

boat

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"TIS"

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# The dragon's clarion call

Palumbo Group is scaling new heights with "Dragon", whose LOA is just shy of 80 metres. The Italian yacht-building group has a clear objective – it is aiming to become a major player.

Text Marcus Krall Photos Alberto Cocchi







Appealing lines: "Dragon's" owner wasn't looking to experiment, so Sergio Cutolo and his firm Hydro Tec designed a classic profile intended to make a potential resale easier.



## DRAGON

Hatches open: not only the three XXL terraces that merge with one another but also its amenities give the roughly 200sqm beach club its appeal.

The owner and his guests have a sauna, steam room, quiet zones and a bar at their disposal here.











Plenty of space on the foredeck: from their suite the owner couple can step out into a private, well-shaded alfresco lounge. The crew can place more furniture further forward if required – if a helicopter, for fast airborne arrivals and departures, is not parked there.

She actually doesn't really catch the eye. At least not here, at the Quai des États-Unis in Port Hercules, where more 75m-plus-LOA yachts berthed for the last Monaco Yacht Show than ever before. And yet in the case of 79.90-metre "Dragon" we are stood in

front of a very special yacht. She is by far the largest yacht that Italian builder Palumbo – with its Columbus, ISA, Extra and Mondomarine brands – has built to date. Before "Dragon", this yardstick was at 54 metres; that was "Prima", which was launched in 2011. However,

there is a clear strategy behind this "upgrade" and foray into an entirely new yacht category. "This", said Giuseppe Palumbo, a third-generation boat builder and CEO of Palumbo Superyachts, on the day of "Dragon's" delivery to her owner, "is a really special day that represents an important milestone for our company. 'Dragon' is the fruition of the vision and strategy that we came up with eleven years ago." Giuseppe Palumbo was referring to 2008, when he and his management team decided to get actively involved in new-build projects instead of focusing just on yacht refits. Three years later they delivered "Prima", and eleven years later "Dragon" is berthed at the quayside. Palumbo Group's letterhead features a total of four yacht brands catering for almost all potential owner desires, when it comes to size. Starting with Extra at 24 (fibreglass) metres and ending with Columbus – we're going out on a limb here! – certainly at more than 100 metres in the not too distant future.



Palumbo Group invested in a massive upgrade with "Dragon". The gamble paid off



## DRAGON

Powering ahead: fully laden, "Dragon" can do up to 17 knots. At 12 knots her fuel bunker is good for more than 6000 nautical miles.





Modern look: at the owner's request, interior designer Francesco Guida created an inviting Provencal atmosphere of light hues complemented by exclusive details.



To understand the business pace that was set, you briefly need to delve into the builder's history. Palumbo Shipyards or rather its predecessor was established in 1967 in Naples as a joinery and metal workshop to provide support to local repair yards. Growth was explosive and the founders also had a good grasp of finance. That's because in the 1980s the family-run business was already a specialist in the maintenance and repair

of hulls, in particular from the commercial shipping sector. This was the foundation for Palumbo's current positioning. Nowadays the former joinery from southern Italy operates eight shipyards located in Ancona, Malta, Marseille, Messina, Tenerife, Savona, Rijeka and of course Naples. Ancona and Savona are the facilities that focus on building new yachts, while refits above all are handled in the remaining docks. Palumbo states that in the

past five years it has completed 1937 refits, of which 341 were accounted for by superyachts. In total the company employs just under one thousand people.

"We are currently doing our homework and raising our profile in the new-build business", says Giuseppe Palumbo. "In a few years' time we will have delivered many more yachts. And then I want to see the Palumbo name at the top of every broker's list, if they are searching for a builder to construct a new yacht. This self-confidence is underlined by the fact that Palumbo had its current flagship built "on spec", in other words not involving

**The Palumbo name is intended to be at the top of every broker's list in a few years' time**





exterior design. "The actual challenge lay in delivering a completely integrated design in a very short space of time, as the client was pressuring us for an extremely short delivery lead time." To comply with this tight deadline, the Palumbo Group initially utilised its original facility in Naples and then from July 2017 onwards the ISA yard in Ancona, after this facility had been recently acquired. To complete the extension, Palumbo had the hull equipped with installed main engines

towed around 800 nautical miles by tug to the other side of Italy – "Dragon", now with an LOA of almost 80 metres, put to sea 20 months later. An impressive shipbuilding feat!

Guests arriving by tender usually board "Dragon" via her swim platform, from where you first of all come to the almost 200-square-metre beach club. Along with a bar, sauna and steam room plus several quiet zones featuring Tribu furniture, this area also meets the requirements

a direct purchase order from a client and financed by the builder's own resources.

**Much shorter in original blueprint**

However, the original blueprint envisaged "Dragon" being much shorter than she is now, i.e. around 70 metres. When her current owner got involved in the project in 2016 and specified her LOA, this didn't cause any complications. "The increase in LOA was no problem, as we had designed the hull to enable it to be extended amidships", says Sergio Cutolo from Hydro Tec, which was responsible for the naval architecture arithmetic and



Clear separation: a partition separates the dining table from the sofas in the saloon. The dining table, which seats up to 14 guests, was made to specification by Giorgetti.





An entire deck: the owner occupies his own deck between the main and bridge decks. The suite consists of a bedroom, dressing room, bathroom and private sauna. This ensemble is adjoined aft by a huge office, complete with an array of seating zones, instead of a lounge.

expected of an on-board spa facility, which nowadays is a standard amenity on board yachts of this size. In addition to the sense of spaciousness that you get, what's also impressive are the agate panels, which were cut so thinly that they

were installed with back lighting in order to illuminate the beach club in an original way. There is a specific reason why this stone was chosen for the spa area: agate is regarded as a healing stone; it is rumoured to have powers that have

an effect on the human body, mind and soul. Its use or even its mere presence can allegedly alleviate headaches, fever, epilepsy, skin diseases or rheumatic joint complaints. Another claim that is apparently made about agate is that it helps with overcoming stress.

Unfortunately we don't have enough time to verify the latter point and continue with our tour. What we still have to do on the lower deck is to take a look around the garage, which accommodates two very decent tenders, one 7 and the other almost 10 metres in length, the crew quarters featuring ten cabins, the additional guest accommodation for the bodyguard, the doctor or the nanny, as well as the engine room, in which two powerful MTU engines, each delivering 2240 kilowatts of output, operate. They accelerate "Dragon" up to a maximum speed of 17 knots; at the specified cruising speed of twelve knots the yacht can travel up to 6200 nautical miles non-stop. Fuel tanks with a capacity of just under 220,000 litres of diesel and efficient hull lines that were CADed by Hydro Tec



Either a bodyguard, a nanny or even a doctor can overnight on the lower deck



make this a reality. Anybody who might have been somewhat judgmental and assumed that the short build time and the size of the project meant reductions in quality is disabused of this notion not just in the engine room; Palumbo has showcased all its commercial shipping skills. The engineering and technical installations are most definitely on a par with anything that's supplied by companies based north of the Alps.

### Ten-square-metre windows

You continue to get this very same impression on the next deck up. We enter the main saloon and get a feel for what the owner's tastes and preferences are. Just shortly after acquiring the hull shell, he commissioned Francesco Guida, one of Italy's most accomplished interior designers, to fit "Dragon" out in a modern, Provençal look. Loosely translated, this could also mean bright and elegant, because both these adjectives describe the saloon – and incidentally all the other rooms on board – superb. The numerous XXL-sized windows each measure ten square metres and, despite the tight squeeze in port, let natural light stream into the room. Your usual sofa arrangement is grouped around a Chelini table, while the fourteen dining room chairs surround a Giorgetti creation, both tables were made to specification. Nearly all of the furniture on board "Dragon" was custom-made in line with the owner's

ideas, and this fact emphasises just how unique this superyacht is.

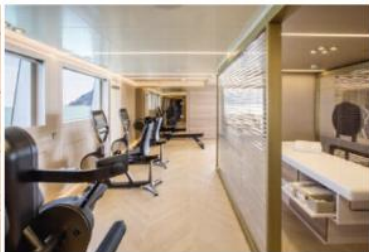
The lobby, which includes a lift that serves five decks, as well as five guest cabins are located forward of the saloon. Four of these cabins are described as being "normal", but they have genuine hotel-room dimensions and each of them has a dressing room as well. VIPs, who have a proper apartment with its own saloon at their disposal, are accommo-

dated right up front. This accommodation is exactly double the size of one of the other four guest cabins and would undoubtedly qualify as a master suite on board many other yachts.

However, the owner of "Dragon" occupies an entire deck of his own, sandwiched between the main deck and the bridge deck. This suite, featuring a dressing room and private sauna and spacious bed chamber complete with 180-



Exceptional solution: in the stern section of her sundeck "Dragon" features a long, narrow pool. It is shaded by biminis, while relax pads are provided on both sides.



Spa and sport: the owner couple has use of a private sauna in their suite (l.), a second one and a steam room are located on the lower deck. By the way, this is where the crew serves smoothies alfresco. Exercise with a view is taken in the gym on the bridge deck (m.).





Professional command centre: "Dragon's" captain operates twin 2240-kilowatt MTU engines from the Team Italia bridge.

degree view, definitely bears comparison with yachts of a similar size produced by other builders; its distinctive feature is to be found instead in the aft section of this deck. The owner had a gargantuan – at a guess more than 100 square metres – office installed here, instead of the usual saloon or TV lounge. It is not quite as large as the main saloon one deck down, but features several seating arrangements for formal and more informal meetings, in addition to the of course obligatory desk. Business lunches are served on the aft deck, where deals can be initiated or finalised in an atmosphere of absolute privacy.

Anyone who wishes to work off the calories as quickly as possible uses the gym on the bridge deck; reservations for massage sessions or beauty treatments can also be made in a separate room between the work-out zone and the wheelhouse. Sun worshippers and pool enthusiasts, however, need to walk or take the lift up to the sundeck and this is where they really get their money's

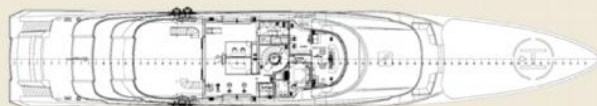
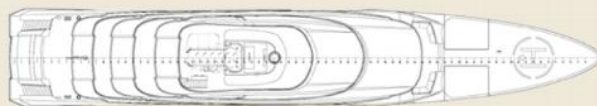
worth. To some people's minds this area could be a bit more spacious. However, the owner had clear ideas of what he wanted and these ideas were implemented to the letter.

Anybody, whose appetite has now been whetted and is toying with the idea

of enjoying the delights of "Dragon" for a week or two as a charter guest, is going to be disappointed. The yacht is used exclusively by the owner and his entourage. However, the builder would be delighted to take on new-build orders for yachts of a similar size under its Columbus brand.

## SPECIFICATION

LOA:	79.90 m	Fuel capacity:	219,000 l
LWL:	69.47 m	Fresh water capacity:	53,000 l
Beam:	12.80 m	Waste water capacity:	45,000 l
Draught:	3.65 m	Air conditioning:	Condaria
Materials:	steel, aluminium	Generators:	2 x 360 kW, 1 x 250 kW, 1 x 185 kW
Displacement:	1690 t	Entertainment:	Videoworks
Gross tonnage:	2300 GT	Bridge:	Team Italia
Engines:	2 x MTU 16V 4000 M63L	Naval architects:	Hydro Tec, Palumbo
Engine output:	2 x 2240 kW	Exterior design:	Hydro Tec, Palumbo
Gears:	2 x ZF 7645	Interior design:	Guida Design
Maximum speed:	17 kn	Classification:	ABS, +A1, +Commercial
Cruising speed:	12 kn		Yachting Service, +AMS, +ACCU
Range:	6,200 nm @ 12 kn	Builder:	Columbus/Palumbo, 2019



Somewhat unusual: on the main deck VIPs occupy an apartment complete with saloon, while the owner occupies the entire deck above, including a huge office.