

“We met with Andre, and we were very excited about the classic design, but also about the ability to follow a proven design concept in terms of sailing excellence while having enough opportunity for personal input. For us, it was the best of both worlds.”

In fact, all four 128s currently on the water are highly customised to each owner's wishes, with the majority previously having chartered a version of the yacht to help with the decision-making process.

Vijonara, for example, shares the same hull lines and keel as the other 128s, but she is the only one to feature a bow sprit, which houses a light-air Code Zero and asymmetric spinnaker. Another key difference is that Vijonara's helm station sits in front of the owners' deckhouse, resulting in a secluded aft cockpit connected to the owners' suite, while the others are designed with the helm station aft.

These customisations might seem like small details, but they have transpired to be some of the owners' favourite features on board. “The aft cockpit creates an idyllic private seating area for us to watch the sunset and enjoy a drink,” reflects Ramona. “The idea for the bow sprit came from a boat we chartered, which we loved not only for the sailing functionality but also to lie in the net and relax. We use it a lot when motoring or at anchor – it's like a hammock suspended directly above the water.”

Another highlight on board for the couple is the oculus in the owners' cabin. Mounted into a Hermès leather-clad table, the window through to the bottom of the hull is

integrated with underwater lighting for night viewing. “It was a costly addition because its technically very delicate to design, but it's so unique and we liked it so much when we saw it on board one of Andre's other designs that we decided to go for it,” says Jörg. “We often sit by it at night to watch the underwater world and it's beautiful.”

But the key enjoyment factor is Vijonara's sail handling and performance. Considering the couple's longstanding passion for sailing, Jörg always chooses to be on the helm whenever the sails are up. The yacht was designed to be responsive and light on the helm and accelerate fast and, as such, the transition to a significantly larger yacht has been an easy one.

“Thanks to Andre's design and layout, the feeling on the helm is very similar to that of a smaller yacht: it doesn't feel like you are working against any hydraulic pressures and there's still a strong connection to the water,” he explains. “It's obviously a different kind of sailing, but no less enjoyable, and there's the advantage of being able to sail faster and conquer bigger distances. For me, helming Vijonara under sail is the ultimate form of relaxation and fun.”

All of the 128s are also designed to be easily interchangeable between cruising and racing configurations. For cruising, the sail configuration includes a yankee and a staysail, making it easy to handle for a smaller crew. Most of them then have removable inner forestays to sail with a Blade and enhance manoeuvrability, the winches are very capable for racing and the

deck layout features track configurations for fine tuning sails. Furthermore, having this number of boats of the same design on the water is unique for the superyacht sector and would make for interesting and competitive racing. Andre hopes to see all five yachts racing in their own class one day.

For Jörg, Ramona and daughter Victoria (who grew up on the water with the family's four predecessor yachts), Vijonara has exceeded their expectations and, nearly four years after her delivery, they still wouldn't change a thing about the boat. While the biggest adjustment has been owning a crewed yacht, this is an element of their yachting experience that they've really grown to appreciate. “We are both still actively involved when sailing. Jörg likes helming and I participate as much as I feel like,” says Ramona. “But when we used to sail, we were always studying the charts and looking for anchorages. The beauty of Vijonara is that now we can give this responsibility to someone who does it professionally, making it more relaxing for us.” Jörg agrees, “Sailing for us is very much an expression of freedom and passing on some of these responsibilities has enhanced the fun.”

The couple has relished the sailing experience on board Vijonara so much so that Ramona decided to join the yacht for the Atlantic crossing to the Caribbean at the end of last year. As Ramona's first ocean crossing, it was a particularly special experience. Looking back on the passage, she says, “There's only water left, right and centre for days on end, and limited phone reception, so no distractions.

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Enjoying sailing on board Vijonara first and foremost, the couple also enjoy what they refer to as ‘sight sailing’; that is exploring new destinations – especially those of historical and cultural significance – around the Mediterranean and further afield. They are currently planning to discover new desti-

nations with a trip to the Pacific. While uncertainties relating to the pandemic are holding up the formulation of any concrete plans, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, Tahiti and Fiji are high up on the to-do list.

With a fifth hull soon to be built, and more orders a possibility for the future, how do Jörg and Ramona feel now that the design of their beloved Vijonara has proved so popular?

“We are incredibly proud: when people love the same classical design, it makes the ocean more beautiful,” Jörg and Ramona smile. “And when you take a closer look, each yacht is very personal because of the many variations one can incorporate. It doesn't take anything away from the uniqueness of our experience; we still see Vijonara as a tailor-made, bespoke piece of art.”

