



THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SUPERYACHT DESIGN EVER?

The Pendennis-built *Vijonara* is the second Hoek Truly Classic 128. Perfect sailing conditions off Palma helped **Toby Hodges** appreciate the keys to this design's incomparable success

PHOTOGRAPHY / STUART PEARCE





Many will look at this yacht and admire its graceful lines, its presence and elegance on the water. *Vijonara* is the latest proof that Hoek's Truly Classic range is the dream for many sailors. But this TC128 is more than just a pretty boat.

Vijonara is an intelligent superyacht choice for modern times, a smart, series-built design that uses a clever build process. The result is a dream yacht but one that is efficient, especially in terms of initial cost and potential resale value.

When I sailed the dark blue-hulled sistership *Atalante*, the first TC128, three years ago I was sold on the lines and impressed by how it sailed, but wasn't sure how popular the notion of a repeatable series design would be at this size. Hoek's Truly Classic models have proven hulls with design calculations all largely completed from 50-128ft. Surely once you get over 90ft or so owners want a own bespoke yacht?

Vijonara proves that notion wrong. *Vijonara*'s owners fell in love with this hull shape, they knew this was the concept they wanted. The fact that they were able to then charter *Atalante* meant they were able to reconfirm their decisions related to the rig, deck and interior layout, to make it their own. The project that emerged shows how a multinational build can be a shrewd choice.

Aluminium fabrication experts Bloemsma built the hull in the Netherlands, before it was shipped to Pendennis in Cornwall for fit-out. A third TC128 hull has since been completed and will be finished in Turkey. A fourth has been ordered for the same Bloemsma/

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Pendennis/MCM build process – the result of the customer seeing *Vijonara* completed. And, as we went to press, André Hoek told us he has just signed a contract for a fifth.

To get five commissions from the same hull design at this size is unprecedented. "We design custom boats not production yachts," says Hoek, "but this has been so successful conceptually that many owners have decided to follow." He says that the size, flexibility of the design and layout, and the economy of scale is key to its success [see panel at end].

"We designed the first one with flexibility in layout – so you can have the main saloon forward or aft of the deckhouse and move cabins or even the helmstations around."

Construction can begin within two months of signing a contract, saving at least half a year over a custom build, says Hoek. The major decisions for the design and build team and the owner have been made. "We have over 40 Truly Classic owners now – they choose this because they can see what they get."

MEETING VIJONARA

Both the blue-hulled *Atalante* and the classic white *Vijonara* were docked in the same STP shipyard in Palma when I flew out for this sail trial. Seeing them it was clear that despite both being built to the same lines, they have enough individuality to create exclusive appeal – it's not as if the owners will be clicking their alarm fobs trying to identify cars in a very large car park.


It's rare on any trial to get ideal conditions, but for our day aboard *Vijonara*, the stars aligned. The owners kindly lent the boat for the day, leaving her in the capable hands of its four crew. The warm weather sail in a sea breeze, ►



TOBY ENJOYS THE CENTRAL HELM POSITION, WITH CLASSIC-STYLE BINNACLE PLUS INSTRUMENT REPEATERS BELOW THE Bimini.

ABOVE: THE STANCHIONS ARE MOUNTED TO THE INSIDE OF THE CNC-CUT BULWARKS SO AS NOT TO SPOIL THE LINE





For the owners to have the aft cockpit, deckhouse and all of the after part of the interior to themselves is the type of indulgence that one should be able to have when scaling up to a superyacht



gentle swell with some accompanying dolphins meant that, were I prospective owner number six, there would have been little to stop me reaching for my cheque book that day.

The week before our sail I had been aboard yachts that were sailing in less breeze and were confined to the constraints of a racecourse at the Superyacht Cup in Palma, so it felt particularly liberating to be fetching across the same Palma Bay in 15-20 knots under full main, staysail and yankee. Our average speed was a handsome 9.5-10 knots at 41-43° to the true wind. We had sufficient heel to make use of the yacht's full waterline length, the additional bulwark helping keeping the sea off the leeward decks. On the helm there was a goodly load on the wheel when pressed and you could certainly feel the 150 tonnes of yacht beneath you. Skipper James Box confirmed that they would normally reef in 21 knots of true wind, so we were on the edge.

The position of the helm forward of the aft deckhouse results in good visibility for the helmsman. It's a superb place, with a clear view over the low main deckhouse. It is better than that offered from a crowded aft cockpit, as aboard *Atalante*, but I did miss the more direct helm connection of *Atalante*, the result of its wheel being mounted closer to the rudder. But it's easy to see why *Vijonara*'s owners chose her particular layout. To have the aft cockpit, deckhouse and all of the after part of the interior to themselves is the type of indulgence one should be able to have when scaling up to a superyacht. The owners were very involved with the design of the helmstation area in particular, with its bare teak rail surrounds and traditional-style binnacle. Pendennis built full mock-ups to allow them to visualise steering the yacht.

RIGGED FOR PERFORMANCE

Vijonara may be the result of a repeatable design, but it allows plenty of sail and deck gear choices. A removable staysail can be rigged for racing, for instance, and a blade jib is another option.

The single-point mainsheet uses a mounting block on the aft deckhouse with a series of rubber bearings that act as shock absorbers. The sheet is run from here, forward in the boom and down to a captive winch in the accommodation. This operates at full speed only when activated, requiring the slight movement of a joystick (together with a sharp eye as to where everyone else is on deck). A backwind function on the Lewmar primaries meanwhile, helps take the initial load off the sheets safely.

Compared with *Atalante*, *Vijonara* has a slightly taller Southern Spars rig with EC Six rigging, higher bulwarks and a bowsprit. The 2.85m bowsprit is a key difference, both visually and practically, as it includes a neat furler for a top-down furling Code 0. This is seen as a more manageable method for a small number of crew to fly an offwind sail in light airs. The sprit also has a tack point for an asymmetric spinnaker at its end, which creates a comparatively larger area kite.

When the wind eased slightly we were able to set the Code 0, increasing our average speed to 10.5 knots on a beam reach. It was just then, as we were romping along at full stretch, that the school of porpoises joined us to play in our bow-wave – the icing on the cake of a cracking day's sail.

HANDS-ON SAILING

The maintenance of the substantial amount of brightwork, I was told, will be subbed out to professionals as the crew will have their hands full. Skipper James Box described the will and need to maintain a first class service, to ensure the boat is in pristine condition for the owners to enjoy and maximise their sailing experience, but how "there is a lot of pressure on the [minimal] crew to keep the levels up".

This was evident as we came to lower sails. The mainsail is hoisted onto a halyard lock, the palls of which are engaged via a manual pull line running up the luff off the mainsail. Once

**ROOM WITH A VIEW:
IN THIS
CONFIGURATION
THE OWNERS
HAVE A PRIVATE
AFT COCKPIT
LINKING TO
THEIR DECKHOUSE
AND CABIN**



ANDRÉ HOEK: 10 KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR THE TC128 DESIGN

- 1** Proven hull concept with good performance and comfortable behaviour
- 2** Fewer decisions to be made during the design and build process compared with starting from scratch
- 3** Possibility to see a boat and charter one before you build
- 4** Shorter lead and build time
- 5** Lower build cost than a full custom build
- 6** Flexible interior layout – the guest cabins can be forward of the main deckhouse or abaft it. So too can the lower salon
- 7** Flexible deck layout – the wheel can be in the aft cockpit or centre cockpit. In the centre cockpit there can be either a single or twin wheels
- 8** Four crew for owner to use and five for charter. The four crew option is especially attractive for clients
- 9** Every boat gets better owing to experiences of past boats
- 10** The yachts are part of a Truly Classic family and brand, and have good resale value

The main head scratching comes down to which layout to choose... which type of rig will best suit your sailing





THE CALM AND SPACIOUS LOWER SALOON LINKS TO THE OWNERS' CABIN



THE OWNER'S CABIN AFT INCLUDES HIS AND HERS BATHROOMS AND STEPS UP INTO THE PRIVATE AFT DECKHOUSE AND COCKPIT



BEAUTIFUL JOINERY ON DISPLAY IN THE MAIN AND AFT DECKHOUSES. THE GYM CAN BE CONVERTED INTO A CABIN



disengaged from the lock, the Doyle Stratis carbon mainsail stows in a stackpack on the huge V-boom. Although a similar method is used on *Atalante*, it is one Box is wary of because it requires all four crew. During our test a crewmember was stationed on the aft end of the boom, helping to flake the sail, the engineer was in a harness at the gooseneck for the luff, the chef let off the halyard, while Box manned the wheel/thruster. And it still took ten minutes to douse sails in flat water.


However, the owner loves sailing, hence the decision to opt for better sail shape benefits over a furling alternative. It was surprising to hear that this is the first boat he has had with a crew, having made a giant 70ft (21m) step-up from a Grand Soleil 56. But chartering *Atalante* sold him the concept.

The owners plan to spend the first couple of years cruising privately but have had the boat built to LY3 large yacht code standards. This means that, with some adjustment, *Vijonara* can be used for charter purposes in the future. "The owners love the boat and want to cruise the world, but building it to commercial standards makes sense for resale value," explains Box.

TRULY ELEGANT

The huge guest cockpit area is the heart of the social space and can seat eight guests on each side of the tables in the shade of the biminis. I liked the position of the instrument repeaters on the aft end of the biminis, but wonder if these large covers, typical on Truly Classics, deserve more design consideration.

The interior décor befits the elegant, traditional style of a Truly Classic. Sapele mahogany is used as the predominant timber, with satin-painted tongue and groove deckheads, high gloss beams and stained Italian walnut soles. The owner

 The boat was built to LY3 large yacht code standards, which means, with adjustment, that she can be used for charter purposes in the future

commissioned Hermès to make some of the upholstery, including a world map made of leather marquetry. The intricate detailing continues as you move through the interior, with tapestry above the bedheads, leather-stitched door handles and all switches and light fittings finished in satin-nickel.

Many elements are indicative of the Swiss-German owner's eye for detail. For example, the saloon table has an image of the sun at its centre, reflecting his Asian business influences.

The siting of the guest cabins forward of the decksaloon leaves the whole area aft free for the owner's private use. This substantial part of the yacht includes a gym (and convertible cabin), a particularly spacious lower saloon, and the open-plan owner's cabin, which links to the aft deckhouse and cockpit. The owner's cabin includes an oculus through the bottom of the hull, complete with underwater lighting for night viewing. This viewing tunnel uses two 15mm thick laminates on its base and another two on the top (cabin) end. The tube is purged with nitrogen, fitted with a water sensor, and a deadlight can be secured on top. Pendennis's project manager Mike Rusbridge says that when they launched *Vijonara* they thought they saw a hairline crack in the oculus – the boat was promptly lifted, but, to everyone's relief, it was just the waterline.

The aft cockpit and deckhouse area is an invitingly calm, private area for the owners to enjoy. The deckhouse includes a leather-topped Hermès desk overlooking the island berth below.

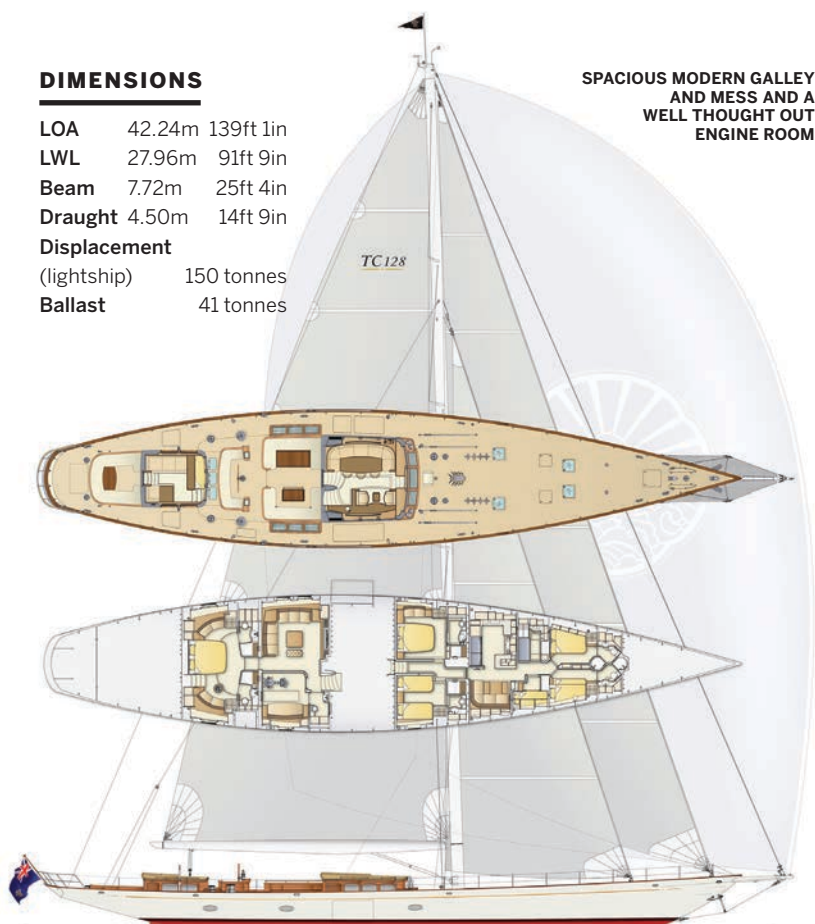
HIDDEN SYSTEMS

The location of the helmstation forward of the deckhouse results in a long connection, with torque tubes running through the ►

DIMENSIONS

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------|
| LOA | 42.24m | 139ft 1in |
| LWL | 27.96m | 91ft 9in |
| Beam | 7.72m | 25ft 4in |
| Draught | 4.50m | 14ft 9in |
| Displacement | | |
| (lightship) | 150 tonnes | |
| Ballast | 41 tonnes | |

SPACIOUS MODERN GALLEY
AND MESS AND A
WELL THOUGHT OUT
ENGINE ROOM



aft cabin deckhead to the quadrant and skeg-hung rudder. When you also consider the structural beams in the deckhead, beefed-up aluminium structure and tie-rods used to spread the loads of the single point mainsheet, there is a focal point of engineering here in the aft deckhouse.

The tech room and main engine room access is via the day heads to starboard. Again it's a similar layout to that of *Atalante*, but with more space to accommodate a slightly larger engine and PTOs (Power Take Offs). MCM's Nigel Ingram was the owner's representative on both projects and here is an example of where he has helped make improvements.

James Box explains that, with a large bank of lithium-ion batteries and a PTO on the engine and both gensets, all the systems can run off DC except the bowthruster. Hydraulic pressure can be proportionately controlled to each area, including a 30% 'cruise' pressure and 80% 'race' setting (tested to 480bar). For noise insulation, Pendennis used a combination of sound-deadening paint all around the engine room and owner's accommodation and a sandwich of Rockwool with rubber and lead matting.

CREW COMFORTS

The traditional overhangs of a retro-classic hull shape obviously limit stowage and bilge space in the yacht's ends, but there is a good amount of custom-made refrigerated space in the excellent galley.

The crew area is finished in the same tactile mahogany as the owner's area and includes a proper ship's office and laundry (where the chain lockers are also housed to help keep weight aft).

A key benefit of the TC128 design is that it requires only four permanent crew for its day-to-day running, but includes the option to house a fifth occasional crewmember if chartering.

Pendennis was responsible for the crew accommodation, systems fit-out, deck, and joinery work, while Dutch interior specialists Ruiter Luxury Interiors built the guest accommodation off-site in the Netherlands.

TEAMWORK

Vijonara's hull was fitted out in 15 months including planning and mock up, says Mike Rusbridge, who joined us for the sail. Rusbridge, 27, studied engineering before doing a graduate scheme at Pendennis, a shipyard with an award-winning apprenticeship programme. After acting as an assistant and specialist project manager on two refit projects, he was given the chance to lead a largely young team of up to 60 Pendennis staff on *Vijonara*'s build.

"The idea now is that the people who worked on this boat will be on the next one (TC128 No 4). Getting and keeping key guys who know all the quirks is important," he says.

Hull number four will arrive at Pendennis in May 2019, just 14 months before it is due to launch.

It is fascinating to observe the process of refinement on a series-design at this size. The third TC128 will have one deckhouse and an aft wheel/cockpit, for example, while number four has two deckhouses but no bowsprit. There are pros and cons to each iteration but, with such versatility, it's easy to see why this Truly Classic design has been so successful and attracted the commissions.

In this day and age, it can arguably be an indulgent and uneconomic choice to go for a full custom boat. The main head scratching to do with this design comes down to which layout to choose, whether to go for forward or aft helms, and what type of rig will best suit your sailing.

Truly nice choices to have. 