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YACHT of DREAMS

David Brandon, managing director of Savenio Signature Travel Experiences, recounts life aboard The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's newest addition.

The next generation of luxury vessels is here, and the finest example is The Ritz-Carlton *Ilma*. From the impeccable service to the stylish interiors, *Ilma* is a floating extension of The Ritz-Carlton hotel concept, designed for maximum comfort and elegance – and I'm one of the first people to experience it. I'm sailing from the Spanish port of Barcelona to St Tropez on the French Riviera, and *Ilma's* interiors are breathtaking. Crafted by the renowned Tillberg Design of Sweden, everything from the furniture to the lighting reflects a polished aesthetic with sleek lines, soft tones and refined textures.

Upon boarding, I'm greeted by Pia Maria Raeder's captivating *Sea Anemones*, the first of several noteworthy artworks on *Ilma*. These stunning, biomorphic sculptures are handcrafted from thousands of beechwood sticks and commissioned exclusively for the yacht. This attention to detail is consistent throughout the vessel.

From the spacious suites to the intuitive personal service, every part of the experience feels like it was made just for me. While settling into my suite, I discover high-end toiletries and a bespoke minibar selection. I'm particularly impressed by the suite ambassador who takes care of everything, from unpacking my luggage to fulfilling my special requests with exceptional care.

Above and beyond
Ilma builds upon the success of *Evrima* to shepherd The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection into a new era. With 10 decks,

a variety of larger communal areas, expanded wellness facilities and enhanced dining options – yet fewer passengers than your average luxury cruise – privacy and exclusivity are maintained alongside an elevated sense of intimacy.

Despite knowing this, the onboard Ritz-Carlton Spa completely surprises me. With a sauna, steam rooms and an extensive menu of treatments, it's an oasis of relaxation. The fitness facilities are well-equipped and I'm delighted to discover that not only are the wellness offerings top-notch, but the treatments are exceptional, too, allowing me to maintain balance while onboard. Fortunately so, considering the numerous indulgences at my fingertips.

The culinary scene aboard *Ilma* is outstanding, running the gamut from Mediterranean to Asian. The Beach House has a Pan-Latin menu crafted under the guidance of Fabio Trabocchi, by Michael Mina, known for his creative approach and dedication to using high-quality ingredients. However, sampling the Pan-Asian offerings at Memori was an absolute highlight. Moët & Chandon is the house champagne, but the wine list offers a range of renowned labels and hidden gems, all of which complement the cuisine beautifully. I recommend arranging a private tasting in the Wine Vault, one of *Ilma's* signature experiences.

Show time
Onboard entertainment is an elegant and low-key affair with performances, piano bars and sophisticated evening lounges taking pride of place throughout

the concept. *Ilma's* focus is more on intimate experiences than big shows. The shore excursions are fantastic and offer unique and immersive experiences, such as private tours of historical sites, wine tastings and workshops. Each journey ashore is well-organised and dives deep into the local culture and heritage.

I make time to enjoy sunset cocktails around the infinity pool – there's nothing like watching the sun dip below the horizon with my favourite tippie in hand – Champagne, of course – and take in the beauty of *Ilma*. Her standout features are the stunning aft marina and infinity pool. It provides an unparalleled connection to the sea, transforming the yacht into a floating haven where guests can relax, swim or participate in water sports directly from the yacht.

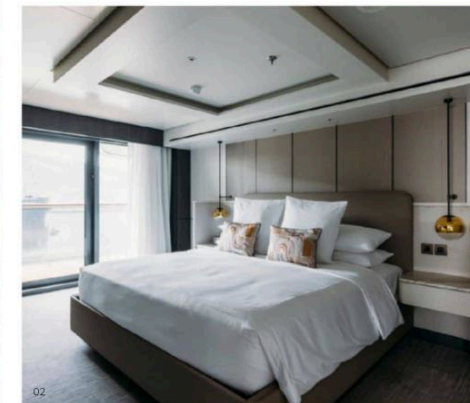
Ilma radiates glamour in a subtle way. It's not about flashy opulence but understated elegance. Everything is designed with meticulous attention to detail, offering luxury in the most refined way. ♦



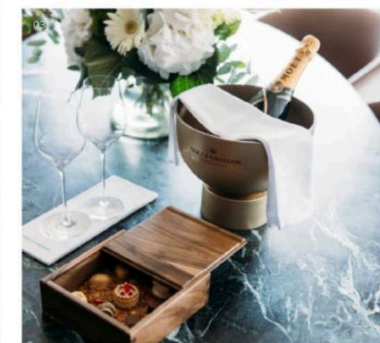
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04



02



01 *Ilma* sets a new standard in cruising. 02 Suites are spacious and contemporary. 03 An elevated in-room dining experience. 04 Take a dip on the pool deck. All images courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection.

Cruise file
ritzcarltonyachtcollection.com