

It's not often that the words *luxury* and *value* go hand-in-hand when talking about yacht charter, but that's precisely what in-the-know brokers say they are finding these days along the southwest coast of Turkey.

"I have been going to Turkey since 1989 and have probably been there over 20 times," says Missy Johnston of Northrop and Johnson Worldwide Yacht Charters. "I think for quality and luxury, Turkey is one of the best values for a five-star trip. Even in the lowest price range, a charterer in Turkey will feel well taken care of from arrival to departure, which might be harder or more expensive to achieve in some other yacht charter locations."

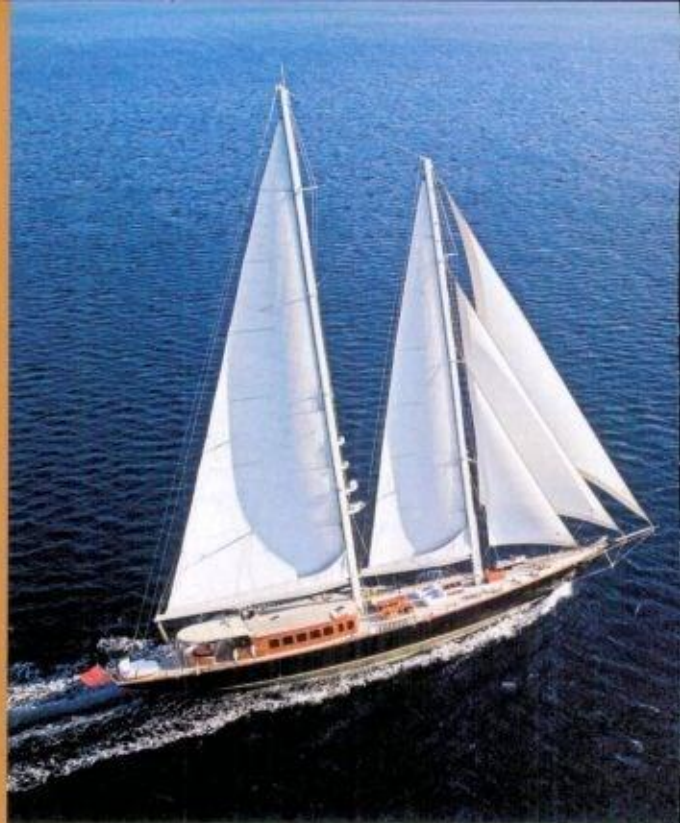
Turkey has been evolving as a charter destination for about 25 years. Its traditional local boat is the gulet, a wooden motorsailer usually crafted of mahogany and originally designed to haul cargo from port to port along the coast. Gulets are beamy, slow and stable because the cargo had to stay on deck without sliding. Today, those same designs prevent charter guests from heeling over and feeling seasick, and the voluminous interiors allow for some impressively sized guest cabins.

As recently as 10 years ago, gulets were still coming into their own as private yachts. There were plenty of them for charter in Turkey, but it could be hard to find high-quality ones with English-speaking crew who understood international service standards. Charter brokers demanded more, and Turkish representatives started scoping out the competition at boat shows from Italy to Antigua. That investment in education about the global charter market, plus a recent boom in quality among Turkish boatbuilders, has birthed today's crop of top-quality charter options.

"There is a pedigree of Bodrum-built wooden gulets coming out of there now that would blow you away," says Jeni Tidmarsh of Luxury Charter Group, who has been visiting Turkey for the past 15 years. "The quality of the gulets has improved exponentially, and really it's in the past five to eight years."

Turkey remains very much a sailing charter destination, with gulets outnumbering local motoryachts by at least 10 to 1. Most gulets offer itineraries between Bodrum and Gocek along Turkey's southwest coast, which welcomes tourism and is a world away from scuffles along the Turkish-Syrian border that are so often on the news.

That southwest stretch of coastline is also chockablock with things for charter clients to see and do. This part of Turkey has always been mountainous and challenging to traverse inland,



SEXY LIKE A BOND GIRL

Regina moved builder Pruva Yachting from its gulet past into the future of Turkey's luxury charter market (and onto the Hollywood stage).

BY KIM KAVIN



Why, yes, that is the 183-foot Pruva Regina

that you see superspy James Bond cavorting aboard in the most recent franchise film, *Skyfall*. On screen, the boat is called *Chimera*, named for a mythical creature whose parts come from different animals.

It's stunning how perfectly on point those Hollywood writers can be sometimes. Bodrum-based Pruva Yachting built 20 boats before the 183-foot *Regina*. Most were traditional wooden gulets, and nice ones at that. With *Regina*, Pruva wanted to move into serious sailing yachts. It gave her a steel hull, a smashing profile and a schooner rig that helps her leave Turkey's fleet of charter gulets in her wake.

At the same time, though, Pruva incorporated a number of design features that charter clients love aboard gulets — which are, after all, spacious, stable and often beautiful boats. *Regina* has protected dining and a large sun pad aft, a seating area with cocktail table forward and an interior decor filled with rich mahogany and light fabrics. Being on board feels like true performance sailing when *Regina* is under way, yet also feels like classic gulet lounging when she's at anchor off the coast of Datça or Marmaris.

Different animals, indeed, but combined in a smart and sophisticated way.

"Our aim was to build a performance sailing yacht with comfortable onboard areas," company manager Cihan Atik told me. "We are a gulet builder, so it is not possible to escape that on the first try entirely, but I believe we have succeeded."

I believe so too. I spent a week aboard *Regina* cruising in Turkey, where she launched in 2011 and has spent the past two summer seasons packed with bookings. Coming into 2013, this vessel remains the most expensive Turkish sailing yacht offering charters in the nation's waters, with a weekly base rate of about \$120,000 for up to 12 guests. She is also still owned and operated by Pruva, which designed her to be profitable as a charter vessel. While most luxury yachts earn enough charter income to cover some expenses each year, *Regina* has the advantage of Turkey's

long, May-to-October charter season, its low construction costs and its ever-improving construction quality. The combination lets Pruva offer *Regina* as a luxury product with more than the usual income and without the usual expenses.

Regina is open to charter itineraries along the usual Bodrum-to-Gocek run and beyond. I spent a few days cruising aboard her east of Gocek toward Fethiye, and *Regina*'s crew showed me all kinds of great things, from the remains of Cleopatra's Baths to what's left of a building where the real St. Nicholas used to live. There's no doubt that this yacht will remain the jewel in the Pruva crown at least for a little while longer, but stay tuned, because the builder is working on a J Class-style design set to launch into the charter market for summer 2014.

Regina takes 12 guests at a lowest weekly base rate of \$121,000. Contact Northrop and Johnson Worldwide Yacht Charters, (800) 868-5913, njcharters.com.

Regina's foredeck offers a breathtaking expanse of places for lounging. And her main salon and guest cabins are larger and brighter than what you will find aboard most other locally built sailboats.

