



MERLIN 100

A TURKISH CLIENT'S REQUEST FOR A MOTOR SAILER THAT BLENDED MODERN HULL SHAPE WITH TRADITIONAL LINES PRODUCED THE MERLIN 100, A SUPERYACHT SO STRIKING IT SPAWNED A SERIES BASED ON THE ORIGINAL

words: Bruno Cianci
photography: Courtesy of Merlin Yachts



'In the exterior design we focused on the fluidity of the contemporary, almost futuristic lines of the deckhouse'

A few years ago a passionate Turkish client commissioned Ibrahim Karataş, an experienced naval architect, to design the yacht he had always dreamt of. The motor sailer *Merlin* had to be a steel, two-masted and two-deck flybridge ketch with an overall length of approximately 36 metres and a hull length of 30. Shortly afterwards the craft was built at the Mengi-Yay facilities in Tuzla, a suburb of Istanbul. The outcome was so outstanding, and the experience so exciting, that it convinced the owner Savaş Özgün and Karataş to make an unexpected decision.

Driven by a passion for what they had just made, rather than by the will to make money in tough economic times, they decided not to settle for a sole yacht, but to put the design into production under a new brand, named after this first example. Designed as a dream superyacht, this craft has now become a series and resulted in the creation of a Turkish yard to build it: Merlin Yachts.

After launching the original Merlin 100 (featured here) in 2010, Merlin Yachts signed three more projects, giving shape to the range to be: 80, 120 and 140 feet of hull length (25, 36.5 and 42.6 metres respectively).

The best way to understand the philosophy behind all Merlin yachts is to explore what has been built and launched so far. The Merlin 100 turned out to be an interesting combination of state-of-the-art underwater hull shape, with traditional sheer lines and a modern looking

superstructure. Further contrasts are provided by the wide and streamlined deckhouse windows, the galleon-style transom, the romantic bowsprit and the oversized rails, an effect enhanced by the grey metallic livery adopted.

'The basic principle behind this yacht and the whole Merlin range to be,' says naval architect Karataş, 'was to create motor sailers with the same interior and deck space as an equally sized motor yacht, since the lack of space is always an obsession. Our first target was to provide space and give sense of even further spaciousness, while in the exterior design, we focused on the fluidity of the contemporary, almost futuristic lines of the deckhouse, combined with the classic geometry of the hull.'



The Merlin design emphasises clean, open deck spaces, including an open air dining area in front of the main mast (above). At the stern on the main deck is an external hydraulic gangway, which drops to form a boarding and bathing platform (right)



‘The greatest problem is always the lack of space. That’s why we designed the spaces with outsize volumes, aided by the colours of the materials, which are never monotone’

The latter is one of the Turkish naval architect’s strong points. Born in 1968, Karataş graduated from Istanbul Technical University’s naval architecture faculty. After moving to Tuzla, where his studio and Merlin’s are now located, he piled up a great deal of experience. The hull shape he patiently developed has been applied to more than 20 craft so far, becoming Karataş Yacht Design’s trademark. This 25-year experience in the boating business stands as one of the pillars of the yard’s ambition.

On board the original Merlin, tradition meets modern elements, and the result is ideal for peaceful cruising in the Mediterranean; the same applies to the 80 (25 metre), while bigger models – 120 and 140 (36.5 and 42.6 metres) – will also be suitable for cruising at different latitudes.

The designers have given great importance to the sense of emptiness and space on the 100’s decks, where various relaxing areas can be found. Two are the main sunbathing areas: one at the stern, an environment also suitable for open air dining; and one in front of the main mast, where a table, combined with U-shaped sofas, can be lowered to create a larger sunpad. This area is wide and clean, its surface interrupted only by shiny deck hardware and the

bow crane capable of lifting up to 1.2 tonnes.

At the stern there is also an external hydraulic gangway, which transforms into a bathing platform to offer guests a closer contact with the sea, well separated from the rest of the yacht. The open air relaxation areas with sofas and coffee tables represent a further welcome to guests who step aboard the Merlin 100, with ample seating scattered all around and a sunpad, all upholstered in Extex, a material known for its lasting resistance to external elements.

The panoramic flybridge is another interesting area: while it gives the captain great visibility, it is also a comfortable place for guests to enjoy sailing and relaxing on large sunbeds. It is more than 18 square metres and is clean and spare in design: the cockpit and the helmsman’s seat (positioned to port), the hardware of the main sheet and the deck-stepped mizzenmast are the only fixed elements on this teak laid surface.

Below, the interior style is bright and clean, finished with light-coloured fabrics and sober furnishings, a choice explained by the boat’s owner and the other Merlin Yachts partner, Savaş Özgün: ‘On sailing yachts the greatest problem is always the lack of space. That’s why we designed



The spacious feel continues inside. The social area (left) offers excellent all-round views, and the walnut floor’s brushed silk surface adds greatly to the overall effect. The galley (above) and crew areas are located just forward of the guest cabins



'By custom producing every piece of woodwork, we have given this yacht exactly the kind of stylistic precision and comfort we were looking for'



the spaces with outsize volumes, aided by the colours of the materials, which are never monotone, and the shapes of the elements. Simplicity is part of the spirit of Merlin, and this has led us to custom design not only the yacht, but also the door handles and every frame and detail of the furnishings, especially compartments and cabinets. By custom producing every piece of woodwork, we have given this yacht exactly the stylistic precision and comfort we were looking for.'

Inside the futuristic deckhouse, the saloon offers a superb all-round view and lots of headroom. The impression that it is open to the light continues throughout the deck.

'We wanted to maximise the spacious and airy feeling,' Karataş adds, 'also through the veneers, contrasting with the moulding and edging.' Below deck furnishings were designed by Studio Modus Mimarlık in collaboration with the owner, with the intention of opening out the volume of the spaces to a maximum, achieved through flowing lines. There is no crowding, just a sense of comfort in every single corner of the yacht. The whole layout, supported by a careful choice of materials, is almost transparent. Lantana walnut flooring with a brushed silk surface contributes to the voluminous and transparent effect, as do lacquered

cabinetry in the cabins, specialist ceramic coatings, lacquered panels and marble in the en suite shower rooms.

There is a socialising area on the main deck along with lounge and formal dining room, while all the accommodation is on the lower deck, with four cabins (for up to nine guests), including the master, as well as quarters for the five crew. The stylistic choice for the guest interiors is bright, linear and clean, with light fabrics and furnishings. It has a clearly Mediterranean style. The master cabin to the stern, with large galleon-style windows just above sea level, gives a superb view of the water. This is certainly a legacy of what the Turks call a *gulet* (derived from the French word *goélette*, meaning schooner), even though the layout of the same cabin, with slightly rotated king-sized bed, denotes a completely different approach.

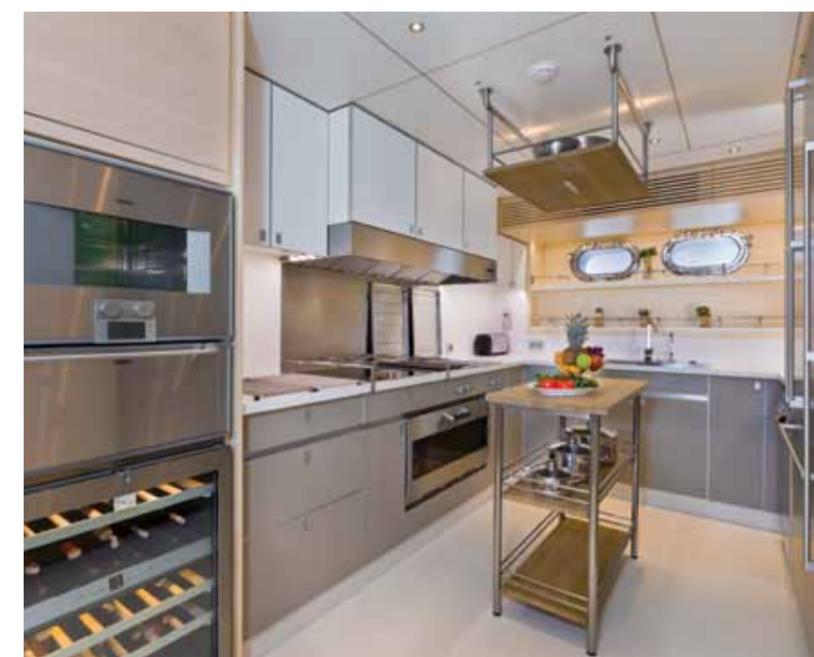
A great deal of care has been taken with the general arrangement, creating angled sweeps towards the windows. This is not only evident in the dining room with glass table and eight custom-designed chairs, but also in the highly effective composition of the master suite in the deck below, spectacularly laid out at sea level. Attention has been paid to technological details as well, from the LED lighting

With large, galleon-style windows and continuing the yacht's generally light colour palette, the owner's suite, astern, is a restful place to gaze at the sea (above). All the accommodation, including the other three guest cabins (opposite top) sit below decks

throughout the yacht to the state-of-the-art entertainment systems by Bose, Philips and Sony. Every door is automatic, as are some of the lighting systems. When the doors in the dressing room are opened, for example, the ceiling lights turn on automatically to improve visibility. The crew and service areas, like the galley, are located just in front of the guest areas, to emphasise the sense of a welcome shared by everyone.

This design is matched by the Merlin 100's high-tech quality, notably the Formula Marine aluminium masts and Park Avenue booms; UK Halsey sails; Harken hardware; Holmatro rigging hydraulics; and Spectra/Dyneema running rigging. The Merlin 100's ballast keel, bowthruuster and the hydraulic systems aim to provide smooth, stable and safe sailing, while two Caterpillar C12 engines (2 x 385hp) provide a range of nearly 850 miles at 10 knots, a mere two knots below top speed.

With the larger 120 (36.5 metre) due for completion soon, it's clear Savaş Özgün and Ibrahim Karataş's enthusiasm for the original concept has been rewarded, and a line of striking and unusual Turkish motor sailers is being born.



MERLIN 100

The panoramic flybridge offers great visibility for both the captain and guests

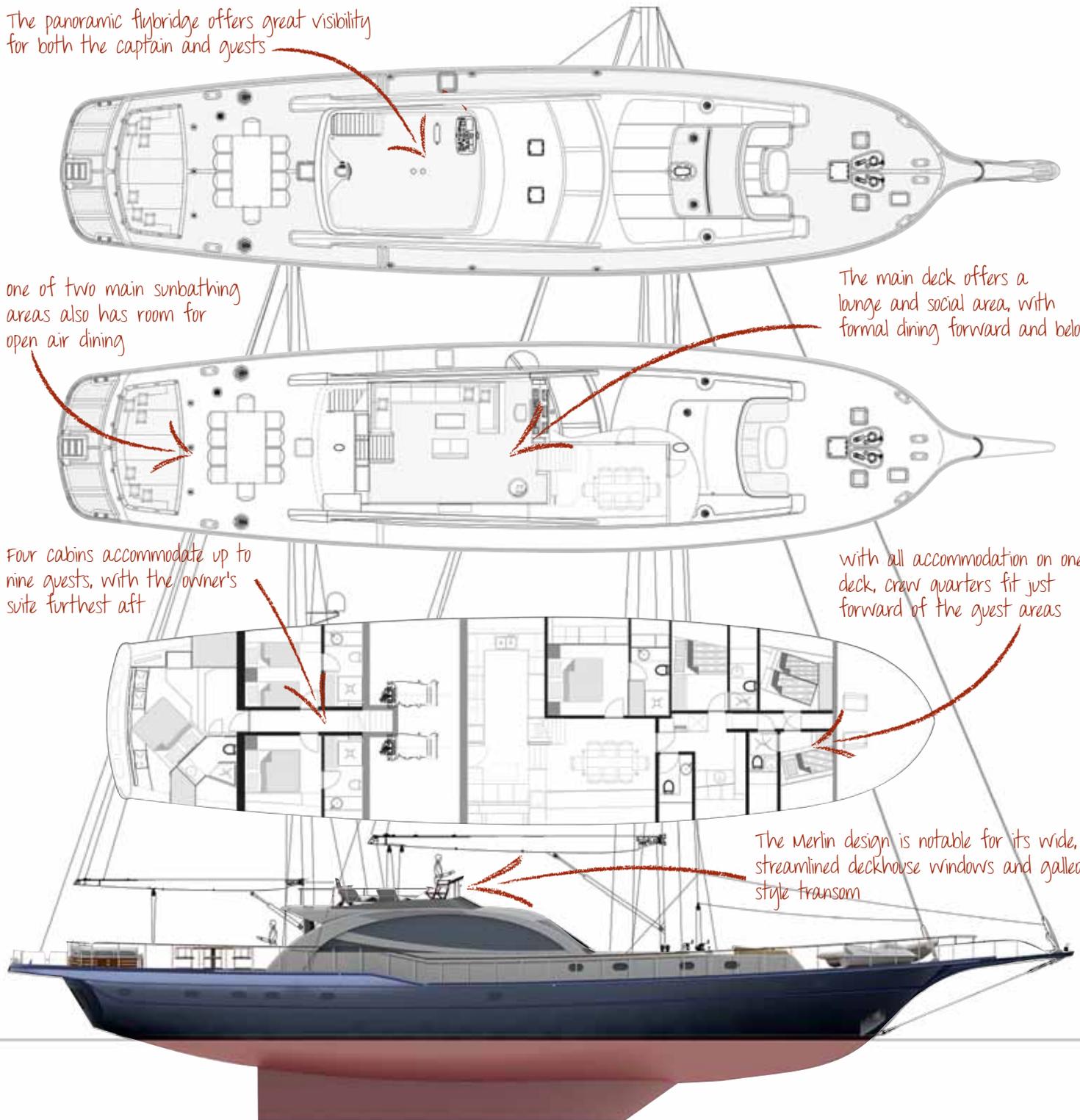
one of two main sunbathing areas also has room for open air dining

Four cabins accommodate up to nine guests, with the owner's suite furthest aft

The main deck offers a lounge and social area, with formal dining forward and below

with all accommodation on one deck, crew quarters fit just forward of the guest areas

The Merlin design is notable for its wide, streamlined deckhouse windows and galleon-style transom



MERLIN 100 *Merlin Yachts*

LOA 36.07m
LWL 30.46m
Beam 7.57m
Draught 3.19m
Displacement 168 tonnes
Engines
 Caterpillar C12, 2 x 385hp
 at 1,800 rpm

Speed (max/cruise)
 12/10 knots
Range at 10 knots
 850nm
Generators
 2 x 26kW Northern Lights
Thruster Slepner SP550

Fuel capacity
 8,900 litres
Freshwater capacity
 4,094 litres
Sails UK Halsey Sails
Spars and rigging
 Formula Marine
 aluminium masts

Tenders
 1 x Zodiac Project 420
Owner and guests 9
Crew 4 + 1
Construction Steel
Classification
 RINA - C * Hull Mach Y

Naval architect
 Karatas Yacht Design
Exterior styling
 Karatas Yacht Design
Interior designer
 Modus Mimarlik;
 Savas Ozgun
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