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Celestia

PELORUS YACHTING

The latest addition to Pelorus Yachting's eclectic fleet of expedition yachts takes design cues from the magical Indonesian waters on which it sails.

Words: Naomi Chadderton • Photography: Courtesy of Pelorus Yachting

In South Sulawesi's coastal town of Bulukumba, boat building isn't just a profession – it's an inheritance. Generations of shipwrights have honed their skills here, shaping traditional wooden vessels with a precision that reflects both heritage and a deep maritime knowledge. Their latest creation is Celestia, a 45m expedition yacht crafted for the exploration of Indonesia's biodiverse waters.

Marking the latest addition to the Pelorus Yachting fleet, the vessel itself is the vision of siblings Jason Tabalujan and Jasmine Chong, who leveraged their creative talents and technical prowess to develop a vessel that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also delivers a superior and distinctive hospitality experience. "Though I learnt to sail during high school in Australia, Celestia is my first boat," Tabalujan tells Starboard. "Imagined during the pandemic, it gave me the chance to work on a project with my sister Jasmine, who is a New York-based fashion designer, and together we envisioned

the boat as if we were designing our ultimate holiday villa. We wanted the look and feel to have a hint of old-world glamour, yet be elegant and functional."

Tabalujan and Chong entrusted Singapore-based designer Deirdre Renniers, renowned for her work on Phinisi, with the interiors. Guided by centuries of tradition, she has fused modern elegance with authentic craftsmanship. "The original brief from Jason and Jasmine was to create a yacht that is deeply personal, reflecting their own values and Indonesian heritage while offering guests an immersive, luxurious experience," explains Renniers. "They wanted Celestia to feel soulful, not just sleek, and there was a clear vision to honour the traditional craftsmanship of a Phinisi, as well as the concept of slow travel and nostalgia. From the outset, we knew we wanted the interiors to channel the spirit of Indonesia. Over time, the brief evolved to incorporate more pragmatic decisions, but the soul of the project never wavered."



Staterooms are nostalgic yet sophisticated, with tropical toile bed linens and custom bedside lamps

Celestia sleeps 14 guests across seven opulent suites, including two 30m² owners' staterooms on the upper deck, each with a king-sized bed. "These two suites are designed to feel like sanctuaries," says Renniers. "Each has a private terrace, a generous desk and bathrooms finished in teak, natural stone and handmade tiles. We played with soft lighting and rich textures to give a sense of barefoot luxury."

On the main deck, guests will find the master stateroom – "a quiet retreat that connects guests to the ocean via 180-degree views," Renniers describes. Throughout the communal areas, the studio created soft transitions between indoor and outdoor, opting for furniture and finishes that feel grounded in the region. The final four deluxe staterooms – two with queen beds and two twins – occupy the lower deck. "Every element, from the linens to the custom lamps, was carefully considered to evoke both comfort and context," notes Renniers. Chong's career in fashion design also guided the aesthetics. She reveals: "I was able to tap into my industry

contacts to create elements that are nostalgic, yet still very much in line with the sophistication of the vessel, such as Italian-made tropical toile bed linens."

As is to be expected among one of the most visually and culturally rich environments in the world, the yacht's sailing route through Komodo, Raja Ampat and the Spice Islands played an important role in shaping its design language. As such, Renniers worked closely with Bulukumba Boat Builders to ensure the design respects the Phinisi form while still feeling elevated. "We wanted Celestia to feel like a natural extension of the surrounding landscapes," she explains – an approach that is evident through understated and simple elegance, a carefully curated selection of local finishes, and muted palette comprising soft blues and earthy tones complemented by brass accents. "The scalloped teak corridor panels on the lower deck are one of my favourite design highlights," adds Chong. "I love how the smooth curved wood feels when I'm heading to the





staterooms. It feels special in an understated, whispered way.”

For Tabalujan, it’s the dual-function elements on Celestia that are truly impressive – such as the headboard in the owner’s staterooms that also functions as a desk, and the dining table on the main deck that can be converted into a spacious daybed. “Storage cabinets and lounge chairs on the top deck can also be converted into a rooftop bar with plush daybeds, a perfect area for sunset cocktails. It really is a great use of space,” he notes.

That said, the project wasn’t without its obstacles. “Designing a Phinisi is a unique challenge because you’re working within a very distinct structure – one that doesn’t conform to standard yacht dimensions,” explains Renniers. She references irregular curves, limited ceiling heights and a traditional layout that needs to be reinterpreted for modern expectations as some of the key obstacles to overcome, as well as a need to use materials that withstand humidity, salt air and movement. “You can’t specify what

you would for a resort or residential project – you need to think like a sailor, even if you’re designing for guests,” she continues. “But that’s the beauty of it. You’re crafting something that is, quite literally, one-of-a-kind.”

Then there was the fact that the design process, which spanned two years from concept to completion, started during the pandemic. “Our meetings were often virtual, and material sourcing took longer than usual. In a way, though, that slower pace allowed the vision to crystallise more meaningfully,” she reminisces.

Whether unwinding on board the generous decks, dining al fresco or simply getting a good night’s sleep in one of the cloud-like beds, Celestia is a symbol of Indonesian craftsmanship for those seeking to explore the vibrant waters of the region. This summer, the vessel will cruise Komodo National Park and Sumbawa, before heading to Raja Ampat and West Papua for the winter. From there, who knows? One thing is for sure – the region will most certainly be explored in style.



ON DECK

Route: Indonesian Archipelago
Owner / Operator: Pelorus Yachting
Architecture: Tresno Seery
Interior Design: Deidre Renniers
Shipyard: Bulukumba Boat Builders
www.pelorusyachting.com