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"My dad has said these boats are kind of like our children, and that's true. They go away and you want everyone to talk good about 'em." —John Bayliss Jr.





SWEET SPOT

THE PEARL 80 RAISES THE BAR FOR A LUXURY SPORT YACHT WITH SPACE, STYLE AND PERFORMANCE TO SPARE. BY ANDREW PARKINSON





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Players in the sport yacht market take heed: The game has changed. Pearl Yachts, a relatively new kid on the block, has quietly reinvented the way we should think about luxury cruising boats. The North American debut of the British builder's Pearl 80 brings a new offering to the segment, essentially ditching the "sex sells" cliché in favor of a more well-rounded, space-centric take on the cruising lifestyle. That's not to say the Pearl 80 is without sex appeal. She's got it in spades. It just wasn't the first thing I noticed when I approached her—nor was it the second, which typically means a death sentence for this breed of boat. She's anything but typical, though, and that's by design.

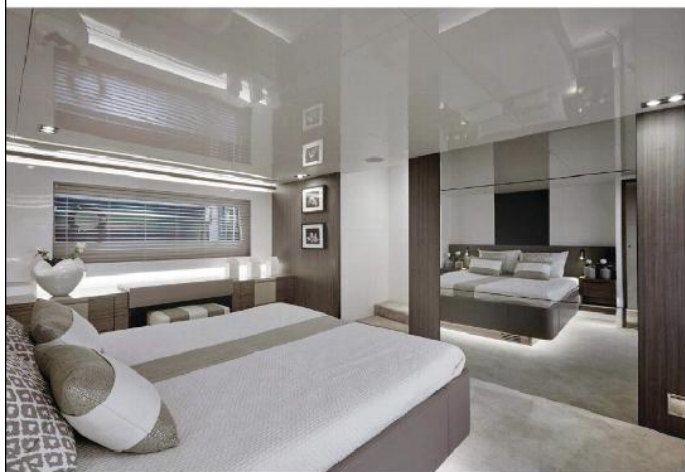
The interior scheme by Kelly Hoppen MBE (Pearl Yachts' exclusive design partner) is striking and offered with three themes: "Studio," "Taupe" or "Luxury." Studio is bright and fresh, characterized by stripes and rich browns. Taupe has pale joinery contrasted by calming earth tones, from ivories to warmer grays. Luxury has the aura of a chic modern penthouse with polished surfaces, nickel and black accents. Regardless of the theme, the interior is traditional yet contemporary, with clean lines and neutral undertones. Contrasting fabrics and woods further augment the interior's visual depth, and glossy white-lacquered ceilings enhance the feeling of spaciousness. Hoppen-curated accessories finish the look, from table lights and vases to cushions and candles.

With the 80, Pearl Yachts reimagined the conventional full-beam salon, with the space now entirely dedicated to an open-plan lounge





Pearl Yachts made the daring decision to go without a formal dining area on the main deck of the 80. Instead, the space was given over to the impressive full-beam, open-plan salon.



The Pearl 80 sleeps eight in four staterooms, including a full-beam master with vanity and en suite, and a guest cabin with twin berths. The high-gloss lacquer ceilings in white hit a contemporary note.



area of low, modular sofas. "In many boats of this size the salon is dominated by a large dining area, but we found our clients rarely ate there, instead preferring to eat on deck or on shore," said Pearl Yachts' Managing Director Iain Smallridge. "By opting not to force the dining table, we get an even larger entertaining area."

At the forward end of the salon is a bar that provides one cozy interior dining alternative, in case of inclement weather. Two steps up from there is the galley, with a bulkhead panel that opens to the salon, adding fluidity to the living space and a social component to meal preparation. The helm station is located just forward of the galley. Extensive specialized glazing and skylights bathe all of these areas with light.

Overnight accommodations are on the lower deck and adjoined by a small entryway. Situated amidships, the full-beam owner's suite features a walk-in closet and a well-proportioned master bathroom. In addition to the plush king-size bed, a sofa, a vanity and plenty of additional floor space indicate a yacht with volumes that behave much larger than her 78-foot, 5-inch LOA.

Forward are two guest staterooms, both en suite. Large windows preserve the flow of light while electronic blinds can be drawn for privacy. The VIP stateroom is at the bow, allowing full walk-around access to the berth, as well as room for a sofa, large en suite and walk-in closet. All of this usable volume—which is also uncharacteristic for an 80—comes courtesy of the deep-V hull. It enabled the builder to position the berth at a 45-degree angle.

The Pearl 80 has some charter muscle to flex. The laundry facilities, crew accommodation and engine room have discreet access along the boat's starboard side. Also, crew can access the galley from an external side door, meaning they won't disturb guests who are relaxing in the salon. Designed for a crew of two (or a couple of kids), the crew's quarters are well-appointed and well-lit.

"In Europe, a boat this size is typically a crewed family boat—a boat for the South of France," said Smallridge. "But as we were keen on entering the American market, we understood that [the 80] could be considered an owner-operator boat in the U.S., so she was designed to meet needs across both categories. An experienced helmsman can drive this boat, and we can add a joystick to make life even easier."

For all its interior prowess, the Pearl 80 is a cruising yacht at heart, which means owners with a penchant for outdoor amenities will not want for much. Deck spaces are conceived nicely for entertaining and relaxing, and the yacht offers three areas for varying levels of alfresco dining—the flybridge, the foredeck and the covered main deck aft. The 80 is a sun-worshipper's delight, with sunpads on the flybridge and the bow, plus a bar, a grill and a spa tub.

The transom garage was a priority for the boat's designers because they wanted to keep the flybridge—an expansive entertaining space—free of tenders and toys. Those toys can be launched effortlessly from the garage, which can accommodate a 10-foot 9-inch Williams Turbojet 325 RIB. Once the tender and toys are in the water, the hydraulic swim platform at the stern can be put to good use.




LOA: 78'5"
 Beam: 19'6"
 Draft: 5'3"
 Displ.: 121,254 lb.
 Fuel: 1,386 gal.
 Water: 330 gal.
 Test Power: 2/1,800-hp MAN
 V12 with V-drive
 Optional Power: 2/1,150-hp
 Caterpillar C18
 Price: Upon Request

The concept for the 80 was derived from the Pearl 75, at one time the flagship of the builder's fleet. "We took the best features from the 75, such as the floor plan, which we loved," said Smallridge. "But instead of modifying the 75, we made completely new tooling, so it really is a new 80 rather than a 'Mark 2' of the 75. That's apparent in the deck design, window design and the hard top. Everything is all its own."

Our test aboard the 80 in Miami's Biscayne Bay was actually the first public trial run of Hull No. 1. (The boat's hull and exterior lines were penned by naval architect Bill Dixon of Dixon Yacht Design.) Seas were calm, which wasn't ideal for hull sensitivity intel, but conditions gave me a nice opportunity to pin her ears back and see what she was capable of. Taking the helm from the flybridge, I found the 80 to be a trustworthy high-speed planing motoryacht that tracked well and felt nimble. She came up on plane at around 14 knots and carved up S-curves with ease on a comfortable bank. I clocked her at 35.6 knots with the throttles pinned, exceeding her quoted top speed by half a knot—impressive performance, considering her tanks had full water and 60 percent fuel, and there were eight guests on board. Test power was a pair of 1,800-hp MAN V12 engines with V-drives, which produce cruising speeds from 18 to 28 knots, with 20 knots a sweet spot for speed versus fuel burn.

In the spirit of transparency, having previously fought in a number of European sport-yacht invasions here in the States, I didn't want to like this boat. When I first stood dockside staring down the business end of yet another white boat in a crowded market, I wasn't optimistic. But once aboard, the Pearl 80 surprised me, and continued to do so over and over again. Whether it was her inventive interior, her well-appointed yet uncluttered deck, her easy handling or a combination of the three, the Pearl 80 struck me as something very fresh and stimulating—just the thing we need more of here in the Americas. □

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RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
600	6.5	4.4	1842	51
800	9.3	11.5	1008	62
1000	9.7	20.0	604	62
1200	10.1	37.9	332	62
1400	10.8	56.0	240	68
1600	20.3	75.5	335	67
1800	24.5	100	305	69
2000	29.5	135	272	72
2200	32.7	158	258	75
2350	35.6	179	248	75

TEST CONDITIONS: Temperature: 79°F; humidity: 75%; seas: 1'; load: 700 gal. fuel, 330 gal. water, 8 persons. Speeds are two-way averages measured with Garmin GPS display. GPH taken via MAN engine display. Range is 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels taken at helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.