

Refit and Repair

FORWARD THINKING

Gone are the days of foredecks being relegated to technical duties. These days, as **Jeni Bone** discovers, they're being reimagined as versatile social spaces.

Once the domain of a superyacht's crew, the site of tender and toy stowage, and where the duties of dropping anchor or hoisting the ship's burgee were carried out, the foredeck has risen to hold the spotlight, recognised for its premium position.

The ideal spot for relaxation and recreation, away from prying eyes at the marina or anchorage, the foredeck on the latest generation of superyachts may boast helipads, lavish lap pools with cascading waterfalls, half basketball courts, dance floors, and cabana lounges. In Australia and New Zealand, yachts 20 metres and above are interpreting the trend by incorporating (or retrofitting) features designed for guests to enjoy the sunshine and best views, socialise, and entertain. Jacuzzis, sun pads, dining and lounge seating, and portable sunshades are now *de rigueur* on this highly prized recreational deck space.

Iconic vessels for which the bow is all about leisure include M/Y *Cloud 9*, the 74-metre CRN whose foredeck is dedicated to entertaining. By day, it's a dining area, tented when wanted for sun protection. When the sun sets, it's a top spot for karaoke. Then there's the Espen Øino-designed, 95.2-metre Lürssen M/Y *Kismet*. Her versatile foredeck can convert from a half-court basketball space to a touch-and-go helipad.

Hull one of the Mangusta Oceano 42 from Italian yard Overmarine wowed upon launch in 2016. Designed by Alberto Mancini, this 42-metre motor yacht received accolades for her lifestyle features, including the two separate sunbathing areas around the family-sized Jacuzzi, complete with an infinity-edge waterfall, at the bow. The glass-bottomed hot tub produces an azure rippling effect in the owners' ensuite on the deck below, too.

Closer to home, charter yachts such as *Sahana* and *Quantum*, both 36.5 metres, have invested in their foredecks to expand their appeal and capitalise on the front-row views.

In demand in Sydney and The Whitsundays, *Sahana* underwent a major refit when she changed hands in 2014. As



Captain Paul Busk recalls, "I was sitting on the foredeck with the new owner discussing the plans for the interior remodelling, and I noticed what a cool spot it was. So we put our heads together and made it part of the conversion, changing it from a working space to a social area." Once occupied by a rope locker and anchor, *Sahana's* foredeck now comprises a lounge area for 10 people, complete with a table and an awning, complementing the sun pads above. It still preserves storage space, since the seating contains ample room for equipment.

"When you're cruising the Great Barrier Reef, the bow is the best vantage point," continues



The magnificent 95-metre *Kismet* has an ultimate foredeck. Covered in luxurious sunpads with a pool and spa, converting to a basketball court when the need arises, overlooking the touch-and-go helipad.

Captain Busk. “On a longer charter, some guests like to escape from the rest of the group, read a book, sunbathe, and at night, it’s great for cocktails. For corporate charters on Sydney Harbour, the foredeck is ideal for unimpeded views of the Bridge, Opera House, and city skyline.”

Recently emerging from a significant refit at Gold Coast City Marina, *Quantum* is a successful example of unfurling the potential of the foredeck. *Quantum*’s owner, Stephen Burcher, says the conversion naturally evolved from the vessel’s popularity as a charter yacht. Based at

Rose Bay, she’s well known in the corporate market for events and day charters, as well as weddings for up to 45 people. “To remain competitive, you have to keep your product fresh,” Burcher asserts. “There are a lot of brand-new boats on the market, so we have to keep the quality and the novelty there. The foredeck is far too popular a spot to waste. It’s prime real estate. Everybody congregates on the bow – it just made sense. And the results are so outstanding, we should have done this years ago.”

Burcher consulted the original designers of the 2008 motor yacht, Peter Lowe and

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Sahana

Quantum's redesigned foredeck started with a vision from the owners who use the boat extensively.



Will Hardcastle, and they jumped at the creative challenge. “The brief was to incorporate more seating, storage space for fenders, paddle boards and other gear, and the ability to add a sunshade to maximise the versatility of the space,” says Burcher. The changes weren’t just for charter guests, either. *Quantum* is a family boat. Burcher and his extended family of up to 12 people traditionally escape the southern chill and head to The Whitsundays for up to four weeks each year.

O’Neill Shipwrights was tasked with completing the project within a window of just five weeks. Company principal Andrew O’Neill, who previously worked on the M/Y *Ilonka* flybridge conversion in 2016 and M/Y *Masteka II* rebuild in 2017, says the ambitious timeline was to ensure minimal downtime for the yacht. Gold Coast City Marina marshalled all the trades required to meet the deadline. “We had previously undertaken antifouling and other minor jobs at GCCM,” says Burcher. “They have the large sheds required, all the trades on one site, and they were just brilliant. All the components were prepared in Sydney, the lounges, moulds, flooring, lines, and cables, and trucked up to the Gold Coast to save time.”

O’Neill, who relocated from his base at Sydney Superyacht Marina for the duration of the project, credits years of overseeing refits in his early career at Perini Navi in Viareggio, Italy, with measuring the balance of time against the quality

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CAPTAIN GLEN GRAY
Quantum

of work. “This gave me an invaluable understanding of the importance of quality and the expectations of superyacht owners and captains,” he explains.

With *Quantum*, “There were so many sequential steps to this project; the pre-fabrication was done in our factory in Sydney, then shipped to Gold Coast City Marina for installation. We focused on ensuring no imperfections.

O’Neill says he has observed the rise in the importance of the foredeck in both charter and private vessels. He believes the refit of *Quantum* suits both her paying guests and Burcher’s family. “With this project we created two separate seating areas, which has really opened up the use of this area for owners and charter guests. It not only increases the capacity of people the boat can cater for, but also creates another separate guest

area for people to enjoy themselves,” he explains. For example, he says, they can dine, use it as a viewing platform, sunbathe, or just relax and take in the surroundings. In addition, custom-made carbon fibre poles can support biminis for shade. This matches the aft deck and flybridge, which makes alfresco dining and events like weddings more enjoyable.

The end result is a multi-purpose space that seamlessly emerges from the original structure. “It looks as though it was always there,” says a proud O’Neill. “Towards the end, we put in a couple of 78-hour weeks to finish within the five-week timeframe. The owner and captain are thrilled!”

A skipper with 25 years’ experience, Captain Glen Gray oversaw the entire project, managing the trades as O’Neill handled the minutiae of the fibreglassing and painting, ensuring perfection at every stage. “It’s a game changer,” says Gray. “For Race Week and the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race start on Boxing Day, guests will be over the moon! Instead of standing on the superstructure, they will be lounging in comfort, beverages in hand and grazing on top-quality cuisine.” He adds that at anchor during events, *Quantum* can now serve formal lunches forward for up to 10. Up to 25 people can sit and spread out in general on the foredeck, too. “There’s so much room there now, and it’s the best seat in the house for spotting whales while you dine or cocktails at sunset. It’s genuinely like a luxury resort.” **Q**