

Superyachts Brazil On the Rise

Brazil's status as a major yacht builder got a boost late in 2008 when representatives from the country's major players came together to form a national association, which they call Superyachts Brazil. The new organization, similar to organizations in other countries such as Superyacht Base in Australia, is intended not only to increase Brazil's visibility in the world of major yacht builders, but to make Brazil a major charter destination.

The meeting, held last December at an Inace Marine-owned resort in Fortaleza, focused on common problems, international marketing efforts, the state of Brazilian marinas and other infrastructure issues, and legal barriers to building yachts and chartering them within the border. A few days after the meeting, the association scored its first success when it got the federal government to relax its chartering regulations.

Steve Buckley, an American charter broker specializing in the Brazilian arena and who set up the government meeting, was optimistic. "They pretty much gave us the green light," he said. "Chartering is now legal to do in Brazil. Their policy now is that foreign-flagged boats can come down for a three-month cruising permit (extendable for three more months) and they won't interfere with charters. No taxes, no nothing."

By most standards, Brazil's yacht-building industry is small, with only three manufacturers of major vessels. But each builder specializes in a different segment of the market. The best-known is Inace, based in Fortaleza, which makes fishing vessels and ships for the Brazilian Navy and has found a niche in the yachting industry constructing expedition vessels and trawlers. MCP Yachts, based in Santos, east of Sao Paulo, has been around since 1980 and makes classic motor yachts up to 130 feet. The third and newest yard, Sunboats, created by the scions of a major Brazilian conglomerate, is a sailboat builder that's expanded into catamaran motor yachts up to around 100 feet. Sunboats has contracted with Thierry Stump, one of Brazil's leading naval architects, to build its burgeoning fleet of yachts.

The meeting, organized by Abe Rosemberg of MCP Yachts and Flavia Barros of Inace, was also attended by a number of US and Brazilian yacht brokers and charter agents, plus

government officials, marina owners and parts suppliers.

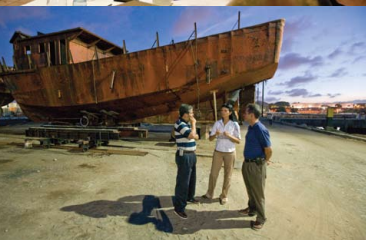
A major topic at the meeting was the charter market, which participants said should acclimatize Brazilians to large vessels plying their waters as well as help showcase Brazilian yachts to the world market. Between Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo is a beautiful coastline dominated by two major areas speckled with hundreds of forested, beachfront islands, a placid weather pattern and dozens of protected anchorages. But there are only a handful of full-service marinas in the area capable of handling yachts up to 120 feet, and Brazilians yacht owners are reluctant to charter their vessels locally. One reason is unfamiliarity with the requirements for chartering such as a sophisticated crew and a willingness to turn over one's yacht to strangers; another is that Brazilians are simply not accustomed to seeing megayachts plying their waters, and such a vessel would attract attention in a country where showcasing wealth is sometimes frowned upon. Besides being nervous about letting strangers on board, "It would imply that we need to rent the boat and can't afford to keep them," said Buckley. John De Caro, a US broker representing Inace adds, "You have to get those foreign boats here to raise the foot level."

Brazilian yacht owners themselves have preferred to maintain smaller vessels under 90 feet in the country, keep them very private, and if they have a larger boat, keep it outside the country. Improving the infrastructure to accommodate more large yachts was a major theme at the meeting. There are currently plans to expand the capacity of marinas to handle megayachts, and both MCP and Inace are capable of haulout repairs to all but the largest yachts.

Said Chaves, "To search for good opportunities you have to look for experience - and we have 30 years of that. You have a reasonable price, and now more than ever, because the dollar has come back, a good exchange rate (with the Brazilian Real). Come to Brazil, you'll find a good opportunity." -SM

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PHOTOS BY SHAW MCCUTCHEON

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Recently launched, the first yacht in the new GUNBOAT 66 Series, *Sugar Daddy*, truly spoils her owner. With speeds of up to 30 knots, this all-carbon sailing catamaran sports four en suite cabins.

Unlike most dual-hulled yachts of her size, *Sugar Daddy's* megayacht-like feature is the luxuriously appointed main saloon that offers 360-degree views. With more space and agility than her 62ft predecessor, she only draws about four feet with her keel retracted. www.gunboat.com



Celebrating its 30th year in style, HEESSEN released plans for its new 4000 Series. The 131ft yachts will lie between the 3700 and the 4400 Series, offering owners 10 additional feet of space than her smaller sister. The tender garage and transom door of the 3700 will remain for the new series, which will allow more interior volume. A larger master suite with walk-in wardrobes and bigger crew quarters are more benefits, while two MTUs will give her a projected speed of up to 33 knots. www.heesenyacht.com

