



BEL ABRI

THE FIRST AND ONLY AMELS 171 AVAILABLE FOR CHARTER.
THIS PREMIUM SEMI-CUSTOM AMELS SHOWS THE BEAUTY
OF REDUCING DELIVERY TIME WHILE STILL ACHIEVING A
STYLISH AND PERSONALISED END RESULT

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Outside spaces offer various areas for relaxation, including sun loungers, in the spa pool or alfresco dining, as well as sweeping companionways that wrap around the deck offering unparalleled views



In 1997, Dutch shipbuilder Amels built a 49.99 metre yacht named *Tigre d'Or* that was to have a big influence on the way motor yachts would be built and marketed. For one, she was the first yacht to be built to the requirements of what we now call the Large Yacht Code, which lays down safety standards for construction and equipment, plus professional standards for the crew. Just as relevant to the 52.3 metre motor yacht *Bel Abri*, which we present on these pages, the owner of *Tigre d'Or* had a new business plan in mind, for as soon as his yacht was delivered he placed it on the market and ordered another one, more or less the same. This enabled a second purchaser to obtain a virtually new yacht without the usual three to four years building delay.

Finally, eight yachts were built that shared the same basic hull, engineering and layout but had individual interior designs. Previously, it had been thought that owners of yachts this size would never accept a semi-custom approach but *Tigre d'Or* showed that provided the concept was good, the building standard first class and all the equipment was the best available, then many owners were not too concerned if their yacht was part of a series. In fact, they could appreciate the value of a proven design combined with a short delivery time.

Amels became part of the Dutch family-owned Damen shipbuilding group in 1991 and later moved from Makkum in Friesland to another of the group's yards at Vlissingen where there was much greater potential for expansion. Under Damen, the idea of semi-custom building was strongly reinforced because the parent company had been using standard design naval and commercial vessels for the past five decades.





It was therefore decided that Amels would build all its yachts in 'Limited Editions' series and would build speculatively, so as to achieve short delivery times.

The first series, the Amels 171, was planned as an enlarged and improved *Tigre d'Or* with gross tonnage taken well beyond the 500 tonne band that has become a benchmark for yachts of 50 metres in length. Proposals for a new exterior design and interior layout were invited from a number of leading studios while the yard completed a thorough update of the systems and engineering. As a result, Tim Heywood was chosen as the exterior designer, creating a look that he describes as 'athletically feminine' with the sweeping curves that are reminiscent of Italian sports cars of the 1930s. The interior layout was drawn up by Laura Sessa, who has also been responsible for the interior design of *Bel Abri*.

The concept has already proved to be remarkably successful, as *Bel Abri* is the sixth in the series to be launched since 2007, while another five are under construction. All the previous yachts (*Deniki*, *La Mirage*, *Were Dreams*, *Lady Nag Nag*, *Unity*) were purchased for private use while *Bel Abri* is the first one destined for charter use, being available through Imperial, which was closely involved in the construction project and managed the build for the owner.

The structural design uses the well-established plan of a raised fore-

The sofas were hand made with upholstery that matches the timber, picked out with red in the main saloon and blue in the upper lounge

body that drops down to main-deck level amidships, the decks being connected by the fluid curves created by the windows of the owner's full-beam suite. The bridge deck, on the other hand, has a full walk-round, which connects the Portuguese deck that wraps around the wheelhouse to the spacious open-air entertainment area aft. An extended sun deck is partly concealed by curvy raised bulwarks that swell up alongside the mast arch to create an area that is shaded and protected from the wind by glass doors. With a generous-sized pool and sun pads forward, a bar in the centre and loungers aft, this deck provides the full range of outdoor relaxation.

A feature that some might regard as old-fashioned is the placing of the engine room in the centre of the lower deck where many designs now position the machinery space aft of the guest cabins, directly adjacent to a tender garage, but the arrangement on the Amels 171 does have a lot in its favour. Placing the weight of machinery and fuel tanks centrally will give the best fore-and-aft balance while the guest cabins are in the area of least pitching force. This leaves open the question of tender stowage and the solution used on the original *Tigre d'Or* – which I have heard praised by more than one captain – is to put these on the foredeck for normal cruising or the bridge deck aft for ocean passages.

The first big advantage of this arrangement is that as soon as the anchor goes down, crew can launch and prepare a tender for use





BEL ABRI

LOA
52.3m

ENGINES
2 x MTU 16V2000 M70;
1050kW @ 2100rpm

SPEED (MAX/CRUISE)
15.5 knots/13 knots

LWL
46.9m

RANGE AT 10/ 13 KNOTS
9,400 nm/ 4,500 nm

FUEL CAPACITY
115,000 litres

BEAM
9m

BOWTHRUSTER
Jastram BU 20F, 110kW

STABILISERS
VT Naiad 820, zero speed

DRAUGHT
3.35m

**GENERATORS
(MAIN/EMERGENCY)**
2 x Northern Lights 155kW,
1 x Northern Lights 80kW

DISPLACEMENT
687 tonnes

FRESHWATER CAPACITY
17,000 litres

CONSTRUCTION
Steel hull, aluminium alloy

OWNER AND GUESTS
10

CREW
12

TENDERS
1 x Pascoe 6.2 m RIB,
1 x Yachtwerft Meyer
6.8m luxury tender

CLASSIFICATION
Lloyds #100A1 SSC Yacht
Mono G6, LMC, UMS.
LY2 compliant

NAVAL ARCHITECT
Amels

EXTERIOR STYLING
Tim Heywood

INTERIOR DESIGNER
Laura Sessa

CHARTER RATES
@275,000 per week

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without the guests even being aware of it and the second is that you save the space that would be needed by a garage for a tender of 6.5 metres or so. The improvement on the Amels 171 is that the boats are stowed in tubs behind deep bulwarks so you cannot even see them from alongside, although this does rather dictate the size and shape of the tenders. Another cunning trick is that the forward signal mast, which every vessel this size must have, also works as the crane to launch the tenders. This can also be done when the yacht is moored stern-to the

quay, which is not possible with an aft garage. Other sports equipment such as jet skis and diving gear are stored in a lazarette connected to the aft boarding platform.

As the first Amels 171 to be destined for charter, it was interesting to discover if the layout had been adapted for this use but the captain, Matt Bryant, says this had hardly been necessary as features that are important for charter such as good crew quarters, galley and laundry were already in place. One fairly major change was deletion of the small

cabin next to the owner's suite, the space being used to create a larger study/sitting room. This had the effect of changing the guest/service ratio to 10/12 which is certainly generous. Bryant also mentions small improvements such as a better-equipped pantry and larger spa pool that a private owner might also specify and a wide selection of water toys to amuse the customers.

Just as important from the operational captain's point of the view, the Amels 171 has proved to be a very quiet, solid, seaworthy yacht that

handles like a larger vessel. 'As a design, she is just right' says Bryant. The experience of the builder shows in the fact that all the technical equipment is the best available. This is because Damen builds commercial vessels that have very high utilisation and has learned that the best value comes from specifying the most dependable equipment.

Sessa was faced with the complex challenge of creating an interior for the Amels 171 that was instantly attractive but also flexible so that customers' individual tastes could be accommodated. Sessa comments,



‘By using standard-sized wall panels and profiles, the interior can quickly and efficiently be adapted to the client’s preferences. In combination with a careful material selection, colours and loose furniture, every interior will be unique.’

In the case of *Bel Abri*, Sessa has used what we would recognise as a modern Italian style, which is inspired by the colour and warmth of the Mediterranean. She has personal experience of sailing yachts and has applied elements of sailboat interior design to enhance below-deck spaces, making them seem larger, more open and more inviting. ‘Overall, I wanted to form serene spaces that create the mood of an island retreat or holiday home by the sea and I am very happy that the owners of *Bel Abri* responded positively to my philosophy,’ she explains.

Flat panels of high gloss wood have been carefully selected so that each deck has an individual palette: in the upper saloon, teak, anigre and zebrano with woven leather wall panels. In the main saloon we find maple as the keynote timber with the dark-coloured sucupira as the contrast. The interior contractor was Metrica, with its usual immaculate standard.

The owner’s suite is exceptionally spacious thanks to the enlarged study which transforms it into something more like a gracious library, complete with comfortable chairs and a wall of bookcases. The bedroom also has a seating area and a single large bathroom. The bathtub with a

The master suite, which includes an office and sitting area, is decorated with a simple palette of neutral colours to appeal to a range of tastes

view out to sea is an intriguing feature! Also in the guest en suites, a most unusual stone named ‘stone wood’ is used for counters. It looks just like wood, complete with a streaky grain effect.

It is important to realise that within the existing bulkheads, the interior can be customised and the décor can be entirely different. This will be crucial for the owners who are happy to own a series hull but wish to have their own details and look.

The entertainment and communications systems are up to the minute and the electrical contractor Alewijinse has done a great job of integrating everything from television channel selection to closing the curtains so that all can be operated by the Lantic ‘pucks’ found in each cabin and saloon. Unlike some control systems, these are pleasant to hold and instinctive to use. The problem will be to get them away from the children, of course!

Access to the four guest cabins is via a staircase in the main saloon – another classic feature – which has the knock-on result that there is no need for a glamorous main hallway amidships. In fact everyone enters through the glass doors from the aft main deck so the starboard-side entrance is really an anachronism. The formal dining room is another space that receives very little use on most yachts and awaits the arrival of an owner and designer prepared to eliminate it entirely.

With Amels yachts, one does have the feeling of being aboard a small

ship, especially in the bridge area which includes not only a small communications centre but an office space outside the captain’s cabin so that the mass of paperwork demanding his attention does not spread all over his bed. The bridge itself is clearly laid out with the watch officer having an excellent view over all sectors except right astern. Upright windows and an overhanging brow are practical features that also do something for the overall look of the yacht. The instrumentation is all glass plus the stand-by features that the classification requires but there is also a proper light-shielded chart table for those officers who are unhappy without a paper chart.

For guests who like to see what is going on, there are a pair of seating areas in the corners of the bridge designed so the watch officer can see over the heads of people sitting there.

There is no doubt at all that *Bel Abri* and the Amels 171 in general is a very successful formula. She was delivered – on time and on price – just 20 months after the order was signed; far less than a fully custom yacht which might take three to four years. The price was well under that of a premium custom yacht although the quality is better because all ‘bugs’ have been eliminated. Other yards could do this but most would lack the financial strength to enable them to build the first boat in the series without an order. As it turns out, Amels hardly needed to worry about this as they were soon dealing with an order backlog and of course each example becomes a little easier, quicker and cheaper to build.



The galley is state of the art and *Bel Abri's* engine room is accessible and well laid out with the two 1050kW engines enabling a top speed of 15 knots

