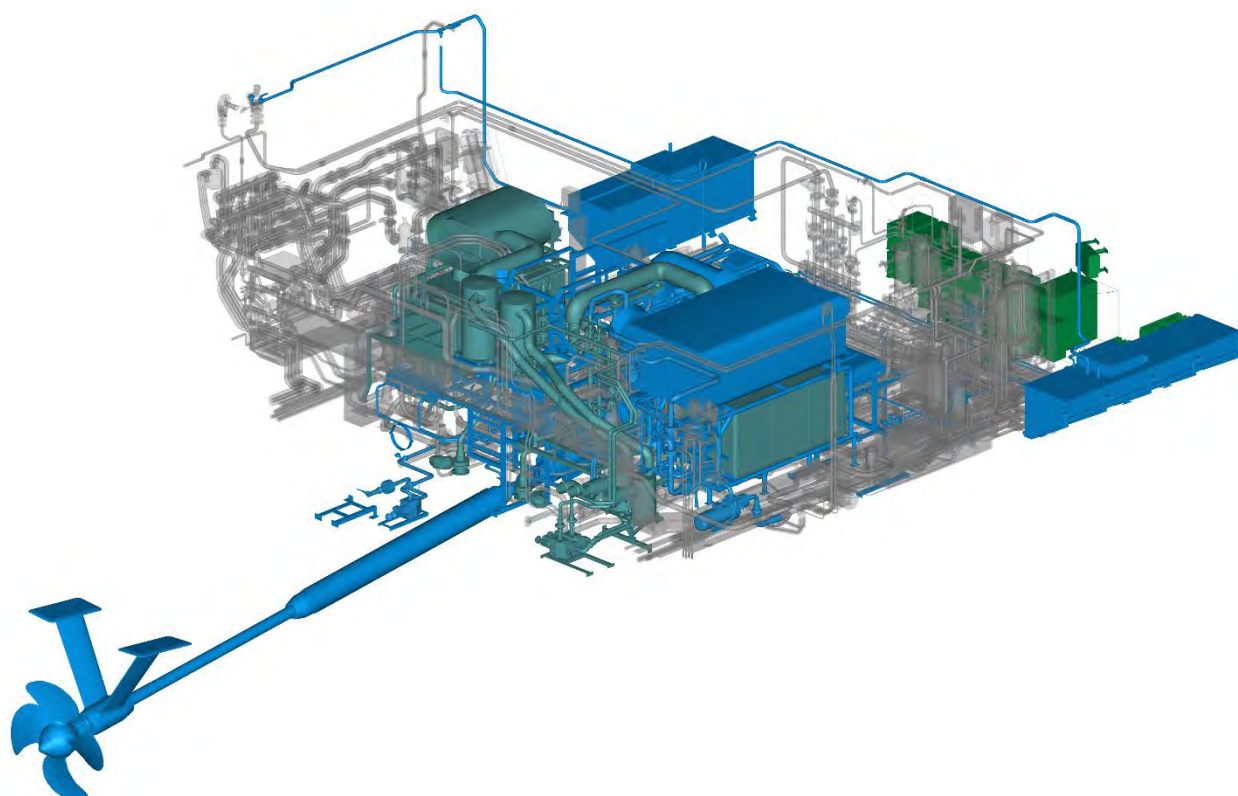
PRESS RELEASE

MAIN SPECIFICATIONS

Type:	Performance Ketch
Owners' team:	Project manager Godfrey Cray + captain James Turner
Naval architecture + exterior styling:	Dykstra Naval Architects
Interior design:	Mark Whiteley Design
Builder:	Royal Huisman
Shipyard number:	Project 408
Delivered:	2025



Length:	65m / 212ft
Length waterline:	49m / 161ft
Beam:	10.8m / 36ft
Draft:	4.8 - 7.6m / 16 – 25ft
Accommodation:	Owners' stateroom + 4 guests cabins + 6 crew cabins
Construction:	Alustar® aluminum
Classification:	Lloyd's Register



Propulsion:	Semi-hybrid: MTU main engine 900kW + Danfoss permanent magnet generator 110kW
Generators:	2x Northern Lights 80ekW
Energy storage:	134kWh for peak shaving
Speed:	14.2kn / 12.5kn cruising
Fuel capacity:	40,500l / 10700 gallons
Range:	3900nm @ 12.5kn
Thrusters:	Retractable bow 130kW + 115kW stern
Rig:	Carbon masts + furling booms, Rondal
Mast height:	Main mast: 67.5m / 221ft, mizzen: 60m / 199ft
Sail handling:	Integrated Sailing System, Rondal
Rigging:	Carbo-Link elliptical, carbon
Sails:	Doyle Sails
Sail area:	1,958m ² / 21,076sqft upwind / 4,671m ² / 50,278sqft downwind
Tenders:	6.6m / 22ft Ribeye + 4.7m / 15ft Smuggler crew / rescue tender (excluding 10.6m / 35ft chase boat)
Video, photobook and more:	royalhuisman.com/aquarius [link]

PRESS RELEASE

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST

As you might know Royal Huisman works closely with our clients and members of the yachting press. We do this in order to give all our media friends equal support and opportunity. Please introduce us to new press colleagues: we will be pleased to assist them and add their contact details to future press releases.



Hundreds of images of Aquarius can be made available on request, in addition to the extensive information provided in this release, giving each publisher or editor the opportunity to create a unique article for their readers.

Please respect the following:

- “Let the yacht be the hero”: the owners of the Royal Huisman yachts respectfully ask that their names, nationality, occupation and all additional references to their personal lives should be excluded from all articles printed, online or otherwise.
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For any questions, please contact Jurjen van 't Verlaat (jurjen@royalhuisman.com or +31 527 243131). Can you please send us a high-res pdf of the final article or link to the website page after publication?