GODDESS OF THE SEA

With a substantial shipyard expansion, new models on the horizon and a growing fan base, Selene Yachts is headed for 1,000 hulls launched.

BY JEFF MOSER / PHOTOS BY SETH HIGH



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I was jet-lagged and over-caffeinated, so I took a seat and listened. Within moments, I was bemused and heartened at the conversation that was taking place.

We were on the foredeck of *Full Circle*, a Selene 60 Classic, which sat on a cradle in the front of the production line at the builder's Zhuhai, China, Jet-Tern shipyard. She was just beyond the big bay doors, close to completion. Her owner, Elisabeth Powell, was on speakerphone with her husband, Chris, going through a punch list of items that needed to be addressed before the boat would be shipped to the Pacific Northwest.

Chris couldn't make the trip, so Elisabeth was consulting with a team of experts on a range of subjects. What made this conversation memorable was that, in addition to Selene staffers, the seasoned crew of specialists was composed of Selene owners.

Jeff and Kami Fehr of *Dock Holiday*, a Selene 59, made smart observations about how to modify the bowrail so that picking up a mooring ball was safe and more convenient. Back in the pilothouse, Jim and Oskana Otwell, who were about to take delivery of their 64 Ocean Explorer, provided feedback on how to adjust the height of the settee for optimal views through the big windows. David Durham, a 54 Classic owner, debated on what model of Stidd seating would best complement the space.

Above: Founder and CEO of Selene Yachts Howard Chen celebrates the grand opening with his wife, Sherri, and daughter, Arina.
Right: An in-build Ocean Explorer on the production line in the newly built shed.





From top: A Chinese dragons dancing team entertained the hundreds of guests and employees; Chen, the author and Paul Cifka of Selene Americas.

A few years back, I had met several of them at Selene Americas' annual rendezvous, which takes place at Roche Harbor in Washington's San Juan Islands. There, I witnessed the camaraderie of the community, too. They are an adventurous, knowledgeable lot and a close-knit group, united by a shared passion of power cruising aboard Selenes. I overheard owners making plans to meet in Maine or the Bahamas. Some went to China during their own build processes.

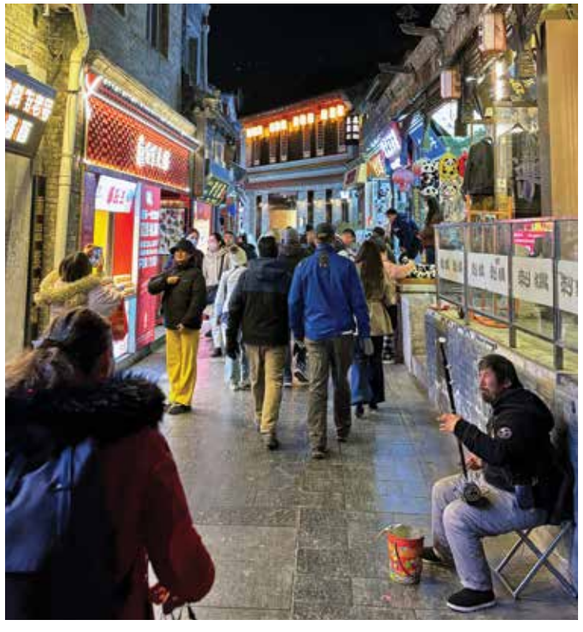
That's why it was little surprise that so many had again made the transpacific journey for the same reason I was at the shipyard: to celebrate the grand opening of a 400,000-square-foot expansion. The $10 million investment includes a new marina, a 300-ton Travelift, and a paint booth and lamination area. All stages of production are now on campus, allowing the builder to operate four production lines, perform refits and repairs, and have 24 boats in protected hangars.

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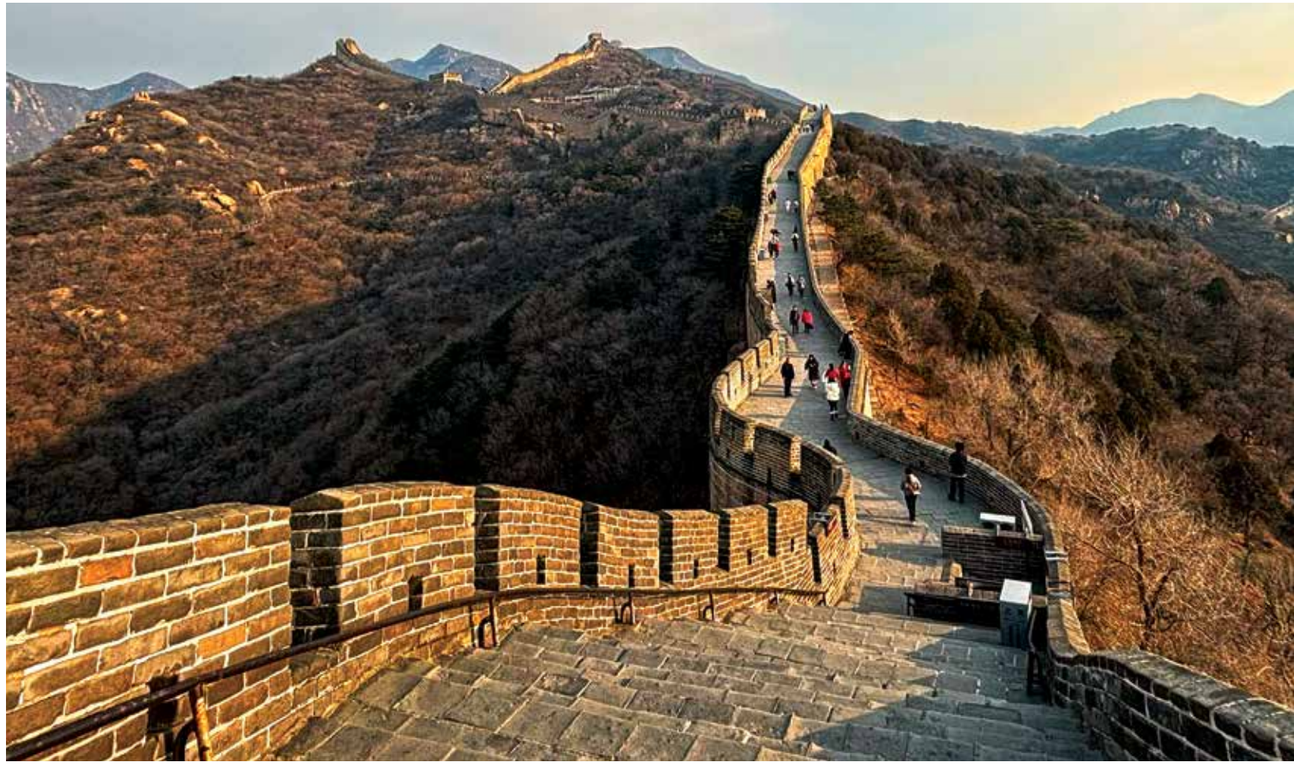






This page: Touring the cultural sites in Beijing is an unforgettable experience. **Facing page:** The Selene Americas team and a group of owners hike up a section of the Great Wall; Family-style dining is the norm.

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Several hundred other people gathered on the tarmac, including dealers from 11 countries and the yard's small army of artisans and other staffers. It was an immensely proud day for yard founder, naval architect and owner Howard Chen and the team at Selene Americas, led by Wayne Goldman.

"Three years ago, this wasn't even a thought," Goldman said. At that time. Selene was struggling in the post-Covid world, and Goldman, who ran a brokerage on Alameda Island off Oakland, Calif., had a kismet moment. Howard Chen's brother, Michael, stopped to pet Goldman's dog, Bella. The conversation led to yard visits and a partnership that has seen the brand reinvigorated.

"She opened the door to everything we are seeing today," he says of Bella. "But what impressed me most is the spirit of the workforce. It is the foundation of everything we achieved together. I want to thank the craftspeople that bring these yachts to life."





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Above: Dealers from around the world and the Selene Americas team pose in front of a 64 Ocean Explorer. **Left:** The author and Chen set up in the new production shed for a *Trawler Talk* podcast. **Facing page:** An opening day keepsake snapshot for employees on both sides of the Pacific.

Three new Selene yachts were along a bulkhead that flanks the facility. After several people spoke, including Chen and Selene Chairman Eugene Chao, we were entertained with a Chinese dragons dancing team, rhythmic drumming and ear-splitting fireworks. We then toured the shipyard and imbibed on food and libations. The party went well into the evening until the red-tinted, full moon rose in the east.

The next day, about 30 of us were gathered for lunch when someone mentioned the fortune of the previous evening's full moon. Chen recalled Selene's origin story: It was decades ago when, as a young architecture student, he had visited the Parthenon and saw Selene, the Greek goddess of the moon, carved into the stone. Years later, when going through the photos, her likeness became the builder's namesake.

Chen turned out to be a fine tour guide as well. After a weekend at the yard, on a trip to Beijing with him and several others, I listened intently as he explained that the city's spine of imperial structures represents a cosmic connection of heaven and earth, the symmetry of the natural world and the synchronization of China's millennia of imperial life. We ate our way through the city, explored the *hutongs* that weave like narrow alleys throughout the area, visited the pandas at the zoo, and raced up a section of the Great Wall.

I will always remember standing under the low winter sun around a nearly 300-year-old temple, gazing southward at the Forbidden City, which looked like a colossal movie set dropped into the modern capital of 23 million people.

The Selene Yachts team is special, and it's good to see members on both sides of the Pacific betting on themselves. New models—including a 52-foot Ocean Explorer and a fast-displacement 62-footer—are expected to join the lineup in the next few years. Chen said he has a target of splashing 1,000 boats.

More than 450 are currently plying the brine all over the world, and I think this company will get there. ❄