

SECRET RECIPE

WITH THE 640 AZURE, OUTER REEF STARTS WITH A BORN-TO-CRUISE HULL AND INCORPORATES DESIGN CUES FROM THE ALFRESCO LIFESTYLE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST. BY JEFF MOSER





LOA: 64'
Beam: 17'2"
Draft: 4'10"
Displ.: 107,000 lbs.
Fuel: 1,000 gal.
Water: 300 gal.
Standard Power:
2/476-hp Caterpillar C9.3
diesel inboards
Test Power: 2/500-hp
John Deere 6090 diesel inboards

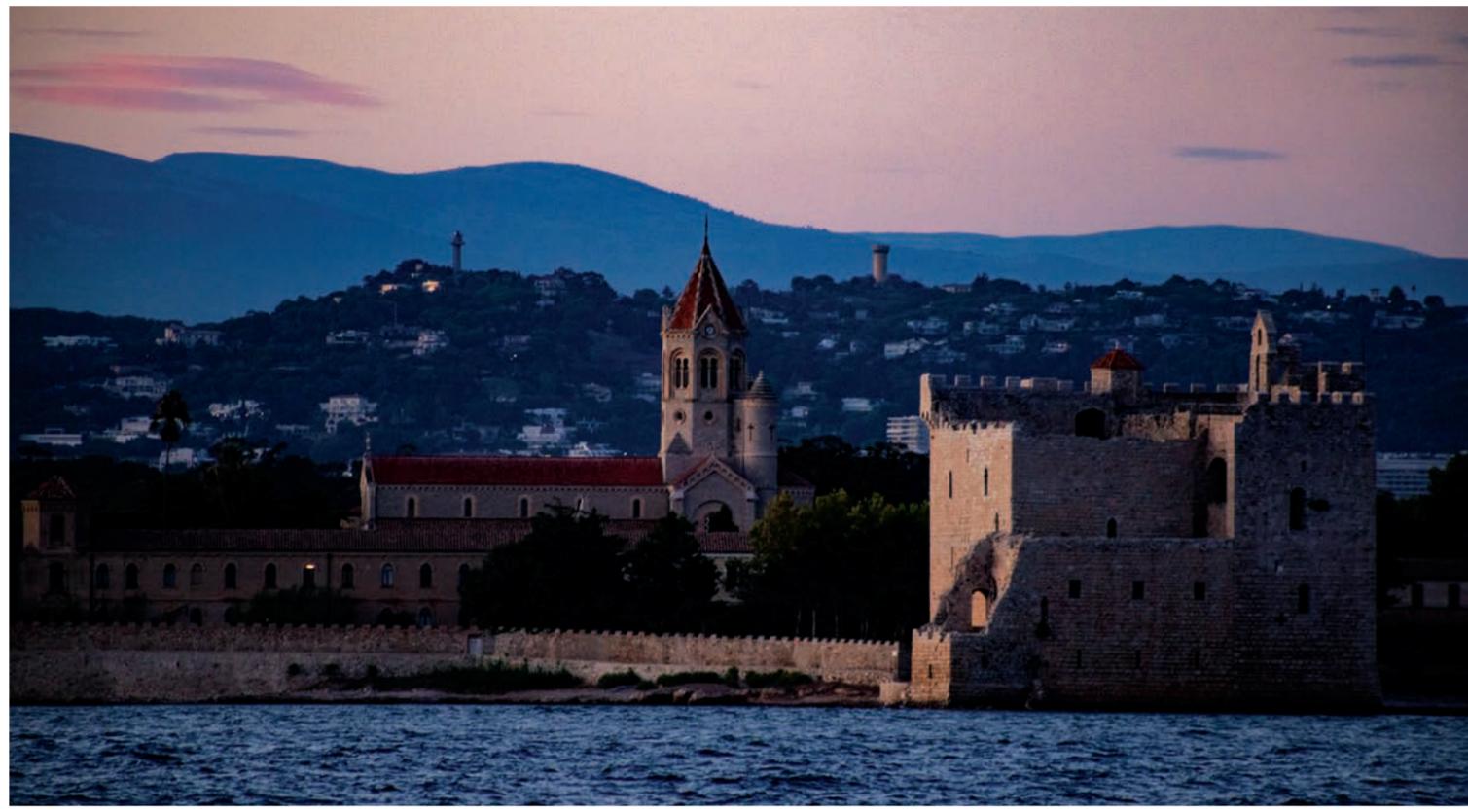
The 11th century Saint Honorat castle ruins—aged by wind and tide—seem to spill onto the Bay of Cannes.

Cartographers call the globe's blank spaces "Sleeping Beauties"; those expanses relatively free from the scars of civilization. Intrepid yachtsmen feast their eyes on the blue of the map and envision aquatic Sleeping Beauties—uncharted waters where man and machine can be tested—whether it's the open ocean, a remote fjord, a wild river or a rarely visited archipelago.

Since the early 2000s, Outer Reef Yachts has earned a reputation for building boats that are born for such off-the-grid travel. Every vessel they have built from 55 to 88 feet (plans to go larger are in the works) has earned CE Class A classification, which means they can handle up to 20-foot seas and 40-knot sustained winds. With sizable fuel capacities and their best-of-both-worlds semidisplacement hulls, they're at home away from home, exploring waters from Alaska to Argentina and everywhere in between. Still, President, CEO and founder Jeff Druke knew they could offer more.

Druke is a searcher, and not only in the waterborne sense; he's simply not satisfied staying in his lane, and takes merit in customer feedback. After a deep dive into his clientele, he realized that in the 20 years or so since he's been building custom yachts (he oversaw his own custom vessels before founding Outer Reef), the demographic has gotten younger by the same number of years. "We [needed] a more modern, contemporary interior to cater to a younger demographic," he told me. The 640 Azure is the result.

Based on the same hull as their 630—the builder utilizes monolithic one-piece construction for all of its vessels, refusing to tack on a few feet here and there as models move up in LOA—the Azure incorporates a revised layout that looks to take advantage of the alfresco lifestyle. The amidships galley that would typically divide the salon from the helm area is now aft. To counter the heavier load, the Azure's hull



has been modified to give the vessel more lift at the stern.

With hull number one debuting at the Cannes Yachting Festival, I had been scheming with Outer Reef's European Director Trevor De Faoite on how we could get the 640 out into Bay of Cannes, as the show's Vieux Port location allows most vessels access to the bay and beyond. With a namesake derived from the Côte d'Azur, we had little choice but to see for ourselves how the 640 would soak in *la dolce vita*; De Faoite agreed. The beauty of Cap d'Antibes and Cap Ferrat beckoned—I suggested Corsica, but we had a few hours to play, not a few days—and we settled on the equally stunning Îles de Lérins for an early evening dinner cruise.

I've been on several of Outer Reef's Skylounge and Classic Motoryachts and found all to be well appointed, comfortable vessels chockablock with rich woods, marble or granite and top-of-the-line appliances ideally suited for whisking away voyagers in comfort. Boarding the 640 felt similar: The satin finish of the salon teak glowed, and her starboard helm three steps up looked like a fine place for a helmsman to whisk away hours while at sea. But moving the galley and going with light Corian countertops immediately transformed and modernized the salon. "Putting the galley aft opens up salon space dramatically," Druke said on his way down from the flybridge via the internal stairs. "[She's] a traditional style boat with European flair."

I had to agree. The 640's sizable aft galley is a first for Outer Reef, the ideal complement to alfresco entertaining on her aft deck that's protected from the elements via the flybridge overhang. This layout has been a perennial favorite of mine and Outer Reef nailed it on the Azure—the full-height, patio-style door folds away and an electrically actuated glass window disappears to create a remarkable in-

door/outdoor gathering space. We'd have both open for our duration on board and Drucek reminded me that on those blazing hot Mediterranean afternoons, owners can simply close up the space and put on the air conditioning to keep cool.

The 640 traversed the busy Bay of Cannes and the *Power & Motoryacht* crew joined the chef, with one of us seated at the bar and two more in the galley near the cooktop. She set up her *mise en place* like a pro, began to sear some items on the cooktop and pre-set the oven for others. If she needed a sous chef and a few more assistants, the C-shaped space had enough room for five to slice, dice and measure; there's also a high countertop that flanks the galley for even more prep area. We were all set to pitch in and really give the galley a go, but, smartly, the chef had done a good deal of her prep work beforehand; she politely declined the need for assistance and continued to assemble a delicious assortment of ingredients for our meal.

We gave her some space and took in the sights from the Portuguese bridge, easily accessed from wide side decks and via a pair of pantograph doors on each side of the helm. On night watch or just for easy, safe access to the foredeck, this space is hard to beat. The 640 ambled along and as we rounded the Lérins, the coastal mountain range that towers over Cannes faded into the evening and all at once the 11th century Saint Honorat castle dominated our view. Its ruins—aged by wind and sea—seemed to spill onto the bay with crumbling ramparts that once repelled pirates and Spanish invaders. While daytrippers can visit the castle, the Cistercian brotherhood order of monks remain Lérins' only permanent residents, dedicated to their church and the island's vineyards.

We filed up to the flybridge to take in a more commanding view, and immediately began to vie for a first pass at the catbird seat just forward of the centerline helm. Dubbed the Bridge Viewdeck by Outer Reef, it's the ideal perch for two and as it's down a step, it doesn't impede the captain's sightlines. In total, there's seating for a dozen guests on the flybridge, its large overhang doubling as a sun deck or dinghy storage—a 2,650-pound-capacity Steelhead davit can place a 13-foot RIB athwartships or a 16-footer parallel. A barbecue and wet bar completed the space. We could've stayed for hours, but the aroma of dinner lured us down.

The chef smiled as all eight on board at once entered the galley from both the salon and aft deck. Spread out before us on the counter on both sides of the galley were the fruits of her labor: ceviche with yuzu and avocado; ham with truffles; a foie gras torchon; pasta salad with zucchini; and apple strudel for dessert. Drucek uncorked several local vintages and a few toasts were made to Cannes, present company and the 640 Azure. It was notable that no guests settled in the dining area, but chose to stand in the galley, leaning on the countertops and at the window overlooking the aft deck; the ample space just encourages people to gather.

The 640 Azure hit the Outer Reef trifecta, a custom yacht with myriad well-crafted social spaces, comfortable and private belowdecks areas and a remarkable fuel range. With 1,000 gallons of diesel on tap, she'll see 1,000 nm at 10 knots. Back off the optional 500-hp John Deere 6090s to 8 knots (476-hp Cat C9.3s are standard) and she'll run an estimated 1,687 nautical miles—from Gibraltar to the Greek Isles—between fill-ups.

She's also equipped to handle all the Med can throw your way, with a pair of standard Seabobs for exploring azure anchorages to Trac ABT fin stabilizers to keep things steady in rough conditions. Custom touches like the Garmin MFD next to the king-size berth in the master stateroom spoke to me—I'd use it to overlay



Like any galley worth its salt, the 640 Azure's galley encourages people to gather. There's ample counter space if the chef needs a hand.



a weather routing app 24/7 or just to keep an eye on things while resting belowdecks.

"[It's] the perfect boat for Europe," Drucek said as he took a place at the starboard countertop with the twinkling lights of the French Riviera at his back. He also mentioned that given the hype they've seen at the Cannes show, the Azure layout is now available on all Outer Reef raised pilothouse models up to 88 feet.

Essentially every nook of the Mediterranean has been mapped and oft explored. But the empty spaces still exist, territories untouched by man where the ambient glow from the cities does not impede. These Sleeping Beauties lie in wait for the dauntless traveler, as do the paparazzo-choked anchorages of the Côte d'Azur. With the 640 Azure, it's up to you to decide on the journey. □

