

The Superyacht New Build Report

216

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A REPORT WORTH READING



Photo: Tom van Oossanen

An iconic meeting:
Peter Lürssen
and Henk de Vries

Behind the scenes
at 69-metre Vitters
ketch *Project Zero*

Is methanol the
real future of the
yacht energy market?

Project Aeolus, the concept
that aims to decarbonise
the large-yacht sector



Expedition know-
how meets like-
minded owner

The rebirth of a true hybrid

*TSG joins Hanse Explorer, along with
the team from EYOS Expeditions, to
experience how this legend is bringing
its Polar pedigree to the Pacific.*

BY JACK HOGAN





Photo: Stein Retzlaff & Mosaic Studios



Hanse Explorer is a hybrid super-yacht in the purest sense, not in the overused and misappropriated way that ‘hybrid’ has been co-opted to denote sustainability in the superyacht industry. Indeed, *Hanse Explorer* is an intriguing mix of two very different species of vessel.

Starting life as an imminently capable Polar research vessel, it staked its reputation early in the extreme latitudes. Its utilitarian design may not win awards at flashy ceremonies, but I doubt this matters. Its looks stem from its requisite ability to thrive in harsh conditions and, as such, 48m *Hanse Explorer* can support the kind of challenging operational profile that very few of today’s growing fleet of exploration yachts can match.

Launched in 2006 at the Fassmer yard in Germany, it quickly became known as a pioneer of Polar chartering when, in 2008, it was the first commercial vessel to develop the ‘fly-in fly-out’ model that so many have now followed.

The high commercial Ice Class hull surrounds a platform that has an 8,000-mile range, far enough for its MaK diesel engines to take the (purely hypothetical) journey from the Arctic Circle to the edge of the Antarctic ice sheet. It was in those regions that the legend was born, but it’s the vast area in-between that it now sets its sights on, and this is where the current owner’s relationship with the vessel began.

“I first became involved with *Hanse Explorer* in 2008 when I chartered it for two expeditions to the Southern Line Islands and Cocos with a friend of mine from National Geographic,” says the owner, who wishes to remain anonymous. “They have an organisation called Pristine Seas, which is dedicated to the creation of very large marine-protected areas. They have now been responsible for the protection of over five million square kilometres of such areas.”

Maintaining the relationship with *Hanse Explorer*, its current owner purchased the vessel after it came on to the market in 2019. It was still very much a commercial vessel, and there were a few key areas of change that drove its most recent major refit.

“When I purchased *Hanse*, I thought it felt quite closed in terms of the interior, so we wanted to open it up and connect the inside and outside of the vessel as much as possible,” he explains.

Tasked with this next evolution, Partner Ship Design and Aros Marine, with interiors from Miescke Design, oversaw a major refit starting in 2020. “We also wanted to create some really cool exterior spaces,” adds the owner. “Originally, the top deck was a workspace and guests never really went there. It is such a great area, so we outfitted it with cabanas and installed a jacuzzi to encourage guests to utilise the space, especially in the tropics.”

However, the most significant structural change came below the waterline. The owner says, “One of the first things I said was that I wanted to install stabilisers, full zero-speed stabilisers. The ship would roll in certain situations, and the previous owner insisted that the water ballast system worked, but in my view it really did not. Installing the stabilisers made a big difference to the on-board comfort.”

This new top-deck layout can be seen opposite (along with a few of the fortunate journalists and guests who made the journey down to Tahiti to join the vessel in late 2022). The omnipresent black Zodiacs, seen on the crane aft of *Hanse Explorer*, give away its exploration pedigree. They also represent some of the EYOS Expeditions influence that underpinned our visit – and the majority of the expedition charters – on *Hanse Explorer*.

As with all of the best-in-class brand

“*Hanse Explorer* is a real hidden gem in the yachting industry. It has led an extremely successful life for over 10 years as a Polar charter vessel and has been wildly successful doing Antarctic and Arctic charters.”



Photo: Stein Retzlaff & Mosaic Studios

Hanse Explorer's new top-deck layout.





Photo: Stein Retzlaff & Mosaic Studios

marketing campaigns, the word ‘Zodiac’ has become shorthand for any RIB with outboards. It’s the originator and what can be seen here is the legendary Mk IV Zodiac (so perfectly paired with Yamaha 4-stroke engines).

“Zodiacs are indispensable everywhere you go. It’s not just the Polar regions,” says Ben Lyons, CEO of EYOS Expeditions. “Zodiacs are a true workhorse that are absolutely vital for any real expedition. They don’t look like a superyacht tender but they have the best functionality of anything you can have on board.”

Having been connected closely with the current owner over many years, *Hanse Explorer* has come to represent the coming together of a wealth of expedition knowledge from the team at EYOS with a like-minded and equally experienced owner. The vessel now offers this history and pedigree to a wider charter market via a truly unique experience on a one-of-a-kind vessel.

“*Hanse Explorer*, I think, is a real hidden gem in the yachting industry. It has led an extremely successful life for over 10 years as a Polar charter vessel and has been wildly successful doing Antarctic and Arctic charters.

Left: *Hanse Explorer* with its indispensable Mk IV Zodiac.
Below: Ben Lyons, CEO of EYOS Expeditions.



Photo: Stein Retzlaff & Mosaic Studios

“What I like about expeditions and, what I think is embodied well in *Hanse*, is the camaraderie that forms,” says Lyons. “It doesn’t matter whether you’re in Antarctica or French Polynesia, there is a natural esprit de corps that forms among all of the guests.”

Hanse Explorer has been outfitted with the expectation that charter guests will be close to the action – moving the boat at night, waking early, packing light and pushing the Zodiacs further into isolated coves and beaches. There are, very intentionally, no jet skis on board.

The market for high-end expedition cruises is growing. However, with the cost at the top end of this market remaining high, many clients may assume that a private experience such as this may be out of their price range. However, this may be a false economy.

Lyons concludes: “*Hanse* is very commercially priced, as you can see from its charter record. I think you get to a point where a family could look at this and say ‘You know what? If we’re dividing the cost between 12 people and comparing it to a really expensive ultra-luxury cruise or something onshore, the costs become fairly comparable.’” JH