

GO THERE

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the perfect weekender

INTERVIEW

ART Marine's interest in
the Qatar marina market

33



AUGUST 2016

YACHTS

QATAR

Floating hospitality

Sunreef Yachts 74
sea lodge, Blue Deer

ONBOARD

BENETTI 11-11
HEESEN ASYA

BOATS
ARABIA
WE TEST THE
DUBAI-BUILT
INSTINCT 360

MODERN
CLASSICS
CONCEPT
ALLIANCES
PAGANI
HUAYRA BC
HIGH-END
SMARTWATCHES

ON BOARD

SAN LORENZO
FLOATING LODGE

BLUE



DEER

TIME STANDS STILL

With his Sunreef 74 'Blue Deer',
Stefano Barbini brings his
exclusive San Lorenzo Lodge
experience to the ocean.

BY STEVE CHALMERS

You may not have heard about the 'White Deer' San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge. Hidden away in the Dolomite Mountains, this unique holiday destination is not on any map, or GPS system. It's not sign-posted, or listed online; there's nothing in fact, that gives away the

location of this noble 15th century hunting lodge - and that's exactly the way owner, Stefano Barbini, wants it.

The 'White Deer' San Lorenzo Lodge is an ultra exclusive signature holiday concept devised by Barbini, the ex CEO of Escada, and his wife Giorgia. Situated high in the mountains, it simply does not exist - a concept that has attracted

1. You can be as private as you want when your hotel floats

2. Captain Rocco, Adriana and Rudolpho

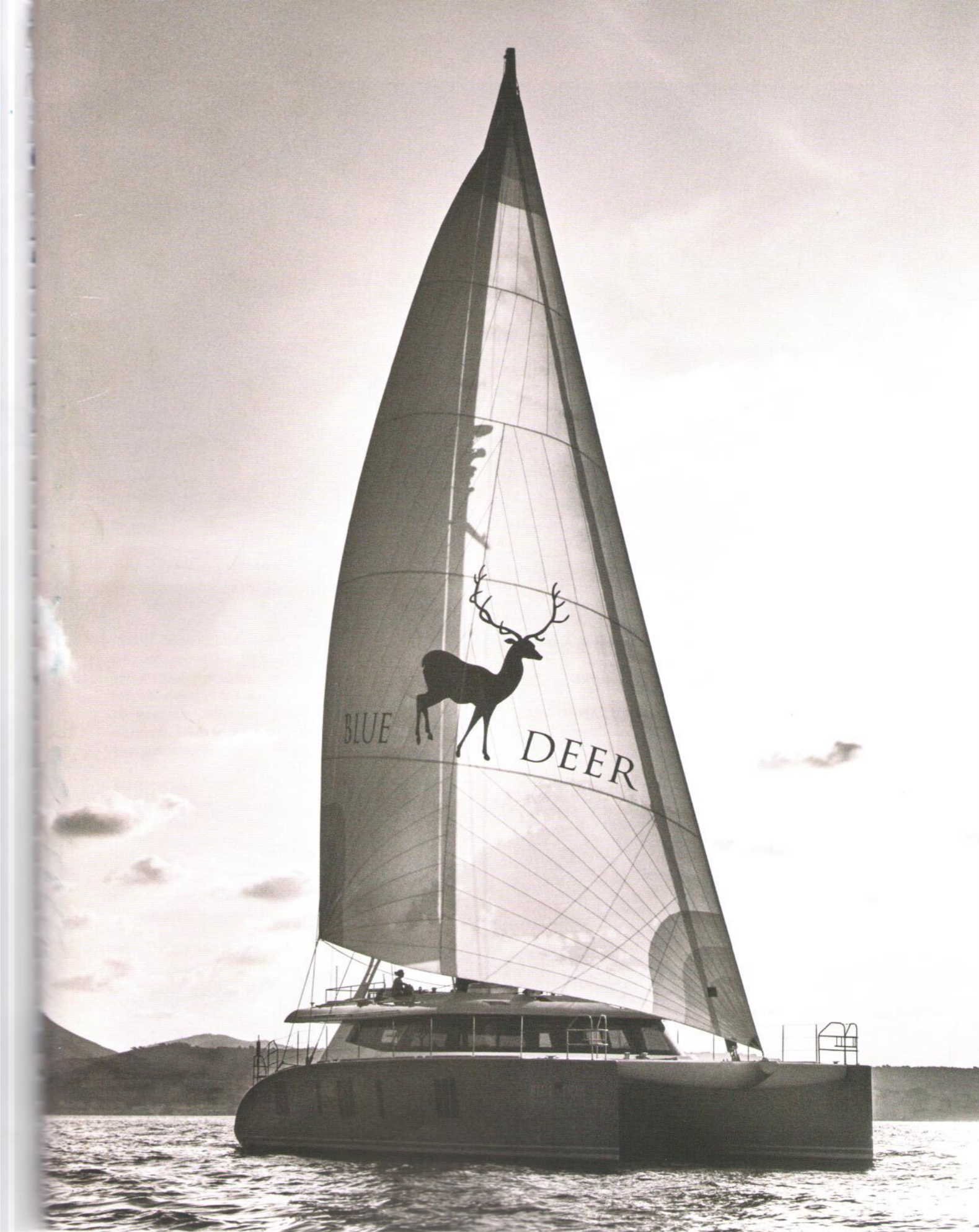
celebrities and businessmen alike, who return year after year to take in the fresh mountain air, stunning nature and breathtaking views spanning three valleys.

With the popularity of this unique location, far away from prying camera lenses, Stefano decided to expand the San Lorenzo Lodge brand and with his family being keen sailors, he knew he



could equal the peace, tranquility and privacy of White Deer on the sea. With that, he created the Blue Deer concept, a floating San Lorenzo lodge that could spend the winter in the Caribbean and move to the Mediterranean in summer.

To recreate the luxury of his mountain lodge, Stefano needed a considerable amount of usable living space - something he knew a conventional monohull could not offer. As it happened, his father was in talks with Sunreef Yachts about a 74-foot build and after a number of visits to the Polish shipyard, Stefano was confident that Sunreef could create the sailing





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catamaran he required, and he put in the order for Blue Deer.

BLUE DEER SEA LODGE

We were eager to experience this very special Sunreef for ourselves, and so we made the trip from Dubai to the west coast of Italy, where two days onboard Blue Deer awaited us. The plan was to use the island of Ponza as a base, taking in a bit of Italian culture and nature, but mainly just to enjoy the Barbini floating lodge experience.

Arriving at the small marina of San Felice Circeo, we were expecting to find Blue Deer berthed stern-to with the passerelle extended for our arrival. Instead, we were met at the quayside by Blue Deer's deckhand, Rudolpho, who helped us into an awaiting 4.5m Williams jet tender, before powering out into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

This was a really exciting way of beginning a trip and as the ocean splashed around us as we neared the 74-foot Sunreef, it all felt a bit like the opening scene of a spy movie. We were half expecting Stefano to greet us in big swivel chair, stroking a white cat, but instead we were helped on board by Captain Rocco and hostess Adriana, then shown to our delightful, bright and airy amidships cabin.

EXTENDED FAMILY

It's completely up to you how you interact with the crew; you can either hide yourself away, or you can treat them as extended family,

as we did. As the fading light of the evening turned to dark, we joined Captain Rocco on the Sunreef's flybridge, where he explained the route, pointing out black volcanic outcrops, silhouetted against the dark of the sky.

It's now you realise that you're completely cut off from emails, text messages and five-way conference calls; enveloped by the night, you focus only on picking out light sources ahead and the jagged coastline around you; a strangely relaxing experience.

NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD

Ponza, the largest of the Italian Pontine Islands archipelago, is no



5

3. Huge amounts of deck space is there to be used

4. An amidships cabin meant a stable anchorage and a good night's sleep

5. Al fresco dining is the law onboard Blue Deer

stranger to VIP guests. The likes of Sophia Loren Gina Lollobrigida and Elsa Martinelli all holidayed in the town, which goes some-way to explaining the quality of its seafood restaurants.

Relaxed, clean and friendly, Ponza is the ideal base for a couple of days lazing around on a big sailing cat, and the sight of the brightly coloured buildings framed by the blue sky was an ideal way to start the first morning.

Heading out to sea, we have no set agenda; it's simply a case of head along Ponza's coast and seeing where the wind takes us. There's no real point wearing a watch on a holiday like this, such



6

is the feeling of relaxation and with the Sunreef's huge flybridge having ample places to enjoy the sun, it was a case of lie back and take in the impressive scenery.

TIME TO EAT

Food is of the utmost importance on Blue Deer. Adriana is a fine chef, utilizing culinary skills she learned at her family's restaurants, she creates modern dishes, often preparing fresh fish caught by Rudolpho from the Sunreef's main deck. After a day of enjoying the warm sun, there's nothing better than chowing down on Mahi Mahi sushi that Rudolpho had caught the morning before. And then there's Stefano's legendary 6-year old Parmesan - a cheese with a creation process that was a story in itself.

Sleep comes easy onboard Blue Deer. The amidships cabin location, mixed with the inherent stability of a catamaran and Captain Rocco's sheltered anchorage had us sleeping like babies. And then

6. With such pleasant European weather, we spent little time in the 74's huge main salon

7. Stefano detailed Blue Deer to his exacting standards



7

there's the waking up process. Raising the electric blinds, light streams in through the 74's triple windows, and you lie in bed watching the sea outside. Magical.

HOMeward BOUND

For the home leg, we set sail for Gaeta, a seaside town that

Stefano promises has the finest mozzarella (Italian's appear to like cheese, a lot). The weather's perfect, and with Blue Deer's sail propelling us forward, we enjoy an open sea, with only the Terracina to Ponza hydrofoil passing us along the way. With Gaeta in sight, Blue Deer rides the current, 'surfing' along with each wave - something I've never experienced before.

It's been a memorable trip on Blue Deer. For us Middle Eastern dwellers, we're used to the sunshine, clear sea and blue skies, but one thing we haven't got is Ponza's unique geographical make up. Jagged rock formations, giant sea stacks, natural bridges, sea-carved arches, volcanic outcrops; it's like being on a floating Jurassic Park ride, but with more cheese. Getting away from it has never been easier or more exclusive - if you want to disappear for a week, then the San Lorenzo Floating Lodge is the perfect getaway. www.sanlorenzolodges.com