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# A Better Mouse- trap

A lifelong sailor demands perfection from the builder of the Outer Reef 80.

By **Chris**  
**Caswell**

Photography by Billy Black

I could use only a single word to describe the Outer Reef 80, I'd be hard-pressed to narrow the field. Fantastic, wonderful, superb, exceptional, all come to mind, but they don't really capture its essence.

So I'd pick the word "meticulous." The Outer Reef 80 is meticulous in concept, in design, and in execution. It is a fine example of a talented builder and experienced owner coming together to create a yacht that is absolutely modern and yet timeless, seaworthy, and luxuriously comfortable.

If you want to see what meticulous means, step into the galley aboard *Illusion IV*, the Outer Reef 80 shown in the photos. For starters, open the top drawer of the after counter and you'll see that every piece of silverware, from steak knife to soup spoon, is nested in its own teak rack. Each rack can be lifted out to reach the lower racks, and the result is total organization. More important, however, is that nothing is going to rattle, no matter how choppy the seas. The drawer has dovetailed joints (much more work but also much stronger) and rolls on self-closing sliders. The entire drawer is detailed, from the raised panel front to the carefully varnished bottom.

Meticulous.

Next, step over to the large lockers on the starboard side facing the galley. You'd guess from the outside that these are the pantry, full of Cheerios and jars of salsa. Wrong. This is another perfectly conceived storage area for all the plates and glasses. Roller racks slide out only when you've released the catches, so you never have to fear an avalanche if the yacht rolls and, inside each rack, glasses and dishes snuggle (silently!) in complete protection.

Meticulous.

But the meticulousness isn't just evident in places like galley stowage. It's there in the carefully labeled and easily understood fuel management manifolds in the engine room or in the oversized rub rails. It's evident in any location where hardware will be installed—the foam coring has been removed and replaced with an inlay of

solid fiberglass that won't crush or leak. It's apparent in things you can see, like the sturdy handrail on the overhead in the saloon, and the things you probably won't see, like the smoothly finished chain locker that won't gather dirt or snag unwary hands.

Meticulous.

Outer Reef Yachts falls under the umbrella of American Global Yacht Group (AGYG) which also builds the Molokai Strait expedition yachts, imports Apremare yachts from Italy, and is about to debut the Newport line of luxury express cruisers that, until earlier in this sentence, were top secret.

Outer Reef was created because founder Jeff Drucek had owned several large yachts including a custom 77-footer and realized that he could build a better boat. Drucek serves as the designer, with Chaucer Chen providing the naval architecture and engineering. One glance at the exterior of the Outer Reef 80 and you know that Drucek has a fine eye for lines: The sheer is sweet, the bow rises just enough, the superstructure is placed just so, and the result is a yacht that will be just as fresh in two decades as it is today.

The Outer Reef 73 uses the same hull and much of the interior remains unchanged in the 80. But there are some major differences that make that added seven feet valuable: *Illusion IV* benefits from the larger saloon with a formal dining area and the enlarged crew quarters are quite amazing.

The interior of *Illusion IV* reminds me of a comfortable gentlemen's club, with warm wood and raised panel bulkheads, commodious couches and chairs that invite sprawling with a good book, and nubby fabrics that should be grandchild-proof.

Two features impressed me about the saloon. First, I liked the solid double doors that are a pleasant respite from the ubiquitous sliders. Second, the builder and designer showed restraint by not putting a long cabinet down one side of the saloon. This setup is fine for stowage, but it forces an artificiality on the seating arrangements that

A DINETTE NEAR THE HELM MAKES FOR COMPANIONABLE CRUISING (BELOW). THE 1,000-HORSE DIESELS PUSH *ILLUSION IV* UP TO 17 KNOTS (RIGHT).





**LOA:** 79'11"  
**LOA:** 72'4"  
**BEAM:** 20'6"  
**DISPL.:** 180,000 lb.  
**FUEL:** 3,000 gal.  
**WATER:** 500 gal.  
**TEST POWER:** 2 x 1,000-hp  
Caterpillar C18 diesels  
**POWER OPTION:** 2 x  
1,550-hp Caterpillar  
C32 diesels  
**BASE PRICE:** \$3.4 million

## TO THE DARK SIDE

"Thank God for the Internet," says the owner of *Illusion IV*, because the constant e-mails from the builder with photos of his new yacht at each stage helped him refine the finished product. "I guess I probably sent Jeff 2,000 e-mails," he admits.

Jeff Drucek, owner of Outer Reef Yachts, shrugs slightly when he hears the comment. "No," he says with a wry smile, "it was over 2,600 e-mails."

But that could be expected for an owner who was crossing over, as they say, to "the dark side." A lifelong sailor from a sailing family that once owned the famed Sparkman & Stephens sloop, *Orient*, he had been away from the water for eight years. "We had a Bob Perry-designed aluminum yacht that we were going to sail around the world but, you know, things happen."

What happened was that his daughters married, so he and his wife gave up sailing to become grandparents. Two years ago, they wanted back on the water. "We've always been our own crew, but I decided someone else could be upside-down fixing something in the engine room while the guests are enjoying themselves."

So crew quarters became a priority,



and that led to the Outer Reef 80. Equally appealing was Drucek's flexibility. "I made some changes, like adding extra stringers outboard of the engines and Kevlar in the bow because I'm used to offshore cruising, but now I think it was overkill."

Other changes included more watertight compartments forward and eliminating private stairs to the master suite to gain the walk-in closet. He also opted for Cat C18s rather than the standard C15s, and installed extra-long Glendinning shorepower cables to handle all docks. A pair of warping windlasses on the stern was added to handle stern-to moorings

in the Med, where the owner plans to cruise. As a sailor, he liked redundancy so *Illusion IV* has two radars and three GPS units among an array of electronics.

"Jeff really created a yacht for guys like me," says the owner, "and it's wonderful to be back on the water." He says *Illusion IV* handles perfectly offshore, but admits that he's in a period of transition. "At first, I wanted to be on the bridge under the stars, but the pilothouse is so comfortable...."

"I'm an old sailor, and handling this yacht is a piece of cake," he says, adding wryly, "I feel like I'm cheating..."

often doesn't make much sense.

In the case of *Illusion IV*, the pop-up TV is in a compact cabinet that leaves space on either side for a pair of club chairs with concealed ottomans, making a total of three loose chairs in the saloon. This allows comfortable viewing of the television, while non-viewing guests entertain each other.

A compact dry bar in the saloon keeps guests out of the galley, where a fridge and icemaker are tucked under the counter for liquor or snacks. The galley is open to the saloon and has all the expected appliances as well as niceties like granite counters and backsplashes.

The pilothouse fills the forward portion of the main deck, and it can be closed off for night running with a solid door. There are comfortably spaced stairs to the bridge and, tucked underneath without being cramped, is a day-head.

The pilothouse is both seamanlike and comfortable, with a pair of Stidd pedestal helm chairs and an instrument panel that is comprehensive yet easily scanned. Four VEI monitors handle an array of navigation and monitoring tasks and the owner has specified a considerable amount of redundancy. A computer keyboard is in front of the companion seat, which also has a handrail on the dash for security. A nice touch is the built-in binocular shelf next to the skipper.

A large dinette with table has been raised so that guests can look through all the windows. The added height gained by this treatment has been brilliantly utilized by the huge chart drawer underneath that can hold full-sized charts laid flat. The settee is large enough to double as a pilot berth if someone wants to keep the watchstander

company on a long passage. A pair of husky dogging doors to the Portuguese bridge completes the area.

Curving stairs from the helm area lead to a lower foyer with a teak and holly sole covered by area rugs. Tucked out of sight are a household-sized washer and dryer, plus a locker for all the laundry necessities.

The master suite spans the full beam and, at first glance, the bed seems to be a piece of loose furniture, but it's just a trick of the builder. What appear to be legs are faux but, once again, the look is that of a home rather than a yacht. The usual vanity is on one side and a large bureau is on the other.

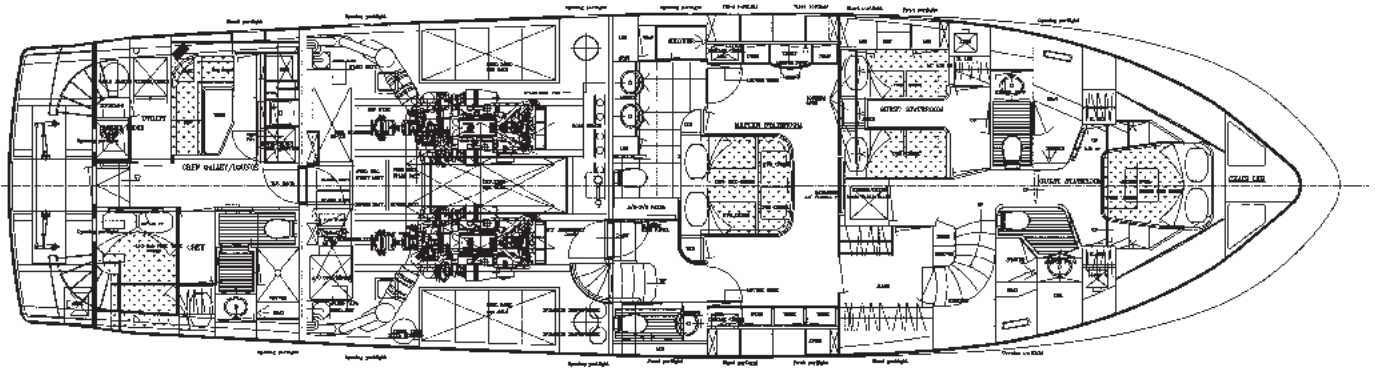
Rather than creating a his-and-hers head using the full beam, the Outer Reef 80 has the head offset to port, but there is still ample space for a pair of sinks in a marble vanity as well as a deep bathtub.

The space saved to starboard has been utilized for a walk-in closet complete with shelves and shoe stowage, plus a door that leads to the engine room. This not only provides an emergency exit for the master, but easy access for the crew to maintain the guest area.

*Illusion IV* has the four-stateroom layout, with a small cabin for kids on the starboard side of the foyer. In the absence of this cabin, the master suite can have an additional closet or an office area.

A very pleasant guest cabin has a pair of twin beds with tropical headboards and, again, the furniture appears to be loose rather than built-in. The en suite head has a large shower but, to allow for entry from the foyer (for guests in the fourth cabin), a second door is next to the head and a bit awkward.

The VIP cabin is forward with a double berth, large hanging lock-



THE ACCOMMODATIONS OFFER THE COMFORTS OF HOME (ABOVE LEFT). EVERY DISH AND UTENSIL HAS ITS PLACE IN THE GALLEY (ABOVE RIGHT).

ers, and drawers for stowage. The private head is capacious, with a shower and seat.

The bridge and boat deck overhang the side decks, so the bridge is able to take full advantage of the 20-foot beam and is very spacious. The helm mimics the lower station with twin chairs behind the fiberglass console that holds a single VET monitor, a Furuno NavNet, and a Northstar GPS. Just aft, a pair of L-shaped settees with tables are mirrored on each side, with centerline access to the boat deck. A huge storage locker is to port, while the starboard side has a full summer kitchen with a stainless DCS grill with rotisserie, U-Line icemaker/fridge, and sink.

The bridge is well protected by a coaming that wraps around to separate the boat deck and a solid hardtop protects the entire bridge from the venturi windscreen all the way aft to the boat deck.

While the standard Outer Reef 80 would have an offset davit and a centerline tender, *Illusion IV* has a 2,000-pound Brower davit on the centerline, a 15-foot Novurania offset to starboard, and a pair of Vespa scooters on the other side. The davit, with hydraulic extension and swing, can launch the tender or the Vespas on either side, giving full flexibility in docking situations.

The side decks benefit from the sun and rain protection of the bridge overhang, but so does the after deck, which has a table, settee, and curving stairways to the teak swim and boarding platform.

From that platform, a watertight door leads to the crew quarters,

which is catch-your-breath gorgeous. There will certainly be a waiting list of skippers and mates wanting to sign aboard *Illusion IV*, which provides them with a suite finished to the same standards as the rest of the yacht.

There is a private cabin to starboard, with a double berth as well as an upper single, and it has a private head with granite vanity and large shower. The crew mess has a comfy settee with table, plus a full galley with four-burner cooktop in a granite counter, fridge, microwave, and flat-screen TV. A separate compartment has washer and dryer, SubZero freezers, plus ample storage for spares and gear.

The engineroom will be equally appealing to the crew, because access and serviceability are first-rate. There is considerable space, on a Treadmaster-covered walkway, between the twin 1,000-horsepower Caterpillar C18s that are protected by stainless steel rails. A pair of Northern Lights 25-kW gensets and a workbench finish off the compartment.

With the C18s, *Illusion IV* has a top speed of 17 knots and a comfortable cruise of 13 knots. An earlier 80, with 1,550-horsepower C32s, tops out at 23 knots and cruises at 20 knots.

Thoughtfully designed and equipped, good-looking, and well-built, the Outer Reef 80 will challenge you to your come up with your own one-word description, but I still like mine.

Meticulous. □

AGYGYachts, (954) 767-8305; [www.agyg.com](http://www.agyg.com)