

India Edition

# BOATING

ASIA  
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## THE SPICE ROUTE

Celebrity chef  
Shipra Khanna  
takes to the sea to  
rediscover India's  
historic gastronomic  
adventures



**Green with a grin** Lending support to the climate cause

**Dancing with dynamics** The Veloce 140 comes with remarkable energy saving velocity

**Up in the air** This year heli-yachting is about speed, comfort and impeccable taste



# UP IN THE AIR

This year, heli-yachting is about range, speed, capacity, comfort and impeccable taste.

By Nigel Watson

Adventure novelists and sci-fi writers for ages have fantasied about flying water vessels and sky ships. With new edge technological advancements fiction might kiss reality's cloak pretty soon. Until then, the yachting world needs its helicopters.

Buying a helicopter is the easy part, living with it will dictate whether you made the right choice or not. Today, all of the helicopter manufacturers make excellent products and depending upon budget and requirements, the right machine will present itself to you.

*A hot list of helicopters for now and in the future would comprise of the following.*

## MARENCO SWISSHELICOPTER - SKYe SH09

First conceived in 2007, the SKYe SH09 exploits the Swiss precision and planning of Marenco Swisshelicopter. I had the privilege of being involved at the very beginning and witnessed the passion and drive surrounding the project. The determination required to keep the momentum of this project is evident and has resulted in an inaugural flight taking place in October 2014. With production and deliveries scheduled over the next 12 - 16 months, it is destined to offer an exciting future for Swiss aviation.

The SKYe SH09 is a powerful single engine turbine helicopter, offering very open internal architecture providing wonderful vistas out of the large windows. It cruises at 140 knots and possesses excellent range. With passenger seating of up to seven and an exceptionally large and open luggage area, the scope for its general use across many mission profiles is evident. This, of course, extends itself into the realms of heli-yachting where I am sure the passenger ride experience will be exceptional.





## AIRBUS HELICOPTERS- EC135T/P3E, EC145T2, EC175 AND THE X4

I want to talk predominantly about the EC135T3/P3 and EC145T2 both of which I consider to be ideal yacht helicopters. The EC175 and X4 project need to be mentioned to cater to those interested in the long range, speed, capacity and comfort associated with the new EC175 model, and for those looking into the future to the launch of the X4, as the Dauphin replacement. For both the helicopters, the landing facilities aboard the yachts will need to be very large.

The EC145, available with either the Turbomeca (T2) or Pratt and Whitney (P2) engines remains for me the No.1 choice in heli-yachting. The flexibility of the cabin interior offers great scope in terms of passenger or luggage carrying capacity. The addition of the Fenestron tail rotor together with the Full Authority Digital Engine Control (FADEC) and the new Helionix avionics suite, common to the EC175, bring significant improvements over the older T1/P1 models, which continue to be heli-yachting favourites.

The slightly smaller, and perhaps less flexible, EC135T3/P3 offers a very good heli-yachting solution. It is also offered with an engine variant (a choice of Turbomeca or Pratt and Whitney), the Fenestron tail rotor system and FADEC as with the EC145. A generous baggage area and comfortable seating for four to five passengers in the cabin, it remains a safe helicopter with good performance and very importantly, in terms of size, it is compatible with many yacht decks.



## BELL HELICOPTER TEXTRON - BELL 429

For the first time in many years, Bell have in the 429 an ultra-competitive helicopter that should suit the heli-yachting industry well. Flexibility within the interior, linked to impressive performance and load carrying capacity make this fast smooth helicopter a machine that demands to be considered. Add attractive US pricing and this should be the case. We are starting to see deliveries into the heli-yachting industry and with impressive maintenance turnarounds resulting in almost no down time, paired with the legendary Bell service, this is a machine any heli-yachting client should consider. It runs for me a very close second to the EC145T/P2, I prefer the aesthetics and the line of the EC145 and feel that the open cabin makes the difference, however you will pay a lot more money for an extra seat and a bit more flexibility in the interior.



## ROBINSON HELICOPTERS - R66

Robinson introduced the R66 to complement its super successful R22 and R44 product range. This is an entry level single turbine engine helicopter that is attractively priced and offers a great deal. Rolls Royce turbine reliability provides improved power reserves and altitude performance. There are also four reasonable passenger seats and a generous luggage area. This is a helicopter that has been designed around enhanced safety, and for limited helicopter yacht operations I believe offers a very real and competitive alternative to all of its more expensive competitors. As a user I would happily consider this as a safe mode of transport to and from my yacht by day in relatively benign weather conditions.

## AGUSTAWESTLAND - AW139, AW169

AgustaWestland have had tremendous success with the AW139, a powerful helicopter that has taken significant market share, particularly in the offshore market. As a VIP helicopter the latest variants brings smoothness of ride with a significant reduction in vibration and noise levels that are moving ever closer to those of a private jet.

This advancement in ride comfort may see clients missing their jets less after taking a ride in it. They might just be willing for a full hour and a half trip in the helicopter itself instead of the jets. The AW139 is a large helicopter and will need a yacht that is compatible with this characteristic. For me it is not the helicopter for landing off airport; dropping into a restaurant, or a quiet beach, is nothing less than an event - there is nothing subtle about its arrival. For this reason it does not get the top position, but if you want a powerful, fast, luxuriously appointed machine that will not look out of place at Head of State level, the AW139 may be your helicopter.

With the AW169, AgustaWestland will introduce a very powerful, fast, comfortable and cost effective VIP helicopter. Not available in the VIP variant until 2017, it remains something of an enigma but if pre-orders and rhetoric are to be believed, this helicopter will challenge the status quo of existing top contenders.



With a maritime career spanning twenty years in the Royal Navy, Sultan of Oman's navy and the luxury yachting industry, Nigel Watson's heli-yachting operating company Luvair, manages helicopters on board some of the largest helicopter capable yachts in the world.

### It's a two-way highway

Think aboard your yacht and in relation to helicopter operations - the location and size of the deck, the strength of the structure, how it will be outfitted and who you will train to man it. Include these points in the brief to your naval architect, yacht broker, or shipyard and as a yacht owner you will be able to enjoy the full capabilities of your chosen helicopter.

Embrace the difference a helicopter can make to a yacht's operation and enjoy the ride. Fly safe.

### Before you buy one

1. Think outside your peer group, what is really best for you, your family and the yacht? Don't underestimate the value of good, professional advice.
2. Do not overlook the second-hand market, there are real bargains to be had in the VIP sector.
3. Fixed provisions for mission equipment you may not need, could make the difference when you come to sell it.
4. Seek out the best customer service and after-sales support you can find.
5. On the day you sign the purchase contract, visualise the day you will sell the helicopter. Ensure they are both happy days thanks to the care you took during the purchasing process.