

LUXURY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Robb Report

Taste of Summer

The Return of Molecular Gastronomy
France Reclaims Malbec
Porsche's Next-Gen 911 Carrera S



THE DESIGNERS BEHIND MEXICO'S
CREATIVE RENAISSANCE

JULY 2019

STYLE



Decked Out

Loro Piana proves it can weather a good storm.

LORO PIANA HAS CULTIVATED superfans for its ultra-soft cashmere jackets, knits and scarves (the Italian brand even invented baby cashmere by convincing reluctant goat herders to shear the animals at just six months). But those tactile materials aren't just for touchy-feely pleasure—they're rooted in performance. To recognize this, the usually understated Italian label invited *Robb Report* to the annual St. Barths Bucket Regatta to cheer on Pier Luigi Loro Piana's superyacht, *My Song*—which, as it turns out, also happens to serve as a testing ground for all of Loro Piana's fabric innovations.

"The best way to learn if what you make performs is to

LORO PIANA SAIL BOAT. CARLO BORLENGHI



do an activity like sailing, using pure wool or wool-and-silk waterproofed fabric, instead of nylon," says Pier Luigi Loro Piana, who has pioneered the company's textile innovations for more than 40 years. "We are experimenting with fibers like linen to make special pants or using particular cotton for long-sleeve tops to see how the fabric protects you from the sun. And we try things in true competitions—in a regatta, my team is really stressing the products." And as you'd imagine, the Loro Piana sailors were the best-dressed mariners at the regatta.

But it wasn't all sailing and style: Debunking the notion that his brand makes only cold-weather apparel, Loro Piana unveiled a new collection of lightweight summer clothes, such as sporty Bermuda shorts in breezy linen, knits in cotton-and-silk blends, waterproof parkas, accessories and sharp aviator shades. The shift into more technological materials is a personal passion for the second-generation businessman, who in 2013 sold an 80 percent share of his company to the French conglomerate LVMH. His innovations include the company's Storm System, a proprietary finish (widely used by other high-end brands) on cashmere, wool and other natural fabrics, which makes them completely waterproof and wind-resistant yet still soft and supple. No longer weighed down by the day-to-day operations of running his family business, Loro Piana now has more time



for sailing—and testing the materials he's always wanted to incorporate into the LP collection.

Still, everything—no matter how advanced—has to pass the touch test. "When a customer comes in the store, they start touching everything," says CEO Fabio d'Angelantonio. "They use their hands as much as the eyes." Those looking to go one better have even begun outfitting their yachts and private planes with the brand's cashmere and wool-blend fabrics. And as these cloths have already been stress-tested at sea, you'd expect that they would stand up to whatever the Loro Piana superfan might throw at them, too. **Jill Newman**