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DUBAI HARBOUR

EVENT PREVIEW

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

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EVENT PREVIEW

Alex Nicholl previews the event for Inside Marine.

Dubai ²⁰²⁶ International Boat Show

Elevating luxury, innovation and sustainability

As the Dubai International Boat Show (DIBS) prepares for its 32nd edition, Alex Nicholl, Vice President of the Dubai World Trade Centre, shares with Inside Marine how the event is evolving in 2026 – from bold sustainability initiatives to a stronger brokerage presence and enhanced business networking.

What can we expect from the 32nd edition of the Dubai International Boat Show?

The 2026 show will build on the momentum of 2025, which welcomed over 30,000 visitors, more than 1,000 brands and a line-up of 200 yachts collectively valued at AED 3.1 billion. For 2026, we are aiming higher still.

Dubai Harbour provides an unmatched stage, with berths for the world's most advanced superyachts and dedicated areas for marine lifestyle, brokerage and innovation. More than 60% of exhibitors will come from overseas, reinforcing our international profile. Visitors will see a wider range of yacht launches, complemented by features that highlight the luxury lifestyle associated with yachting.

The 2025 show introduced a brokerage area. How is this expanding in 2026?

The brokerage sector is critical to the global industry, and its debut at DIBS 2025 confirmed how much buyers valued a dedicated zone. For 2026, we are expanding this footprint, creating a more prominent harbour area for leading brokerage houses.

To improve connectivity, we will introduce a tender service linking the brokerage pontoons with the main marina display. This will give prospective buyers seamless access to explore pre-owned yachts alongside new launches, while offering brokers a platform that recognises their essential role in the market. 

Inside Marine is a proud partner to
Dubai International Boat Show



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What new features are being introduced, and how do they support industry needs?

Several exciting additions will debut or expand in 2026. The Innovation Zone, launched last year, will return on a larger scale to showcase start-ups and next-generation technology. This creates a direct link between entrepreneurs and buyers who are actively seeking smart, digital and eco-friendly solutions.

We are also enhancing the visitor experience through new hospitality concepts. The Cigar Lounge will provide a refined social space, while the Captain & Crew Lounge will combine relaxation with workshops on wellbeing and career development. Our Flybridge platform, an elevated F&B space with views over Dubai Harbour, is being expanded after its popularity in 2025.

Every feature is designed to balance spectacle with business value – giving exhibitors meaningful ROI while ensuring visitors enjoy a memorable, premium experience.

Sustainability was a major theme in 2025. How is it shaping 2026?

Sustainability is now central to the future of yachting. At DIBS 2026, we are launching a Sustainability Hub, dedicated to eco-friendly innovations from fuel-efficient propulsion systems to recycled refit materials.



This hub reflects the UAE's wider investments in greener marine infrastructure and responds directly to the demand we see from buyers and shipyards alike. In 2025 we saw record interest in hybrid and electric yachts; 2026 will push the conversation further by positioning sustainable solutions at the heart of the show.

What themes can we expect from the Annual Leisure Yachting Conference?

The conference sets the tone for the week and attracts more than 300 global delegates. For 2026, we will explore themes shaping



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Sustainability is no longer optional in this industry. Owners, shipbuilders and destinations are all moving rapidly towards cleaner technologies and greener practices, and DIBS is where these innovations take centre stage – Alex Nicholl



the industry's future: sustainability, experiential ownership, AI integration, autonomous cruising and digital resilience.

We will also highlight the role of destinations, with Dubai as a model of how investment in marinas, infrastructure and government support can transform a city into a global yachting hub.

Are there any special aspects of the 2026 show you would highlight?

Networking remains at the heart of the show. The ESS Connect Programme facilitated over 650 scheduled meetings in 2025, and we aim to surpass that in 2026. These targeted connections are a proven driver of business for exhibitors and visitors alike.

We are also refining the VIP Programme. Last year, we nearly doubled attendance on our handpicked VIP Programme to 270 guests from 48 countries. For 2026, we are adding exclusive hours, curated private yacht tours and concierge-level services to make the experience even more effective for serious buyers.

What aspect of the 2026 edition are you personally most excited about? ↴



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For me, it is the sense of scale and theatre when everything comes together. Seeing the marina lined with yachts at sunset against Dubai's skyline is something that never loses its impact.

This year, I am particularly excited about our reimagined media experience: the Sunset Media Tour. We are shifting the Media Walk into the evening, creating a golden-hour, LED-lit route along the jetties with guided

tours spotlighting selected yachts, and a concise press briefing, plus time for interviews and imagery when the boats look their best. The format is designed for comfort in April temperatures and better content capture, with post-tour networking to extend conversations between journalists and exhibitors.

Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

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Walking along the marina at sunset, with the world's most advanced yachts set against Dubai's skyline, is something that never loses its impact – Alex Nicholl

Dubai International Boat Show is more than a showcase of yachts – it is a statement of where the industry is heading. It is about luxury, yes, but also about innovation, sustainability and connectivity.

For exhibitors, it offers direct access to the fast-growing Middle East market, projected to reach nearly US\$2.9 billion by 2027. For visitors, it is an unmatched opportunity to experience the future of yachting first-hand. And for Dubai, it is a chance to demonstrate once again why the city has become the world's most compelling destination for maritime luxury. ■



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