

Islander December 2007 Technology Update

Amsterdam, Antigua and finally Christmas gadgets

Another year has flown by, and here we are again at Christmas. It brings back memories of my article last year and the most popular gadget – the slippers with headlights! I had numerous requests for further information. If anyone actually acquired a pair it would be great to hear how you got on with them.

In mid-November we were exhibiting at the Super Yacht Pavilion and the Global Super Yacht Forum at the Marine Equipment Trade Show (METS) in Amsterdam. The 20th edition of METS was huge this year, and visitor numbers had increased by 3,000 over last year. The total tally was nearly 20,000. If you are looking to buy anything at all for a yacht, then this is the place to come. It has everything you could possibly imagine being shown by over 1,100 exhibitors. However, there are no actual yachts for sale at the show, so all the stands are selling equipment without the distraction of glorious yachts!

From our electronics perspective, everything currently available on the market for yachts under 35m was on display, from navigation to communications to entertainment. Many new products are showcased at METS so there was a chance to see the latest innovations. As I mentioned last month, METS was the launch platform for a number of new products. We were also intrigued to see one exhibitor still promoting a product that they launched last year, but which doesn't actually work. So, even though you see something that's glossy and shiny it doesn't actually mean it's good.

The Super Yacht Pavilion is like the VIP lounge of METS, but without the access exclusivity. This is where, for the first time, we had our stand although we have of course visited every year. We found it superb, and will definitely be there next year. We were promoting communications technology with a focus on VSAT and Fleet Broadband. At this time of the year, our clients are heading for the Caribbean, and this year a good number are heading for the Indian Ocean. So we have been instrumental in making sure we can provide communication services in the Indian Ocean Region and have even extended our services to the south west Pacific.

The Global Super Yacht Forum was in the same building alongside the Super Yacht Pavilion and combined with METS was responsible for bringing a whole collection of key people in the super yacht industry to Amsterdam. The Forum has some very interesting subjects and panels, but on the whole was a little short on innovation.

After the show like many others in the industry, we took the opportunity to visit various yards, which is always useful and a treat when in Holland.

Then it was back home to Mallorca for a few days, and then off to Antigua from whence I have just returned. I can report that all over there are ready and waiting for the influx of yachts from the Med. There is a hope and expectation that as the East Caribbean dollar is tied to the US dollar, more yachts will be heading over there this winter. Will this be true? At METS I met Billy Smith, the CEO of Trinity Yachts, and

when I suggested to him that he must be very happy with the dollar crash as many clients will be interested in building a new yacht in the USA, he said that their build slots were already full up to 2012 even before the dollar crash, and these new potential clients are not prepared to wait for a build slot in 2012!

Antigua was preparing for Charter Week, followed by the Superyacht Cup in mid December, both of which events will have taken place by the time you read this. At the Monaco Show in September, a handshake took place between government representatives of both Mallorca and Antigua to form a marine industry alliance. This was as a result of the Superyacht Cup being run in both locations. There has been very little publicity about this, but hats off to Patrick and Spike.

The various bars and restaurants were having their opening nights and a few yachts were arriving each day. There is a new air of optimism about, as the Antiguan government's policy is to put a strong focus on the yachting industry. We met up with an old yachting friend who lives there, Andrew Blatter, founder and publisher of the excellent Superyacht Services Guide, which now covers both the Caribbean and the Mediterranean in separate editions, and is soon to have a US edition added to the stable. As a result of his work he knows everyone on the ground and was kind enough to introduce us to all the movers and shakers in the local yachting industry.

And now the part you've all been waiting for - Christmas gadgets. Gadgets and gizmos are fun at any time of the year, but at Christmas we don't need to feel so guilty about indulging ourselves... Here's a small selection of my current favourites.

Borat's Bikini

I know this is not a gadget. It is a bikini for men! Let's take a dispassionate look at the functional benefits of the mankini over more conventional swimwear. First, it's a one-piece for convenience. Then, it's lurid shade of lime, meaning that it's going to get you seen. It's safe when you're in the water. Crucially, it possesses a pouch in which to safely stow one's crown jewels. And finally, it is emblazoned with the Borat cinematic logo device, just in case anyone should think your efforts serious.

So there you have it. An amazing Secret Santa! A self-deprecating poolside appearance.

Paintball Shotgun for 18+!

You need to proceed with great caution when handling this equipment. It unleashes fire-power of indescribable proportions and is, by far, the most powerful of all Pinmar's paintball products!! It is all because of the Paintball Shotgun's capacity to hold 20 paintballs and fire them at a range of over 60 feet. So here's an excerpt from the instruction manual "Load your bio-degradable paintballs into the firearm's magazine. Lock into place and hold the Paintball Shotgun with both hands. Carefully scout out for your opponents yacht hiding in the marina or yard, and when you spot your target, squeeze the trigger. Your opponent's boat will be covered in paint in no time, reasserting your dominance in the field of yacht painting showdowns. You may proceed to shout uncontrollably whilst beating your fists against your chest after use".

Rocket Fishing Rod

As all we viewers of the Discovery Channel know, fishing is an extreme sport! If you spot the creature you want, then the Rocket Fishing Rod will make catching it a whole lot less troublesome and more fun. You see, the Rocket Fishing Rod eliminates the need for casting. It also incorporates a shotgun type mechanism which fires out the hook, line, and sinkers up to 30 feet. The baited hook sits within a unique capsule that releases it as soon as the capsule hits the water - this doubles as a float when in the water, alerting you to when your creature is biting the bait.

Note: you will need a fishing and shotgun licence here in Mallorca unless of course you have your Class 4, then you can do anything.

Man Skills – A Training Manual for Men by Nick Harper

This is the ideal Christmas gift for the man in your life – provided he is able to read! Apparently the problem with most men these days is that they know very little about the really important life skills. They may be able to exfoliate and download all that modern stuff, but, faced with a dripping tap or fish that needs gutting, most men will have to look it up in a book or sheepishly consult their antipodean friends! Somewhere along the line, a vital communication link between fathers and sons has short circuited. All the marvelous skills the older generation mastered, all the wisdom of a lifetime spent fixing, catching, bludgeoning stuff to death, have somehow failed to transfer to the modern man. Indeed Nick Harper reached the age of thirty-two before realizing he didn't even know the basics, so he scratched his head for a while before deciding to learn them. He covers the essentials, like how to wire a plug, win at arm-wrestling, choose a suit, bleed a radiator and dance without looking like a hopeless moron. Then there are the more interesting skills, like how to throw properly (and not like a frilly girl), how to fend off a dangerous beast (including dogs, sharks, angry bulls and alligators), how to rip a phone book in half with your bare hands, and how best to jump from a speeding train.....

A very happy Christmas to you all, and go for it in 2008!

Roger Horner of E3 Systems

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