

If you could take just one item to a deserted Bahamian island, you'd be foolish

not to choose the smooth, shallow LeVen 90, says *Kate Lardy*



Castaway

You can't frequent the Bahamas' Out Islands without taking a few risks. Getting to the wild isles requires running over shallow banks, which are littered with coral heads, and the most intriguing anchorages and inlets tend to have a mere metre or so of water in them. The superyacht industry may talk about a 2.5-metre draught as being "Bahamas friendly" but the fact is, it is the smallest boats, drawing significantly less than this, that have the most fun here.

This is something Nassau resident Lucas Silva knows well. He also understands that with risk comes great reward. The shallow, clear waters make an unbeatable playground for his extended family to enjoy together. His yachts of choice to play with here have ranged from a 37-metre raised pilothouse Admiral to a 15-metre Nisi power cat. Both award winners, the one thing they had in common was a flair for the unusual – and that element is what he has taken with him on his quest to create the ultimate Bahamas superyacht.



For this, his third yacht built with consultant YachtCreators, he wanted to bring together the best traits of his previous boats: from the catamaran, the ability to connect with the water; from the Admiral, the comfort and security of a superyacht. The result? A 27-metre vessel built to class with huge deck spaces that can park itself right on the beach.

All design decisions were made while picturing a beautiful day in the Exumas – those 365 unspoiled islands of brilliant-white sand and swimming-pool-blue water. The yacht needed to have a shallow draught, of course, and to harmoniously blend indoor and outdoor spaces together to keep guests at one with the unique and gorgeous surroundings.

Vripack, initially consulted for the naval architecture, ended up taking over the entire design, inside and out, while fellow Dutch company Van der Valk was chosen to build the all-aluminium yacht. YachtCreators, working with Silva, were the drivers that pulled the concept together, creating a whole new brand – LeVen – in the process.

The three-tiered aft deck is the first hint that this is not your typical motor yacht. A generous bathing platform is the launch pad for the water toys kept in the adjacent lazarette, which YachtCreators calls the trunk. The mezzanine level is the primary lounging area, with aft-facing seating for keeping an easy eye on young swimmers, while the dining table sits higher still, giving crew a chance to set up for meals while not disturbing guests.

A long flybridge overhang shelters the dining area. Hovering at an immense height over the deck, it gives the space a superyacht feel that belies the 27-metre LOA. It also makes for an almost 12-metre-long top deck above: a sophisticated outdoor lounge that straddles sun and shade, and is also the home of the yacht's only bridge.

Inside, oversized windows offering a true 360-degree view provide that all-important connection with the water. The main deck is designed around a "great room" concept, combining the saloon and galley into one big space. Forward, instead of a helm station, is the open galley. Guests seated at the island here have premium forward-facing views while under way.

Virtual reality technology played a key role in the arrangement. Barin Cardenas, CEO of YachtCreators, says they presented the yacht in full VR two years ago as a marketing tool, but "it ended up that we noticed things we didn't like by walking the space. The galley was originally aft, the lounge was wrapping under the windshield and looked back. We switched the entire main deck based on VR."



“IT’S ABOUT GIVING YOU THE FEELING THAT YOU ARE NOT AFRAID TO TOUCH ANYTHING, EVEN IF YOU COME RIGHT FROM THE BEACH”

The LeVen 90’s top deck houses the bridge (above) and the open-air lounge (opposite page, bottom). The aft main deck (right) offers plenty of sun and seating and has access to the bathing platform (below right)



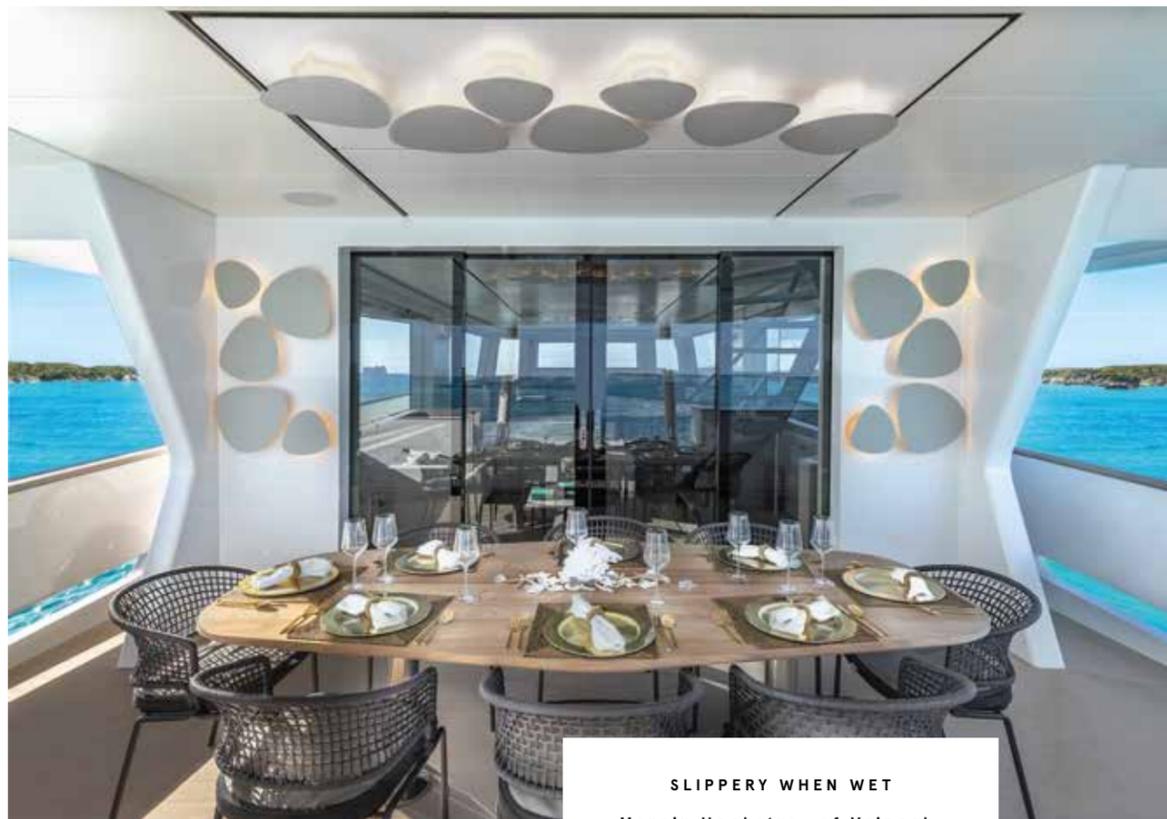
In tune with the yacht's intended cruising grounds, the interior decor has a casually elegant beach feel. The natural palette relies on grey-washed oak that has a light sandy tone, contrasted with brushed metal in a dark bronze. There is nothing shiny or glaring. It is a calm and neutral milieu in which ornate detailing is eschewed for simple yet luxurious comforts, like the soft leather of the sofas that invite you to sit. "It's about giving you the feeling that you are not afraid to touch anything, even if you come right from the beach," says Marnix Hoekstra, co-creative director of Vripack.

Down below, a wall covering in the master suite picks up on the theme by mimicking ripples in the sand. This aft cabin is rivalled by a substantial VIP forward. "It's an example of how our design is underpinned by the naval architecture," says Hoekstra. The hull is extra beamy forward, allowing space for this generous VIP.

It's a layout that suits Silva's family. Like many yachts, the LeVen must cater for a multi-generational group, and Silva himself takes the VIP in order to offer his parents the master. A twin cabin to port takes care of the kids, and



Up a level from the mezzanine lounge is an alfresco dining area (right) and through the wide glass doors that connect the interior and exterior is the main saloon (below). Opposite page, top: the main saloon looking aft and (bottom) the forward galley



SLIPPERY WHEN WET

Marnix Hoekstra, of Vripack, explains how the hull that defies naval architecture principles came to be

The Slide Hull comes from the commercial world. Around nine years ago, a captain of a commercial ship said to us, "I've got this perfect boat running. I'm going out in the heaviest weather; everybody wants to be on my boat when I have to go to these windmills, etc, but I have no idea why it is so good." We said, "That's easy; we'll figure it out for you."

So we took a ride with him in heavy weather and the guys came back like, "Yeah, this is weird because this hull should not perform. Every theory we have tells us that this hull is bad, but we've been on her and she performs!"

We figured out what made the hull work so incredibly well. After we found that out, we were able to see it doesn't comply with any fundamental naval architecture formulas, so we couldn't calculate the boat as such. We were therefore able to apply a patent on it, because it's really a radical innovation.

Originally it was built by this captain. He built it, didn't like it, and he changed it; he changed his boat like 10 times, just an innovator working by heart. We actually improved on it once we figured out how it worked, so we hold a joint patent with him now.

The beauty of it is it has no dynamic trim; it rides [level]. And particularly in a little heavier waves or a little chop, it's the smoothest ride you've ever seen.

there is an extra queen cabin for guests to starboard. In all cabins, the hull windows stretch sufficiently low for those lying in bed to get an invigorating sea view.

"The idea was to tackle the five senses – sight, sound, taste, smell, touch," Cardenas says. "Everything that you see should connect with the water, everything your hand touches should feel good." Sound – or lack thereof – is taken care of by a superyacht-grade noise attenuation system by Van Cappellen. Furthermore, all house systems can run off batteries for a completely silent yacht at anchor.

"The electric system is a bit different than the usual yacht," Cardenas explains. "Much like a Tesla, everything runs through the batteries. All systems – AC/DC/120/240 – everything is powered from a massive lithium battery bank offering stable, constant and clean power. That bank is constantly topped off by several independent systems for a truly redundant power source."

This was a key part of the plan to make a "beachfront home experience", as Cardenas describes it. "Drop anchor, lower the main deck windshield, fully open the saloon doors and let the ocean breeze run through the main deck from

bow to stern," he says. "Self-closing doors will keep the cabins cool, as the lithium bank can run full hotel operations and the lower deck air conditioning for eight hours in daytime. In the evening the generators come on to top off the batteries while guests take hot baths, cook dinner and such. This then lets the boat run in silent mode in full night operations for up to 12 hours."

Comfort under way is helped by Vulkan thrust-bearings that separate the running gear from the gearbox and engine, so there is none of that jerky push-and-pull feeling when the engines engage. "This also means the engines can move independently, so we can use softer mounts and a stiff engine bed for a massive reduction in vibrations," adds Cardenas.

But the main contribution to a smooth ride is the patented Slide Hull by Vripack. The boat runs flat; there is no bow rise thanks to this revolutionary design that directs the passing water to "slide" down the hull (see previous page). It is Vripack's largest application of the hull shape to date.

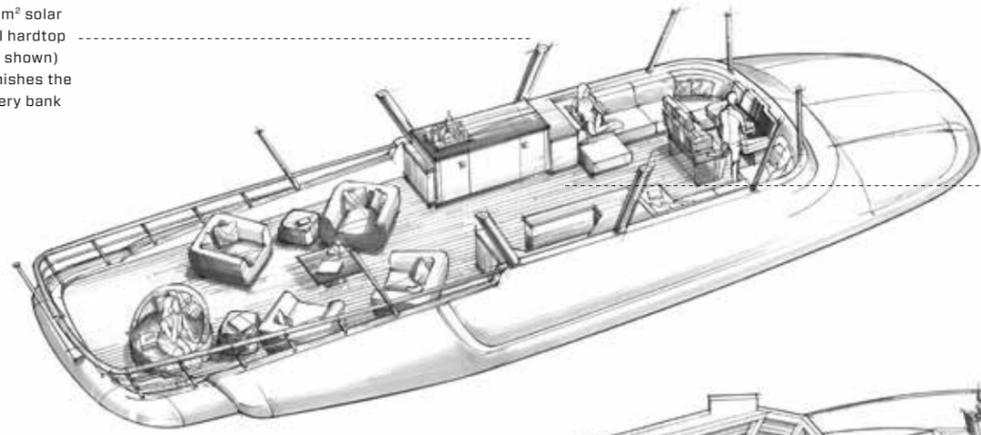
The designers then took it one step further, reducing the draught to an incredibly shallow 1.37 metres by incorporating Voith Linear Jet propulsion. In this system, the propellers are fully protected within nozzles integrated into the hull. They are quiet, vibration-free, efficient and, above all, allow the yacht to access shallow areas with confidence – with even the option to "beach" the yacht, like a dinghy or catamaran.



LeVen 90

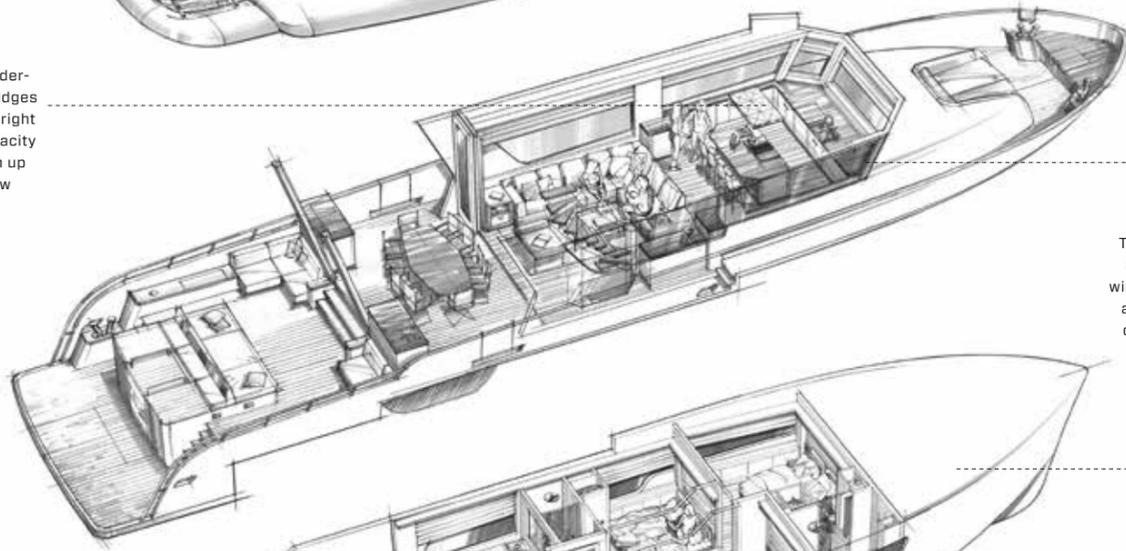
LeVen Yachts

A 50m² solar panel hardtop (not shown) replenishes the battery bank

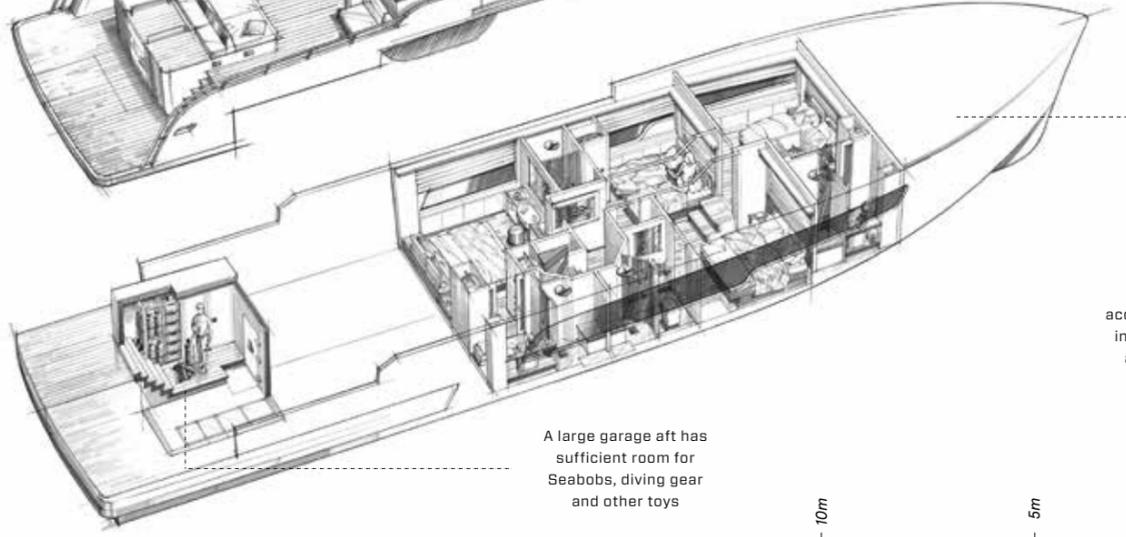


The "teak" deck is actually M-EcoDeck, a sustainable and recyclable composite

Seven under-counter fridges exceed upright fridge capacity and open up the view



The forward main deck window lowers at the push of a button



Crew are accommodated in two cabins at the bow

A large garage aft has sufficient room for Seabobs, diving gear and other toys



LOA 27.45m	Speed max/cruise 28/22 knots	Freshwater capacity 2,000 litres	Construction Aluminium hull and superstructure	Interior design Vripack	Yard Van der Valk Waalwijk, the Netherlands t: +31 (0) 416 651 562 e: info@vandervalkshipyard.com w: vandervalkshipyard.com
LWL 26m	Range at 18 to 25 knots 500nm	Tender 1 x 4.35m Williams Sportjet 435	Classification RINA	Builder/year LeVen Yachts/2020 Fort Lauderdale, US t: +01 954 650 7353 e: hello@levenyachts.com w: levenyachts.com	
Beam 6.7m	Generators 2 x Northern Lights 25kW	Owners/guests 8	Naval architecture Vripack		
Draught (full load) 1.37m	Fuel capacity 12,000 litres	Crew 4	Exterior styling Vripack		
Gross tonnage 135GT					
Engines 2 x 1900hp MTU 12V 2000 M96L					

The beach house theme of the LeVen 90 is echoed in the sand-inspired wall covering in the master cabin (far right) while the low windows in the guest twin cabin allow for a great view (bottom right)



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“The nozzles are made from cast aluminium so they can hold the vessel’s weight,” says Yoeri Bijker, of Van der Valk Shipyard.

The LeVen is the second vessel to incorporate this drive system following a commercial catamaran three years ago. Initially there was some question about whether it would work on a monohull, but Hoekstra saw the potential and draught advantages of combining it with the Slide Hull. “The only thing we have left to do is beach her,” he says. “I can’t wait to do that.”

While this particular design is the answer to Silva’s yachting needs, it is also a repeatable concept that YachtCreators and Van der Valk are offering as a new range. The aluminium construction makes it highly adaptable to various layouts. “The hull is made from such a strong skeleton and rigid frame that we don’t need any structural bulkheads, so can freely make an arrangement in terms of the interior,” says Bijker.

It’s a concept that will appeal to anyone looking for a luxurious castaway experience. YachtCreators may be calling the LeVen 90 “the ultimate Exumas superyacht”, but it’s really for family-focused owners everywhere who want to be close to the sea. ■

