



## **The world arrives in Fort Lauderdale with hopes of a rising economic tide**

By Tony Esposito - October 28, 2024

The Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS) opens Wednesday as the largest in-water boat show and with hopes of bolstering a softening tourism trade in the “yachting capital of the world”.

The show’s seven venues will host more than 1,000 exhibitors, 1,300 vessels and an expected 100,000 visitors and even without one boat sold is expected to generate US\$25.8m in tax revenue for Broward County alone.

“The hotels love it, the restaurants love it,” said Phil Purcell, CEO and president of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF). “I think it’s been a little bit of a slow tourist season. This will be a good shot in the arm for hotels and restaurants,” he told the *Sun Sentinel* newspaper.

In addition, FLIBS is responsible for creating a workforce of its own.

“Once the show is up and running there will probably be around 30,000 workers working the show between the visitors and staff,” said Andrew Doole, president of US Boat Shows for Informa Markets, producer of the show each year.

Riviera Yachts landed in Fort Lauderdale with a container ship with an 11-motoryacht fleet from 39ft-78ft valued at A\$20m, a 34-day, nearly 8,000 nautical-mile voyage from Brisbane, near the company’s headquarters on the Gold Coast of Australia.

The head of Costa Rica’s Commission of Marinas is scheduled to visit to highlight the Central American nation’s “growing yachting and marina offerings, as well as the destination’s leadership in sustainable marine tourism,” according to a spokesperson for the country’s tourism board.

The cornerstone of Fort Lauderdale’s one-billion-dollar-plus marine industry, the show also serves as an economic driver for real estate brokers, consulting firms and high-end vehicles and aircraft.

“We have a number of client meetings arranged months ago because of the boat show,” said John Boyd, principal of The Boyd Company, a business site selection consultancy based in Boca Raton. “It’s a great example of the economic impact that doesn’t show up in the statistics.

“The Fort Lauderdale Boat Show is a one-of-a-kind economic development opportunity,” he added. “It’s about who attends: some of the most influential, successful business leaders, sports figures, billionaire oil sheiks from the Middle East that are in town spending money.”

The 65th edition of FLIBS runs through Sunday 3 November and is usually the first indicator of the US winter boat selling season.