

Life Styles

Flying on Water

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Speed is important, but it's not everything. The boats produced by the Frauscher family business are more than just fast; they represent the perfect blend of design, cutting-edge technology, and a passion for traditional craftsmanship—a winning combination.



Perfection is possible when experience, craftsmanship, and innovation come together. At this rendezvous between the Frauscher 909 Benaco and a Porsche 911 4S Cabriolet in Traunkirchen, two variations of perfection meet: uncompromising, elegant, sleek.





V for victory: The Frauscher Benaco rises elegantly above each wave—a picture of perfection

Three heads nod in agreement in a single, perfectly synchronized movement: “A boat has got to fly!” The heads belong to Michael, Stefan, and Andrea Frauscher, and the three of them know a thing or two about boats. Their family has been building striking boats of timeless elegance for 80 years, making everything from Olympic yachts to day cruisers. The three Frauscher siblings recently took the helm at the renowned family business, combining innovation and tradition with a liberal dash of Austrian charm.

When I ask the Frauschers to sum up their business philosophy, the reply is simple: “We take pleasure in making things people really want to have.” Depending on size, fittings, and engine, the boats cost between €35,000 and €400,000. Quality is not an explicit selling point—in this price range, it goes without saying—and in Michael Frauscher’s experience, talk about technical features is generally over in about three minutes. “Our customers usually grasp what we’re trying to do pretty quickly.”

The Frauschers aren’t ones for extraneous frills and frippery. True to the dictum “form follows function,” they prefer clear, clean lines

and classic shapes designed to achieve maximum performance and functionality. But that’s not to say appearance doesn’t matter to them at all. Quite the contrary: they work with a Hamburg-based designer and local architects to hone and refine the natural elegance of their boats still further. Stefan Frauscher sums up what they strive for in all their work: “A well-balanced synthesis of the traditional classic values and innovative technological components.” Combining the two is no mean feat, but the Frauschers have what it takes to pull it off: a real passion for what they do. And, as they readily admit, “We’re lucky in that our customers are a lot like us.”

A mountain lake up to 200 meters (650 feet) deep, idyllic Traunsee is located in Austria’s Salzkammergut region. As Stefan Frauscher looks out over the expanse of deep blue water, the clouds overhead are reflected in the polished mahogany of the deck in front of him. It is a view the former world champion yachtsman has seen thousands of times, but he still can’t take his eyes off it. The love of water that defines his life and that of his family is reflected in the company’s slogan, which translates roughly as “Wonderful Moments on the Water.” ▶





Indeed, you can tell right away that Michael and Stefan Frauscher are in their element on Lake Traunsee. As they set out from the harbor at Gmunden, they look forward to the 12-kilometer (7.5-mile) test course ahead of them with almost childlike glee. The lake extends in front of the helm like a virgin stretch of autobahn, and the two eight-cylinder engines under the stern of the 30-foot (9-meter) motor yacht seem to be quivering with anticipation at the chance to get some “exercise” and unleash their 640 horsepower. As the skipper manages the aquatic slalom, cool as can be, the sleek Benaco cuts like a knife through the reflection of Traunstein, the imposing mountain towering above the lake, and trails a wake behind as mighty as a whale’s fin. Coincidentally, the Benaco’s model number is 909—but the similarity with the vintage Porsche Spyder doesn’t stop there. The two share much more: both are lean, sleek machines built for speed and agility. The faster the Benaco skims over the lake, the higher its V-shaped hull rises from the water’s surface: a picture of unparalleled elegance.

Frauscher boats are designed for use on large lakes and the rougher waters of the ocean. They always incorporate state-of-the-art technology. Michael is responsible for designing the boats, and he takes a very hands-on approach, tinkering with them as painstakingly as any Formula One test driver. “Once there’s nothing left to be improved on a boat, it’s time to move on to the next

Class act: On average, four boats leave the dock each week; the finishing touches are performed by hand



Three in one boat: Michael, Andrea, and Stefan Frauscher have taken the helm at the family business

one.” And indeed, in recent years Frauscher has released a new model every year. Bearing names like Riviera, Lido, Venezia, and St. Tropez, they promise fun in the sun and are available with a choice of electric-, gasoline- or diesel-powered engines; the latest ones also come in a hybrid version.

The Frauschers build their boats with an attention to detail that borders on the obsessive, right down to the company logo on the propeller that is visible only once a year when a boat is taken out of the water for the winter. Each boat is assembled by hand, and a plaque even tells the subsequent owner the names of the two people who built it—no mere advertising gimmick, but a real personal touch. It also helps maintain the Frauschers’ scrupulous standards: if a boat doesn’t pass the exacting quality check, it’s company policy for the same two staff members to perform whatever touch-up work it takes to get it up to par. That everyone naturally takes pains to avoid such embarrassment might partly explain why so few boats fail to make the grade. The professional expertise and skill of the 40 staff members and the fact that it’s standard practice to take each vessel for a trial spin on the lake also have a lot to do with it. Basically, it all comes down to a single principle that underlies every step of the production process: the deep respect everyone here has for their craft and for the boats.

Because the Frauschers don’t cut any corners when it comes to materials and technology, their boats often last 30 years or more. Still,

the Frauschers are as committed to providing excellent service as they are to outstanding craftsmanship. If a customer needs a technician for maintenance or repairs, they make sure he’s there quickly. They know that with the limited number of weekends their clientele can spend on their boats, every hour counts.



Engelbert Frauscher laid the foundation for the Frauscher boatyard in 1927 in Vienna, where boats such as the “Olympia Jolle” were developed. In 1945 the family-run business relocated to Gmunden, continuing the tradition with motorboats and sailing yachts like the famous “H-Boat.”

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