

Jazz, a 33m/108ft André Hoek design, at the Urkmezler yard showing off her cold-moulded wood construction

Turkey's wooden revolution

David Glenn reports from Tuzla and Bodrum where a new initiative highlights the advantages of building in wood

Until quite recently it was a popular misconception that timber yacht construction in Turkey was largely confined to the traditional wooden gulet, the heavily framed and planked local workhorse built on the beach. While that simple building technique still exists and the ubiquitous gulet is much in evidence, modern methods of timber yacht building have become more sophisticated, spawning an entirely new industry along Turkey's long coastline.

Many yards have evolved from family businesses passed down through generations and as a result there are clusters from Tuzla near Istanbul in the north to Bodrum and Antalya further south. Some are one-man bands, others highly sophisticated superyacht builders.

An organisation called Kayik, Quality Wooden Craft of Turkey, was formed to help promote this specialist form of timber boatbuilding, highlight its advantages, correct misconceptions about its use as an economical and strong boatbuilding material and to share information.

Part of Kayik's plan was to spread the word, which is why I found myself part of a whistle-stop tour of yards building in wood. I say wood, but as designer Rob Humphreys, who knows the Turkish wood product

well, explains: "It's really wood-reinforced plastic," a reference to the wood epoxy system which, while not new, has been exploited more in Turkey than any other country I know.

The Humphreys-designed 27m/90ft *Tempus Fugit*, which was recently launched by the Arkin Pruva yard in Antalya, is one of the most recent and impressive examples.

The widespread use of timber is, in part, owing to readily available skilled labour at highly competitive rates and a strong historical allegiance to the material. The sheer number of yards building in wood in Turkey is confusing and there is a wide variation in standard. Some of the more ramshackle would have given European health and safety inspectors a fright, although at the other end of the scale standards were world class.

Historical roots

Early on in our tour we visited the fascinating Rahmi Koç museum on the banks of the Golden Horn in Istanbul to give us some background into Turkish boatbuilding, which has very deep historical roots.

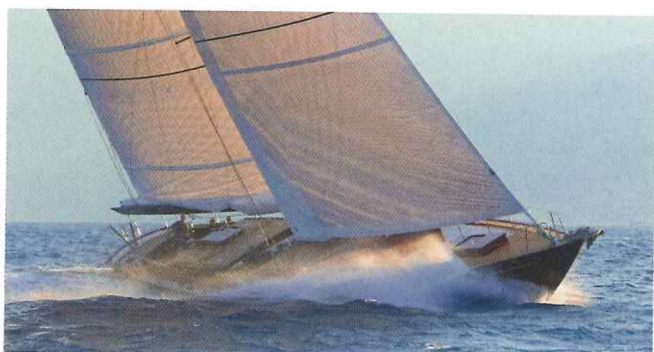
The Koç (pronounced 'kotch') family is one of the wealthiest in Turkey, owning many different businesses. The RMK shipyard, owned by Rahmi Koç, a keen yachtsman, is one of many ship and yacht building businesses centred in the Istanbul marine industrial suburb of Tuzla.

Koç had his own most recent yacht, *Nazenin V*, built here, a superb aluminium-hulled Sparkman & Stephens-designed 52m/170ft ketch, and it is where Oyster builds its injection-moulded superyachts.

But of more relevance here is an entire department dedicated to the restoration of classic wooden yachts. A 1919 William Fife seaplane tugboat, a commuter launch once owned by the local US embassy and the Camper & Nicholsons 1903 steam yacht *Romola*, which has just been relaunched and is in immaculate condition, are examples.

Among the stand-out sailing yachts built in wood epoxy in Turkey in recent years are the André Hoek-designed 33m/108ft sisterships *Jazz* and *Simba*, both built by the small yard of Urkmezler, but finished by the giant Proteksan Turquoise superyacht builders in Tuzla. *Jazz* was built for Mehmet Karabeyoglu, one of the founding partners of Proteksan, and *Simba* for a friend of his.

I was able to inspect *Simba* at the Proteksan yard where she was in for a winter refit. Skipper Tim Van Der Weide told me he



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The Rob Humphreys-designed 27m/90ft *Tempus Fugit*, recently launched at the Arkin Pruva yard in Antalya, is in wood epoxy



Above: *Simba* (left) and *Jazz*, André Hoek 33m/108ft sisterships, built in wood epoxy by Urkmezler



Above: David Glenn inspects the woodworking techniques of some of the smaller Turkish yards. Left: the Hoek-designed 20m/66ft Pilot Classic *Mazu*, which is currently in build at Metur Yachts

had an impressively short 'to do' list and she did indeed seem to be in excellent condition for a yacht launched a couple of years ago. She's magnificently well-finished on deck and below.

Hoek, whose own yacht was built in timber in Turkey, is impressed with the wood epoxy technique, which typically uses western red cedar strip saturated in epoxy as a core and further protected with veneer laminates, often in mahogany.

Pros and cons

"These boats are very stiff longitudinally," says Hoek. "*Jazz* (built in 2009) has never needed to retune her rig because there has been no loss of tension – quite amazing." Hoek would normally expect considerable movement in other forms of construction with a need to retune.

"The disadvantages of cold-moulded construction are tank construction and capacity, and resale value of the yacht," he believes. "Tanks cannot be integrated (as they can in aluminium) and have to be made in stainless steel or polypropylene. Therefore more tanks (and more space) are needed."

I was surprised to hear that he considered noise levels in cold-moulded yachts to be higher – "like in most composite yachts, certainly compared with aluminium (which is heavily insulated)."

"The interior volume of a cold-moulded yacht is quite a bit higher, though. A very nice feature is that the structure can be part of the interior joinery, with real frames instead of fake ones!"

Designer Rob Humphreys confirmed the stiffness of the cold-moulded technique when he heard from Hall Spars, which was supplying the

Tempus 90 rig. "What surprised them about Tempus was the utter silence that greeted them when they set up the rig – no creaks or movement at all," he reveals. "For me it is a testament to the homogeneity of modern cold-moulded wood/epoxy, which in this case was executed extremely well by Arkin Pruva."

The same yard has built a number of yachts, including the 37.5m/123ft gulet-style yacht *Daina*, one of an increasing number of modern luxurious gulets, which have sailing qualities far superior to the more 'agricultural' originals.

The modern gulet

Another yard that really impressed me was Aganlar, arguably the most advanced of another cluster of builders in the Bodrum area. Here, the gulet-style yacht is built in considerable numbers and the yard's owner has a sophisticated system for building any size of laminated frames using an adjustable jig.

Fifty frames were being built for the 32m/105ft gulet-style yacht they had under construction, which we were told would have a completion time of 14 months with a price tag of around €3m.

Other timber yachts coming out of Turkey include the Dykstra-designed *Gweilo*, which is essentially a wooden version of *Windrose of Amsterdam* with a longer keel and a more cruising-orientated layout.

Clearly there is a wood building network in Turkey worthy of note and the Kayik organisation's job is to continue to get the right message out about wood epoxy construction.

For more information see: www.kayik-turkiye.com

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