



Courtesy of Borgo Santo Pietro Group

The meaning of luxury at sea

Interview with
Claus Thottrup,
Co-owner, Borgo
Santo Pietro Group
and Satori Yacht



Ask most people what a “luxury cruise” looks like, and they might talk of cocktails and silver service, shiny gin palaces and flashy destinations where people go to be seen and surrounded by A-list celebrities. This attitude is changing fast, especially for our guests, who are among the growing number of people who are cash-rich and time-poor. Those few days they choose to spend on a boat out at sea are precious.

So, what is luxury for these guests? It is being able to sail into calm bays and hidden lagoons where the turquoise water is translucent and there are no ships or tourists destroying the view. It is deciding whether you prefer to spend the day sailing and playing in the waves or simply wake up at a new destination each day. It is choosing whether to drop anchor close to the shore or in deeper waters for diving – and having a captain who can do this quickly and safely.

This type of freedom and control is partly what makes Satori Yacht so unique. She is a 41.5-metre schooner with custom North Sails and interiors swathed in teak and mahogany, which my wife Jeanette and I personally

designed for a maximum of ten guests and nine crew. Along with her ‘20s and ‘30s aesthetic and exquisite features – walnut panelling, marble en-suites, vintage silverware from the Italian navy – she has the latest technology and water toys. This season she’ll sail from the south of France across to Tuscany, around to Corfu and Montenegro, up to Venice, then play a little around the Cyclades islands and Turkey.

Thanks to Satori’s high-end systems both above and below deck, our captain can truly tailor-make our guests’ experience depending on their wishes and the weather conditions. If it is too windy in one bay, he can sail to a more sheltered one. If the guests have a sudden desire to visit a destination, he can sail all night so they can wake up there. After all, a luxury cruise should not be like a bus service with fixed timings and destinations, nor like a hotel fixed in one spot.

Nor should it be like a canteen. When my wife and I first chartered a traditional gulet boat in Turkey 12 years ago, we had control over the sailing but not over the food. We

believe those looking for an exclusive sailing experience shouldn't have to eat a hamburger, unless they want to, or wake up for breakfast at a set time or use a plastic plate.

Our two chefs and hostess join us for the season from our boutique Borgo Santo Pietro hotel estate in the Tuscan hills, where we have a cooking school and one of our two Michelin-starred restaurants, Meo Mondo.

Synergies with our other hospitality businesses therefore allow us to take a broader view of luxury at sea: it's about the sailing experience, but also

Firstly, by thinking carefully about how to tailor the ships and experience to the desires and expectations of the guests, whatever their budget.

Secondly, by looking at how to differentiate the experience of guests on the same ship who are prepared to pay more for their holiday. And thirdly, by employing 5-star crew and staff. Just as our guests should be treated as individuals with their own ideas and desires, so our crew are individuals and not simply roles. Interaction with crew members, chefs and other staff is fundamental to a guest's experience whatever the size of the ship.

Talking of people who provide a 5-star service, it is appropriate to mention RINA. When we had Satori hand-built in Bodrum, Turkey, we were determined to have her certified in Europe by RINA because the safety and well-being of our guests is fundamental. Collaborating closely with ourselves as the designers and with our captain, RINA helped us to build safety into the very design of Satori and the mindset of our crew.

What, then, is luxury at sea? I'd say it is all about the human touch, about flexibility and individuals who go above and beyond to give their clients the best possible experience. And that applies to 8,000-pax cruise ships as much as it does to Satori Yacht.

BIOGRAPHY

Claus Thottrup is the CEO, co-founder and co-owner of the Borgo Santo Pietro Group together with his wife, Jeanette Thottrup. This collection of luxury lifestyle companies comprises the five-star Borgo Santo Pietro boutique hotel estate, high-end design and construction company PN Homes, Michelin-starred restaurants Meo Modo and La Bottega del Buon Caffè, luxury yacht Satori, the Borgo Cooking School, and the line of natural skincare Seed to Skin. Originally from Denmark, he also owns and runs PN Homes Italy and PN Homes UK, designing and constructing boutique hotels and high-end private residences.



Satori Yacht, courtesy of Borgo Santo Pietro Group

very much about the service. This may be a growing trend, as we are not the only ones moving from high-end hotels to high-end hospitality on the water.

Clearly, such an exquisite vessel as Satori cannot be extended into a giant cruise ship carrying 8,000 passengers. Nor can our concept of exclusive hospitality at sea simply be expanded to a mass market. But I believe that even larger cruise companies can provide a 5-star service for all their guests.

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 www.satoriyacht.com