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TOY STORY

Playtime on yachts has never been so much fun.

Words – Cecile Gauert

Playing is good for you. It unleashes creativity and may even help your brain create new pathways, to say nothing of keeping you fit. The yachting industry has long ago embraced not just playtime but also playthings – the more toys, the merrier. Designers and marine toy specialists are busy finding better solutions to handle yacht toys in practical and attractive platforms. One way or the other, they'll keep you playing.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE TOY CRAZE?

One of the primary drivers has been charter since it became big business. In the mid-1990s, a famous advertising campaign for a now-infamous yacht clamored: "He who plays with the most toys wins." Some things haven't changed.

John Cichanowicz, a retail charter broker for Burgess and an ex-captain, says having a particular toy can make or break a charter deal. Often topping the list are slides and climbing walls. Many of their manufacturers' innovations are linked to the demands of the charter business, from semi-production slides, delivered in just a few days, to custom-fitted toys that address the specific demands of charter guests. FunAir (in the business of making fun out of thin air) recently fitted the successful charter yacht *Lazy Z* with a "leap-of-faith" platform, in addition to a new custom slide and climbing wall.

"Jumping off the boat is a right of passage for many charter guests," says John Courtney, managing director for FunAir's yachts and marine division. The trouble is leaping off a big yacht looks quite different from the other side of the rail. An inflatable platform, complete with inflatable anti-skid stairs and handles, allows the more cautious to change their mind and return to the sun deck with nothing bruised, except perhaps their ego.

Charter isn't the only factor. "Nowadays, owners of 100-foot-plus vessels are using their boats as luxury hotels, pampered with all comforts," says Aldo Manna of MC Yacht & Co. International, but they're "slightly bored by the life they live on board, as they often perceive a lack of contact with the sea and few chances of entertainment at anchor."

Plus, they tend to be competitive. "Owners want to have the latest and greatest," says Cichanowicz. What that is depends on whom you ask (see page 108 for the ultimate toy list). For many these days, it means a climbing wall, a sea plane, a great center console and most often, all of the above.

In the custom world, anything is possible, given a large enough platform.

A particular interest in, say, competitive Jet Ski racing, will influence the yacht's design and construction. The 314-foot Michael Leach-designed Blohm + Voss *Palladium* dedicated the entire transom area of the lower and main decks to recreation with a huge garage able to accommodate a PWC for each guest and an elevated beach club/observation platform to keep an eye on the action below. More new builds than ever have sports courts, as in football, tennis and basketball courts, according to Josh Richardson of Superyacht Tenders & Toys.

Not even a "golf course" is off the table, done long ago



My Seanna's refit gave the yacht a nice, large garage for all manner of toys, in part to boost her charter appeal. Opposite: FreeStyle's Cruiser NLS slide fits just right on the 121-foot Heesen Aurelia.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JIM RAYCROFT (OPPOSITE), COURTESY OF FREESTYLE SLIDE (CIRCLE)

on the Oceanco *Lady Lola*, nor is a tennis court, which the Dutch superyacht builder designed for an experienced owner looking for a new yacht, but the list of demands is forever growing. "Where once a 'simple' limousine tender was sufficient to bring the owner and guests ashore, now a whole array of high-tech gadgets are necessary to make any trip into an adventure rather than just a journey," says Michele Flandin, marketing manager for Oceanco.

BUILDING A BEAUTIFUL TOY BOX

"From inflatable slides and climbing walls to basketball courts, designers now have the added challenge to incorporate storage for all these activities...without compromising esthetics or functionality," Flandin adds. And this being the superyacht world, esthetics often comes first.

The owner of 180-foot *Atlante* told designers Nuvolari Lenard he did not want to see his tenders. Dan Lenard and his team gave a classic solution a decidedly new twist and enclosed the tenders in a beautifully finished exterior lounge on the main deck aft.

A similar concern for elegance, as well as transforming a private yacht into a charter-friendly vessel, drove the 2014 refit of the *Delta* now known as *My Seanna*. Murray and Associates worked on the 21-foot stern extension for a beach club/garage. The well-finished space has a large TV, great sound system and a head. "It does not look like a tender garage. It was designed as a space with dual purpose, and they use it a lot as a beach club," says naval architect Patrick Dupuis. The helicopter-capable yacht often ends up towing its tender, a 40-foot Van Dutch.

Finding space for recreation, toys and what they imply (fueling and charging stations or compartments for walls, slides and floating islands), while preserving elegant lines means being creative. "With all the new requests,

the most obvious innovation that has emerged is the use of multipurpose areas. Swimming pools with adjustable floors become helipads and/or dance floors. Tender garages, some with doors up to fourteen meters wide, transform into beach clubs and diving centers. Flexibility is the key," says Flandin.

MAKE THE TOYS WORK

What kind of toys you're planning to have is "among the first questions we ask.... It has to be part of the checklist even if it isn't that important to the owner, as it will affect how well the boat can sell," says Greg Marshall of Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architect. Don't forget functionality. "What is also important is how easy it is to deploy the toys and how to get them back on."

The toy makers are working hard on functionality, too. In the inflatable market, FreeStyle Slides may be the maker of the world's tallest inflatable slide but its smaller slides are what the yachting world seeks. A recent innovation is a single-piece slide that starts at about 10 feet and weighs less than 255 pounds, which crew can set up in less than 20 minutes. The company also has been working on a retractable slide that will be custom-fitted permanently to the yacht. "The goal is to ensure maximum fun for the yacht guests and crew," says the president and CEO, Stephen Philp.

FunAir, meanwhile, is making its floating islands multifunctional. They incorporate Jet Ski docks with spaces for pools and detachable loungers that become part of a beach setup later. The company is working with shipyards on more permanent solutions, too. The airline industry, with its slides that deploy in six seconds from a compartment inside an emergency exit door is something they've looked at. "These are very different slides," says Courtney, "but there are things to learn not only in the

Most projects are confidential, but you can expect to see built-in slides and/or climbing walls in the near future.

BETTER WITH TWO

A purpose-built second platform makes sense when big-ticket items, such as a helicopter, car, landing craft and personal submarine, become part of the equation, even just to rent for a charter.

The Helicat (left), a pure concept, is a dedicated helicopter platform. "The idea was to create a landing platform for a helicopter at a cost of around \$3.5 million," says Greg Marshall of Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architect. As a bonus, "the crew has its own space with 1,800 square feet of accommodation."

Vantage, a Palmer Johnson 150 managed by Ocean Independence and currently available for charter in the South Pacific, recently expanded its toy box with *Ad-Vantage*, a refurbished Damen support vessel. Now added to the mothership's impressive list of toys are fishing boats, a Hobie Cat and a 3300 Triton submarine, among others. *Ad-Vantage* also boasts nicely finished cabins, affording her owners the ability to charter them together or separately.



A great tender is necessary but just not enough anymore, according to Oceanco, which designed a concept for a foldout tennis court on a superyacht (below right center). Inflatables are also a must-have, from walls to trampolines.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

Captain Herb Magney, who worked in hospitality before running yachts, makes a good point: "If the crew isn't a toy-driven crew, then leave the toys at the store. Toys are the interface, the tools, the hardware between great fun-loving crew and guests. These are guests who want to feel like they are encouraged to enjoy themselves and do it safely."



PHOTOGRAPHS: THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF GREGORY C. MARSHALL NAVAL ARCHITECT. OPPOSITE: JIM RAYCROFT (TOP), COURTESY OF OCEANCO (CENTER RIGHT), COURTESY OF FUN AIR (BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT)



Nemo 44 (above right) and CRN Expedition Teseo (right) are conceived to carry more toys, and Greg Marshall is working on built-in slide storage (here). Vantage and its toy carrier Ad-vantage (below) are currently in the South Pacific.

PHOTOGRAPHS: GREGORY C. MARSHALL NAVAL ARCHITECT (TOP LEFT), RODOLPHE HOLLER (BOTTOM)

PHOTOGRAPHS: BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: JIM RAYCROFT, ISTOCK/GENNADY KONDRATYEV, ISTOCK/VIRTUALPHOTO, COURTESY OF FUNAIR, RODOLPHE HOLLER, ISTOCK/OZDEN NASIF, COURTESY OF GOPRO, COURTESY OF SEABOB

way that the slides perform but also in the way they pack so tightly.” Most projects are confidential, but you can expect to see built-in slides and/or walls in the near future. Marshall and his team are working on a project that includes a permanent slide and wall solution. And, indeed, a self-deploying slide “can go right next to the rafts. We are working on a design right now,” says Captain Herb Magney, who has run many successful charter yachts.

Richardson at Superyacht Tenders & Toys also has some things underway. “Inflatable helipads (that can be deployed for ‘touch-and-go’ operations on yachts without a [permanent] helipad), zip lines and many more items I cannot discuss are all nearing release to the market.”

THE CASE FOR A BIG BOAT DECK

When it comes to creating the best toy box, size matters. Richardson’s company just outfitted the 351-foot Kleven explorer *Ulysses*. “For me, the real joy is not having the constraints of normal yacht garages, which are always compromised in terms of crane load, door size and roof height,” says Richardson.

So how big does the yacht need to be realistically for something more than a nice tender or two, diving gear, paddleboards, inflatables and a couple of PWCs? “The line is right at fifty meters (164 feet), but that’s also because beyond that size people are starting to have higher expectations,” says Marshall, whose firm designed the Diamond 50m explorer for McMullen & Wing. Its forward garage compartments accommodate an Orcasub, a couple of Sea-Doos and a big RIB and/or ski boat.

It seems at 164 feet, an expedition-style vessel can be the right answer. The CRN Expedition 50m, Teseo, is a

concept designed around the ability to haul a number of tenders. “There is the need – almost an obsessive need, I could say – to equip the boats of every dimension with several different tenders that...replace the yacht during daily activities. It seems to me that tenders [are becoming] more important than the boat herself, and I believe this is surreal,” says designer Bernardo Zuccon, who created Teseo. “The superstructure is shifted much farther forward to [allow] housing two 26-foot and 16-foot tenders and a water scooter.”

Keep the deck long and you can go smaller. Brokers MC Yacht & Co. International and designer Fulvio De Simoni designed a Sport Utility Yacht for Ocea. Their Nemo 44 has a full-beam waterline garage that accommodates a 26-foot tender, a 16-foot crew tender, a wakeboard, WaveRunners and an extensive selection of water toys. A platform between the main and upper decks accommodates a 40-knot center console, a sailing day-cruiser or a deep-sea submarine, plus a drop-keel sailboat, a Moth sail dinghy, a huge quantity of floating devices, such as SUPs, kayaks, kiteboards, Seabobs, JetBoards and all kinds of “over-the-railing” toys.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

If you are planning to build, make a list of what you’d like to add in the toy box. Be realistic size-wise and plan early. Choose toys that can be used in different ways and ask for the spaces they occupy to be multifunctional. If you already have your ideal mothership or don’t want to go too big, the best solution may be a shadow boat or even a whole moveable island (yes, that idea has already been floated). And if your idea of the toy box is a couple of dive tanks and a pair of fins, that’s great, too. Just play on! 🏠

THE ULTIMATE TOY CHEST

WE’VE ASKED CAPTAINS, BROKERS, DESIGNERS AND YACHT TOY OUTFITTING SPECIALISTS FOR THEIR ULTIMATE CHOICES, AND HERE ARE THE COMBINED RESULTS.

- BLOB
- 4 x 4s
- 40-foot-plus center console
- Balls
- Beach lander/amphibian craft (such as Iguana)
- Canoes or kayaks (far left)
- Climbing wall

- Diving board
- Evolve Carbon electric skateboard
- Fishing gear
- Floating docks
- Floating loungers (center)
- Gocycle electric bike
- GoPro cameras (top right)

- Hydrofoils (wakeboard and kitesurf)
- iRider
- JetBoards
- Jet Skis (2nd from left)
- Jetpack or flyboard (2nd from right)
- Kitesurfer/windsurfer
- Motorcycles

- Powered surfboard (Lampuga)
- Quadski sports amphibian
- Radio-controlled boats
- Rope swing
- Sailing boats, keelboats or catamarans
- Sailing dinghy

- Scuba, snorkeling gear, Brownie’s Third Lung
- Sea pool
- Seabobs (far right)
- Seaplane, such as Icon A5 aircraft
- Slides

- Submersibles/ROV (3rd from right)
- Towables

- Trampoline
- Wakeboard, including Radinn electric wakeboard (3rd from left)
- Waterskis
- Whaler Super Cat 20
- Zorb

