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Capt. Alessandro Orrao was born and grew up a stone's throw from Monaco, just beyond the border at Bordighera, Italy. He began a career in catering and for some years worked as maître d' at the Balzi Rossi restaurant in Ventimiglia, before making the switch to yachting. "I started work as a steward on a 30-meter yacht when I was 23 years old," he says. "I wanted a change after my father died and to live somewhere else, although I still had uncles in the area."

During that first season on board, he was always keen to help the captain during navigation and anchor watch, and the engineer during the winter. "That is where my passion developed for the job and a desire to reach the position of captain," he says. Orrao achieved his goal six years later in 2005; spending four years on the Mangusta 92 M/Y *Soleluna*, another four years on a 41-meter Baglietto M/Y *RC*, then 45-meter Benetti M/Y *BRAVELOVE ONE*, and finally on the 46-meter Sanlorenzo M/Y *Scorpion*.

Then in 2020, he joined M/Y *Polaris*, this 70-meter yacht by Rossinavi. "It's nice to be here on *Polaris* not because of her size, but I like being an Italian captain of an Italian ship," he says.

The captain joined the project eight months prior to the launch of this RINA-registered ice class yacht with a steel hull and aluminum superstructure. M/Y *Polaris* is designed to accommodate 12 guests and can carry up to 17 crew on board. Key features include a sauna, beauty salon, and gym. She was built at the Rossinvi Viareggio shipyard with naval architecture by Arrabito and the interior and exterior design by Enrico Gobbi, Team for Design, and was delivered in May 2021.

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"I was involved in the final eight months of *Polaris*," says Capt. Orrao. "The actual construction part was already finished but having to implement safety on board and having to work hand in hand with the manager to develop the whole ISM part of M/Y *Polaris* was a great experience that would not have been possible without the help of my senior crew."

He is particularly pleased with the bridge. "This is the thing I like the most," he says. "*Polaris* is an ice-class vessel, with azipull propulsion and dynamic positioning — a new system more and more used on boats this size. The boat is very powerful with this propulsion and you have to be very gentle; it takes a while to learn and understand its sensitivity."

Orrao developed the skills to drive a boat like this from 10 years working on M/Y *RC* and M/Y *Soleluna*; they both have a similar sensitive jet propulsion system. “This is my favorite part: *Polaris* is very comfortable and can be maneuvered very easily, but at the same time you have to be careful because she doesn’t allow for mistakes. Once you have grasped it, you can control the movement and do all sorts of things. I want to share this skill with my officers,” he says.

“Not knowing the relationships and decisions made four years ago between architect and owner, it is difficult to say what I would have done differently,” he says. But he admits bigger garages would be on the list “in order to safely operate the limo tenders that are on board yachts of this size these days,” he says. “Equally, the Jet Ski bays need to be suitable for the launch and recovery of any water toy. At times, it seems that shipyards have forgotten safety and the need for ease of maneuver. And I speak for all shipyards, from the most famous northern Europeans to the Italians and Turks ...The industry always wants a bigger tender, five Jet Skis, and the place isn’t really big enough. It’s always like this. If I am lucky enough to build a yacht, I will take care of this.

Polaris and her crew will winter in Viareggio to take care of a few warranty jobs and prepare for next season. “Then I hope we will start a real-world tour,” says Orrao.

As for his own career, his desires are simple. “To continue to do this job with the same enthusiasm that brought me here and the same energy in the hope of being able to continue with my wife (chiefstewardess/purser) with whom I have been working as a couple since 2007,” he says. “I hope to be able to teach a lot to those around me in order to have a new generation of captains ready when those of my generation retire.”