

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Lexus to hit the sea in 2019 with luxury yacht

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A rendering of the Lexus LY 650 luxury yacht. Image credit: Lexus

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is revealing more details about its upcoming yacht, as the brand continues to invest in ventures beyond the automotive space.

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The first Lexus LY 650 is expected to be completed in late 2019 before making its global debut. As automakers are capitalizing on the growing popularity of yachting, sharing innovative designs meant for the waves, Lexus is making a splash by starting production on its own vessel.

"Now might be a good time for automakers to enter the yacht industry because there is a growing number of people who can afford such luxury, as evidenced by the growth in yacht sales," said Ron Kurtz, president of the [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta. "In addition, the health of the auto industry is being challenged by a lot of competition from both traditional and non-traditional automakers and transportation alternatives.

"There seems to be some tendency for luxury brands to lend or sell their names and their cachet to products in different industries," he said. "This has included restaurants, hotels and now yachts."

Mr. Kurtz is not affiliated with Lexus, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Lexus](#) was reached for comment.

Seaworthy

The first-ever Lexus production yacht is being heralded as the automaker's fourth flagship alongside the LS sedan, LX SUV and LC coup.

At 65 feet in length with a 19-foot beam form, the LY 650 goes beyond the initial concept designs Lexus has shared in the past.



The original Lexus' sport yacht concept. Image credit: Lexus

Lexus first dove into the boating sector with its Sporting Yacht Concept, alluding to a future in new lifestyle markets in January 2017.

The automaker's metaphorical jump into boating started with a sport yacht design with high-performance twin engines, not intended to be put into production.

Lexus' one-off design project was created by The Toyota Marine Department, inspired by its fleet of premium Ponam yachts that were launching in Japan. The idea was to build a recreational sporting yacht with twin high-performance Lexus V8 engines that accommodates six to eight people ([see more](#)).



Interior rendering of the LY650 yacht. Image credit: Lexus

The LY 650 will sleep six and include three staterooms as well as additional multipurpose entertainment and lounge areas. The Lexus design principles are captured in the sleek exterior, including a pronounced bow and curved deck accents.

Lexus chose Wisconsin-based Marquis-Larson Boat Group, which has decades of experience in bespoke boat building, to build, sell and service the yacht.

Setting sail

Lexus is one of several luxury automakers hitting the water and doubling down on attracting more boating enthusiasts.

Italian automaker Maserati is returning as the official car of the Cannes Yachting Festival for the second year, a role that includes acting as a chauffeur for VIP guests and providing hospitality in an on-site lounge.

A "Drive & Sail" program will allow consumers to get a feel for Maserati on both land and water. Happening from Sept. 13 to 15, the experiences will let visitors take the cars on the road and climb aboard the Maserati Multi 70 sailboat ([see story](#)).

French automaker Bugatti also demonstrated the pull automakers have in the yachting industry with a limited-edition vessel to start off its partnership with yacht manufacturer Palmer Johnson.

Bugatti is revisiting the water with the Bugatti Niniette 66, a new yacht built in partnership with Palmer Johnson. The boat will be the first in a series of new yachts from the two, and will help Bugatti stay in competition with other automakers that are doing the same ([see story](#)).

However, the success of these automotive-boating initiatives remains to be seen.

"The Lexus yachts are differentiated from other yachts by name and design style," Mr. Kurtz said. "The name provides confidence or reassurance regarding quality, but I question if many, if any, of the Lexus owners can afford these yachts."

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