

A TALE OF TWO KETCHES

WORDS SAM FORTESCUE

IMAGES RICK TOMLINSON AND CORY SILKEN



When the towering Vitters ketch *Adèle* was finally delivered to Jan-Eric Osterlund in 2005, there was a collective intake of breath from the yachting community. Here was a boat with beguilingly classic lines, radiating understated elegance, yet fast and stable with the capability to go anywhere on the world's oceans.

Like the J-Class of the 1920s and 30s, her appeal stretched far beyond the 'yachterati' – anyone could appreciate that *Adèle* was a thing of beauty. All too easy to overlook was the fact that this was also a truly radical design from a Dutchman whose name has become a byword for contemporary classics. Even now, more than two decades after he began work on the project, Andre Hoek is still brimming with a sense of excitement over *Adèle*.

'Like the J-Class of the 1920s and 30s, her appeal stretched far beyond the yachterati – anyone could appreciate that Adèle was a thing of beauty'

"She was the first big Superyacht in this style that was ever built," he tells me. "She led the way for similar owners. That's why she's such an icon. The boat is breathtakingly beautiful – a combination of proportions, shearline, styling, deck details – it's the whole package. That's what attracts people. Since then, we've done close to 150 similar boats that are ocean-going – though not on the same scale, of course."





SAILING

As well as a carefully developed underwater profile that was honed through tank testing, wind tunnel tests and velocity prediction programmes (VPP), the layout of the boat was pioneering. In particular, she sported three deckhouses: one over a private owner's cockpit aft; one over the main companionway; and one at the foot of the forward mast, for crew access. Elegant curves and classic leather upholstery characterised the interior styling, where the owner's vast cabin aft ran the full beam of the boat. Such was the privacy of the layout that he had a desk in the deckhouse above.

'Even now, more than two decades after he began work on the project, Andre Hoek is still brimming with a sense of excitement over Adèle'

The stability and performance of the boat was immediately put to the test as Osterlund set sail for an ambitious world cruise that took in Svalbard in the north, Antarctica in the south and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans in between. Renowned yacht photographer Rick Tomlinson was fortunate enough to accompany the owner and his family at key points along this two-year adventure.

"The colour scheme of the boat is very traditional, and the original owner of the boat wanted her to look beautiful without compromise," Tomlinson says. "The hull is just off-white, which works so nicely with the varnish of the wood. You

could put *Adèle* in any location in the world and she looks elegant."

And while conditions at both ends of the planet were fairly benign, Tomlinson remembers a sploshy overnight beat from Bora Bora to Tahiti. "We had 40 knots on the nose. A boat of that size and underwater profile doesn't slam, she just heels to the wind and has a beautiful motion of sliding through the waves – even with white water pouring down the decks."

Adèle has had a new owner since 2007, and underwent a refit in 2015-16 that updated power, propulsion and communications systems ahead of another world cruise. After that, Tomlinson joined the crew for a second trip to Svalbard, where the boat was able to get close to a polar bear as it devoured the remains of a whale carcass, generating an instantly iconic photo.

"The real purpose of going there is to see polar bears," he says frankly. "There are also walruses, arctic foxes, whales, lots of wildlife. But to have an encounter with a polar bear like that was very special. We had Per-Magnus Sander as a local guide, and we got escorted through some uncharted areas by a local steamer - a classic harbour icebreaker."