

FLYING FOX

THE GREATEST ESCAPE

Delivered last year, the 446ft Flying Fox is the world's largest charter yacht, offering the ultimate luxury getaway for up to 25 guests in 11 staterooms. And she'll soon be back in Asia.

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PHOTOS **GUILLAUME PLISSON FOR IMPERIAL**





Designed by Espen Oeino, *Flying Fox* features a curvy superstructure and protruding side decks on its dove-grey hull

The 136m *Flying Fox* presents an otherworldly charter experience, with the kind of choices you can only dream of having. For starters, if you decide to fly to the world's largest charter yacht, there's the question of *which* helipad you want to land on.

The helipad on the forward bridge deck is for choppers with a maximum diameter of 46ft when rotors are spinning, while up on the sun deck, there's a bigger, more frequently used helideck for up to 59ft, designed for the owner's Airbus H175.

However, the big helideck is much more than that. Not only does it have a purpose-built waiting room, but when the pad's clear and the sun goes down, the whole area can be converted into a beautifully lit alfresco dining area with a dancefloor and stage for live entertainment.

The 12m transverse pool is a feature of the two-deck spa and wellness area spanning the aft main and lower decks



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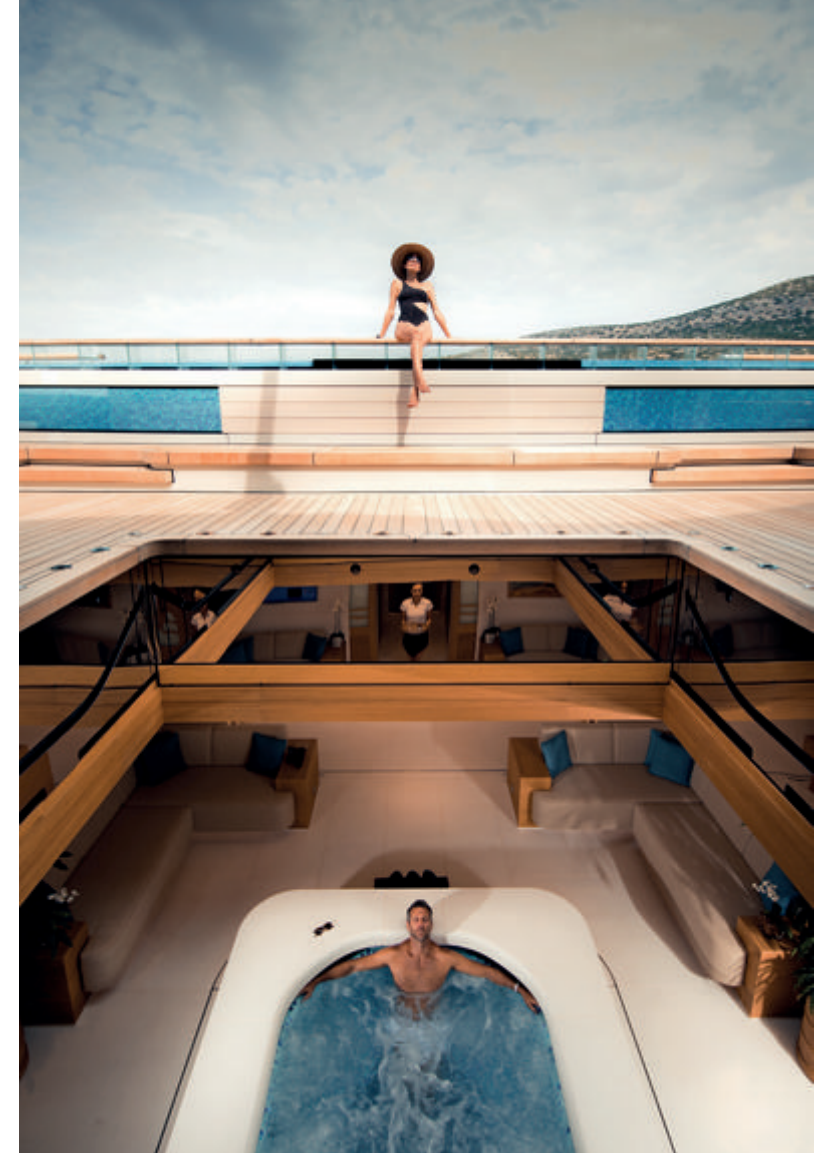
Julia Stewart, Imperial

charter, says *Flying Fox* is worth every penny for those who can afford the PYC-compliant megayacht, which can have up to 36 guests during the day and accommodate up to 25 overnight in one master stateroom and 10 VIP ensembles.

“*Flying Fox* is the most refined charter experience available and the most expensive, but every euro spent on a journey on board is definitely worth it. After experiencing this yacht, your vision of a luxury retreat will be completely different,” Stewart says.

“Above all, *Flying Fox* is about lifestyle, self-retreat and relaxation. When charter guests journey on board, it's like completely escaping from the rest of the world. The world's most experienced charter guests were demanding this kind of once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Flying Fox can feel like a small world unto itself, only she's really not small. To comprehend the scale of the 9,022GT yacht, it's worth noting her volume is almost double that of the world's second-largest charter yacht (112m) and more than three times that of the third (92m). Lists and rankings may change and be disputed, but you get the idea.



Looking down from the outdoor pool (top right) to the Sea Lounge on the the spa's lower deck, which leads aft to the enormous stern bathing platform (below)





Flying Fox, pictured by Velaa Private Island, visited the Maldives in early 2020 and will return to Asia later this year for its second winter charter season

Currently in the Mediterranean for her second summer season, *Flying Fox* is scheduled later this year to return to Asia, where she already has charter bookings. It will be her second stint in the region, having spent time in the Maldives during an Indian Ocean cruise earlier this year for her winter charter season, which was eventually halted due to Covid-19 (*see box*).

Stewart says Asia holds a strong appeal for international clients seeking new destinations to explore, as well as those living on the continent who are aware of just how much more there is to be seen.

“Guests often demand new sensations that only secluded areas can offer,” she says. “The Caribbean is a busy place, but in Asia, there are so many areas, lagoons, islands and archipelagos to be explored. It’s like an unlimited playground.”

A stunning watersports and dive centre has its own drop-down platform that can also serve the yacht’s many tenders



TAKING OFF WITH *FLYING FOX*

If any yacht can take you anywhere in Asia in comfort and safety, it’s *Flying Fox*, which has an advanced medical clinic, a facility that has moved near the top of the priority list of today’s superyacht charter guests.

Furthermore, the multi-national crew from Europe, Asia, Oceania and South Africa include several ex-British military from the Royal Marines and Special Boat Service (SBS), the naval equivalent of the world-famous SAS (Special Air Service).

“They’re hired for both top-end close protection and their background in maritime security, important for both clients and the security of such a high-end asset,” says the current onboard Captain.

“All of our crew are highly skilled in their particular fields and we have a great level of expertise in technical diving, massage and beauty



Day trips can be arranged to picture-perfect islands and beaches, and feature a range of watersports including kite-surfing

treatments of all varieties, medical personnel, aviation, hospitality service, chefs and fine dining.

“As for the Olympians on board, let’s just say that you’ll be served faster than you can imagine, and if you ask us to jump, we ask how high and how far,” he smiles.

Although *Flying Fox* can’t qualify for the Olympics, she can travel pretty far, with a range of 6,500nm, and is remarkably quick for her size, with a top speed of 20 knots.

Just as importantly for client comfort, she’s very quiet and has no vibration while underway or when using any of the four thrusters, another major achievement considering her volume.

“Vessels of this size are designed to flex as we move through the seaway, which can often create noise on the interior, but *Flying Fox* is extremely quiet,” adds the Captain, who has vast experience of the Indian Ocean area, from Tanzania, Seychelles and even Oman across to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia.

BEACH HOUSE AT SEA

Guest areas start with the sea-level lower deck and the main

deck, which features the 12m outdoor pool aft and 10 VIP suites with balconies. The bridge deck includes the popular exterior galley aft, huge main saloon and cinema.

The owner’s deck has an aft saloon overlooking the main saloon, offices, studio, beauty room, dressing rooms and forward stateroom with outdoor jacuzzi. On the sun deck, there’s a winter garden and jacuzzi forward of the main helipad.

A central lift connects these five main guest decks, plus there’s an elegant observation deck a few steps up from the sun deck.

The calming, nature-inspired interior by Mark Berryman feels like a beach resort, with extensive use of bamboo, teak and oak offset by the lush greenery of large plants spread throughout the rooms and common areas.

The relaxed setting makes you feel like you’re *supposed* to walk around barefoot, before and after pool and spa sessions, or a zone-out in one of the outdoor jacuzzis.

“*Flying Fox* is like a home at sea,” Stewart says. “The warm, zen-like interior gives a really comfortable atmosphere where everybody can feel relaxed. The wood, trees and plants everywhere help you to

Barbecues and covered dining can be arranged on the beach, whether for large parties or a couple





Spanning the bridge deck and owner's deck (top), the saloon has a maxi TV and is separated from the dining table by an artificial coral aquarium

breathe deeply, to really feel like you're now out of the madness of the outside world. It's a unique, agreeable feeling."

The Captain agrees: "Both the interior and exterior have a relaxing design. It's very much like a beach house, so guests immediately feel like they're on holiday."

TOYS, POOLS, SPA AND ... CRYOTHERAPY

In terms of features and facilities, *Flying Fox* has everything you need and can imagine wanting on a yacht, starting with the 12m transverse pool along the aft end of the main deck. The pool is hugely popular with both adults and children, Stewart says, and the water – salt or fresh – can be heated or cooled in a matter of minutes.

Life at anchor benefits hugely from dynamic positioning (DP), a rare

"It's very much like a beach house, so guests immediately feel like they're on holiday."

Captain, Flying Fox

technological feature on a charter yacht that enables it to remain stationary without anchoring, for increased comfort and safety. DP can even be programmed to gradually rotate the yacht, such as to follow the sun.

"Despite her massive size, flexibility is the real strength of *Flying*

The 22-seat dining table by the saloon on the bridge deck; natural wood and greenery dominate the zen-like interior



After water sports, the spa offers R&R in the Finnish sauna (left), Turkish hammam (right) and cryotherapy chamber (bottom)

Fox. If a guest wants the aft deck to face the sun all day, we can set the DP to track the sun for that perfect tan," says the Captain, who adds that the system also opens up cruising areas by allowing access to non-anchoring zones that other vessels may not be permitted to enter.

For those who want to do more than lie by the pool all day, there's a superbly equipped 1,000sqft gym just yards away, while downstairs on the lower deck is a paradise for watersports lovers.

A full-beam garage for five tenders up to 41ft give an idea of the scale of toys on offer, while aft on the port side is the watersports centre with fold-down platform flanked by separate dive and kite stores.

Power toys include six jetskis, four F5S Seabobs, a flyboard and hoverboard, while tender toys include wakesurfing and waterskiing

equipment, and a large selection of towing inflatables.

There's also a foil board and a particularly wide range of kitesurfing equipment along with kayaks, SUPs, surfboards, fishing gear, wetsuits and protective wear.

The dive centre is first-class, with a large selection of suits, tanks, compressor pumps and even underwater cameras, while a double-lock decompression chamber with three seats is among the best of its kind. The yacht's PADI-certified instructors can cater to all levels, from teaching introductory courses to supervising dives to depths of 100m.

After physical activity, *Flying Fox* offers a soothing array of ways to relax and unwind in its 4,300sqft, two-floor spa, connected to the watersports hub and monitored by multi-skilled therapists.





The aft bridge deck and owner's deck can be protected by sliding glass 'windbreakers' on both sides

With heated limestone floors and louvred oak panelling, the spa's centrepiece is a vast spa pool, with water that can be changed from steaming hot to icy cold in about 10 minutes. It's ideal as a plunge pool following time in the Turkish hammam or Finnish sauna, while there's even a cryotherapy chamber, the first installed on a superyacht and a firm favourite with charter clients.

On the floor above, the spa lobby leads to separate rooms for dry and wet massages, and a three-station beauty salon offering hair and skin treatments, manicures and pedicures. "Guests rate the spa as good as if not better than the best you can find ashore," Stewart remarks.

OUTDOOR DINING, OUTDOOR COOKING

Flying Fox also offers world-class cuisine around the clock and the

most popular dining area is on the aft bridge deck, where chefs at the exterior galley cook for up to 24 seated diners.

This showpiece cooking zone is fun for guests and a delight for chefs, whose hardware includes a Teppanyaki grill, tandoor oven, Josper charcoal grill, full-size rotisserie and pizza oven.

"The exterior galley is the favourite area of all guests," Stewart says. "It's the perfect social area to relax, socialise, drink and dine at the end of a busy day at sea. It's great to relax at the bar and watch the galley brigade creating exceptional dishes of your choice."

Ensuring guests from every part of the world are catered for and provided with the meals they want, clients complete a comprehensive document prior to boarding that covers all dietary requirements and desired cuisine.

The owner's deck and sun deck each feature a forward jacuzzi; a cosy observation deck sits above the sun deck – see the helicopter through the hallway



The covered dining area can seat up to 24 guests; the exterior galley offers Teppanyaki, barbecue, rotisserie, tandoori, a pizza oven and two bars

IMPERIAL ON *FLYING FOX* RETURNING TO ASIA POST COVID-19

Early this year, we were expecting an excellent charter season for *Flying Fox* in the Maldives and the Indian Ocean before the global spread of Covid-19. We anticipated the crisis by stopping any crew rotation before the pandemic affected the Indian Ocean and distancing the crew from exterior contacts. All crew on board were safe before and during the crisis.

During the peak of the pandemic, we noted an increase in charter enquiries, for an obvious reason: *Flying Fox* is one of the safest vessels, with a full-time medic on board and a clean environment.

Crew rotation is only scheduled to restart once the global situation stabilises. It's a huge effort for all involved, from crew to management teams, but necessary to ensure the safety of all aboard and the cleanliness of the vessel.

We can assure future charter guests on *Flying Fox* that she remains a very safe environment and hope her next trip to the Indian Ocean will be as successful as the first journey promised to be.

Julia Stewart, Director, Imperial

"Everybody knows a charter journey is about culinary experiences, so the head chef and his team adapt to all requests and requirements," Stewart adds. "Flexibility is at the heart of *Flying Fox* more than any other superyacht because we simply can't disappoint guests."

Once dinner's over, a walk through the saloon leads to the indoor cinema, which features a Dolby Atmos sound system and huge comfy chairs with D-Box motion technology. It also offers video games, while there's VR technology on board, too.

Imperial has operated in Asia for over a decade, managing private yachts cruising in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, and charter yachts such as the 60m *Arkley* and more recently the 82m *RoMEA* (see *Charter, Issue 50*). However, *Flying Fox* offers a new gold standard for the charter world, one that will be seen in Asia in the coming months.

"Imperial has always had the reputation for tailored service, attention to detail and constant control of all operations whether it's new build, management, sales or charter. It's true that delivering several iconic superyachts in the past five years has raised our profile, but our strength is the 24/7 dedication we apply to our business," Stewart says.

"Now, on *Flying Fox*, we offer a yacht that combines everything you'd like to experience once in a lifetime." ✂

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