



**Space – the final frontier**  
Alessandro Menozzi,  
CEO and founder of Porto  
Mirabello, outlines how  
creating modern facilities for  
an ever-growing fleet of ever-  
growing superyachts is not  
just a question of business –  
it's imperative.

ABOUT ALESSANDRO MENOZZI

**1,107**

NUMBER OF BERTHS IN  
PORTO MIRABELLO

**24 MONTHS**

CONSTRUCTION TIME  
FOR THE MARINA

**€140 MILLION**

INVESTMENT REQUIRED TO  
BUILD PORTO MIRABELLO

**100**

NUMBER OF SUPERYACHT  
BERTHS FROM 25M TO 140M

**The number of large yachts being built and delivered is overtaking the provision of berths that can accommodate them, and restrictions on marina development or extension in, for example, the South of France will exacerbate the issue in the future.**

There's little doubt that the explosive growth of the superyacht fleet over the past two decades – both in overall quantity and in the number of larger yachts – is nudging infrastructure in the Western Mediterranean towards crisis point. During the summer, the fluid patterns of yachts cruising with owners or charterers means there is, to a degree, an element of musical chairs when it comes to mooring space and, although the traditional favourite haunts can hit capacity, to a large extent there's always a berth free if you need one for a few days.

The issue starts when the summer season ends. The winter of 2017-18 is a classic example of how quickly things can change. Damaged infrastructure in the Caribbean as a result of the fierce hurricanes meant a large number of yachts chose to stay in Europe and, with it being the off-season, they were looking for longer-term berths with the aim of over-wintering in maintenance mode. Few realised how perilously close to capacity the Mediterranean (certainly the Western Med) became and the problem is only going to get worse.

The number of large yachts being built and delivered is overtaking the provision of berths that can accommodate them, and restrictions on marina development or extension in, for example, the South of France will exacerbate the issue in the future. However, new developments are starting to come on stream that

have berthing and infrastructure with superyachts specifically in mind, and my own at Porto Mirabello in La Spezia is one such facility.

My venture into marina construction and operation was actually somewhat accidental, started by curiosity in a lawyer's office. I was there on an unrelated business matter when I noticed a binder with the name 'Porto Mirabello' on the lawyer's desk. I asked what it was about because I was really attracted by what a port could be – I actually hail from landlocked Modena, noted more for supercars and food than anything yacht-related. The lawyer explained it was an old port project that had hit the barriers of bureaucracy, environmental risks and restrictions. Although I have never owned a boat, instinct kicked in and I said I wanted to take it on. The lawyer looked at me as if I was mad.

I met the owners of this project and took over the company with the help of a bank. I did it powered by the idea and by fear of failure, totally oblivious to the investment required (about €140 million) and, above all, without any knowledge of the industry. I visited dozens of marinas, pretending to be a client, trying to learn and 'borrowing' others' experiences. I was young but the fear and the hunger ensured Porto Mirabello was born in less than 24 months.

The fascinating aspect was building it on an artificial island in front of a city,

with wide docks that are almost unique and capable of accommodating yachts of up to 140m. The result has put us among the largest and most important marina facilities not only in the Med, but also worldwide, and a key part of our development was considering what a yacht needs not just for transient summer stays but also for long-term berthing as a home port.

We benefit from the breakwater at the entrance to the Gulf of Poets which renders La Spezia one of the most protected bays in the Mediterranean, and our location in the heart of prime cruising grounds – and within a stone's throw from the major yards and facilities that cover the stretch down to Viareggio. But it's the emphasis on service, security and a sense of community that really makes the difference. It's about making owners, guests, captains and crews feel at home all year round, and it's also about offering next-generation facilities that can cater to the next generation of large yachts.

Of course, development never stops. Even now we are working on our facilities, including expanding the area for the largest yachts with customised private lounges and the addition of 10 five-star luxury suites in the marina complex ready for the 2020 season. The aim is clear – the Med may be filling up as the superyacht fleet grows but we, at least, will be growing with it. We have to if the fleet is to have a home for the future. **AM**