

All In the Family

BACKED BY 146 YEARS OF SHIPBUILDING HERITAGE, CHEOY LEE CREATED A 104 FOR AN OWNER LOOKING TO STAY CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER MOST. ♦ BY DANIEL HARDING JR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM RAYCROFT



LOA: 104'0"
BEAM: 22'0"
DRAFT: 5'10"
DISPL.: 211,500 lb.
FUEL: 5,000 gal.
WATER: 600 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/1900-hp CAT C32 ACERTS
TRANSMISSIONS: ZF 3050A,
2,750:1 gear ratio
PROPELLERS: 45 x 49 5-blade Nibral
GENERATOR: 2/53-kW Kohler
WARRANTY: 10-year structural, 2 years "bumper-to-bumper" on everything but electronics.
BASE PRICE: \$8.9 million

Most boatbuilders get their start creating modest-size craft and, if they're one of the lucky ones, grow their line to include larger and larger boats for a loyal and expanding customer base. In some cases, they grow their line to the point where they find themselves building 100-plus-footers. Then there's the rare occasion when a commercial builder like Cheoy Lee, which cut its teeth making cutting-edge ships, actually downsizes to build what we call superyachts.

Stepping onto the palatial swim platform of the Cheoy Lee 104, and through the nearly 6-foot-high transom door into the vessel's engine room, it hit me almost immediately: The latter scenario certainly has its advantages.

Twin 1,900-horsepower Caterpillar C32 Acerts are hardly the stars of this space, which features a smooth blend of old-school and high-tech safety features. Some of the more traditional touches include large sight gauges on the fuel tanks, beefy handrails between engines, easy-to-check inboard inspection points on the engines, even a not-just-for-decoration fire axe on the wall.

From the new school come nice touches such as Delta-T ventilation, a Sea-Fire suppression system, and an Atlas TecPower switchboard. Borrowed from the shipping industry are impressive sized workbenches (two of them), and a philosophy that every living and workspace on board needs to have two egresses. For example, you can exit the engine room through that transom door, or through a second, watertight door that leads through a guest stateroom closet.

I fancy myself an objective marine journalist, but I couldn't help but wonder: If Cheoy Lee put this much thought into the engine room, what must the rest of the interior have in store?

I followed Cheoy Lee Vice President Panu Virtanen through the cockpit, and noticed that he left his sunglasses on while walking into the saloon; the space was so bright that he really didn't need to take them off. The saloon and formal dining area were spacious—no doubt about it—but when you're talking about new boats over 100 feet, you come to expect that from all of them. No, what really stood out was the warm and inviting décor that Sylvia Bolton Design created; sometimes yachts this size end up feeling a bit like museums (hands in your pockets!), but this boat is as comfortable as a pair of well-worn jeans.

The country kitchen (calling it a galley just doesn't seem right), is where things really get impressive.

"The family [that owns this 104] is all about family. And the boat is very family-oriented," says Virtanen. "The family doesn't have a chef on board. They want to spend time together like they would if they were ashore, and for them, that means spending time in the galley preparing meals." I noticed as he spoke that we took multiple strides just to walk past the oversized fridge and freezer

Test Notes

FOUR EQUALLY sized staterooms can accommodate eight people in luxury comfort, and help end arguments.

THE 5,000-gallon fuel tank lets an owner cruise for thousands of miles before returning to the "real world," and a fuel stop.

EIGHT UNDER-WATER LEDs turn the water behind the swim platform into an aquarium.

THE MODEST draft at 5 feet, 10 inches, allows the owner and his family to cruise to most ports in the Bahamas.

IF WE WERE spec'ing out a superyacht to be family-friendly, we wouldn't change a thing on this boat.

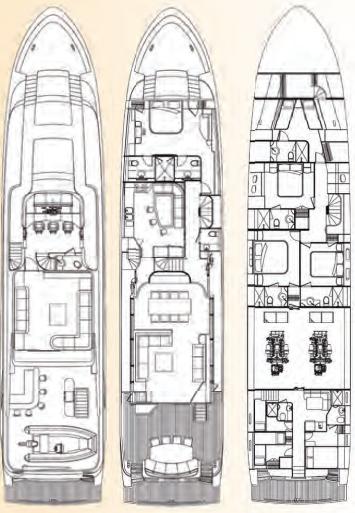
What you can't see is the 75-inch LED TV, which makes for an impressive movie night.





RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
550	6.1	2	13,451	68
1000	9.9	20	2,183	69
1500	14.7	64	1,013	71
2000	20.5	160	565	76
2260	25.0	204	540	81

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 80°F; humidity 62%; seas: 1'; wind: 10 knots; load: 3,000 gal. fuel, 600 gal. water, 5 persons. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Furuno GPS. GPH estimates taken via Caterpillar monitoring system. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at lower helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.



(Clockwise from left): A 40-inch TV keeps guests in the galley entertained. Everywhere you look you see Sylvia Bolton Design's nice detail work. The saloon is warm and inviting.

in the galley. "And this," says Virtanen as he gestures toward the seating for 10 (if you're close with your family that is), "this is just like at home."

With a kitchen of this size and prominence on deck, it would stand to reason that fitting in an on-deck master of any size would be implausible, if not impossible. This is when a second realization hit me: Don't tell a company that's been creating commercial craft for 146 years that something's not possible.

The full-beam, on-deck master boasts all the features you would expect: a desk, settee, large berth, etc. But it's the spacious, carpeted area—18 feet long—that's a pleasant surprise. Walking through this space feels like, well, like walking around at home. Forward is a large walk-in closet that at first seems typical. Then I notice a stainless steel ladder and handrails on the bulkhead.

"Double egress?" I murmur aloud as I inspect the ladder. Virtanen confirms my suspicion.

"Now you're just showing off," I retorted, while imagining how many times a younger version of myself would use this closet ladder to reach

the bow. I'd probably never use the saloon door.

We continue on past a casual, upper-deck lounge and sundeck, which is home to an impressive-sized grill and the boat's only bar.

"Just one bar, huh?" I ask.

"We have designs for there to be three, but the owner really is just going to use the boat with his family."

We have different families, this owner and I, I thought to myself.

As I grabbed hold of the helm offshore of Ft. Lauderdale, with little chop to speak of, Virtanen and I shifted conversation to Cheoy Lee's construction methods, a topic for which he possesses a passion.

"It's all infused. Other builders will have wood-cored decks and plywood bulkheads and end up having three different materials married to each other, and you'll hear it in when you're in rough seas. You don't have any of that on a Cheoy Lee," explains Virtanen.

Part of the reason for their uncompromising construction methods, says Virtanen, is the fact that Cheoy Lee is family owned and operated, which allows the company to focus on keeping customers

happy instead of cutting costs.

"We don't have to report to a stockowner, we don't have to explain why we spent too many dollars on Hong Kong screws," he laughs. "We don't need to do any of that. We don't have to find a last penny savings."

When asked for an example on the 104 where Cheoy Lee refused to head down the path of frugality, Virtanen immediately cited the integral fuel tanks that are built into the hull.

"It's something we've been doing forever. Is it an extremely difficult and expensive way to build? Yes, but we feel that it's the right way to do it. First of all, your tankage is part of your hull structure, an integral fuel tank will make your hull even stronger, you have nothing that corrodes, because there's no metal involved, and they act as a double bottom if something critical were to happen." Such tanks also help lower the vertical center of gravity.

That sturdy construction was appreciated most as I spun the 104 in full-speed turns (25.6 knots during one of our two-way speed runs) in order to bounce the boat atop its wake. I was a bit sur-

prised by what I heard: nothing. The boat was exceptionally quiet.

Wondering if my hearing had failed me, I passed off the helm to take sound readings throughout the boat while she ran at nearly WOT. Sound levels in the galley measured 70 decibels in one spot and 75 in another. To put that in context, I recorded similar readings in these spaces when Virtanen and I were talking dockside.

I was happy with the 104's handling at speed, but it was when she was pulling back into her slip that I discovered how really nimble she is. The captain backed the boat with her 22-foot beam into a space that I'd swear was no more than 24 feet wide.

"O.K.," I said to Virtanen as I hopped back onto the dock. "I'm impressed. But next time you don't have to pick the tightest slip in the marina."

If I think back on the 104 and what I learned during our test, Cheoy Lee hasn't shied away from a challenge in 146 years. Why start now? □

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