

# The Superyacht OWNER

Feature Article – September 2012 Issue

By Angela Audretsch

Compared to the Caribbean or the Mediterranean, Thailand is still a relatively quiet superyacht destination, maintaining an air of mystery. Colourful, friendly and unspoiled it will reward anyone who is willing to make the trip. Not only is it a stunning destination but also significantly cheaper for long-term berths and a growing hub for charter. Two superyachts that have been drawn to these waters are the 41m M/Y *Calisto* and the 36m S/Y *Yanneke Too*. Owner Eric Merlin and Captain Charlie Dwyer tell *The Superyacht Owner* what makes Thailand so special.

“For people who’ve chartered boats many times on the Mediterranean and in the Caribbean, South East Asia is something they must do once,” says Eric Merlin, owner of the *Calisto* who has been living in South East Asia for 20 years. “Phuket is the best place for yachting in Asia, and it is also an island with some of the best hotels, restaurant and spas in the world.” For Captain Charlie Dwyer, who has been in South East Asia for 14 years on and off and with the same owner for 19 years, Thailand is a special place. “I’ve been around the world eight times and Thailand has everything that everywhere else has and probably with a little less hassle,” he tells us. “It is one of the most beautiful places in the world. The people are lovely. The culture is wonderful. How can you beat palm trees on a beach as your backyard?”



*Captain Charlie Dwyer of Yanneke Too has travelled all over South East Asia over the last 14 years.*

Phuket is typically the first stop for superyachts. With three marinas, including Yacht Haven and its 10 superyacht berths, Phuket is a real hub. From Phuket there is easy access to stunning islands and places like Krabi and Phanga Nga, favourite spots for the owner of *Yanneke Too* when he is on his yacht. For something a bit more off the beaten track, many owners head to Koh Samui, an island on the other side of the country. “Koh Samui is the jewel of Thailand,” says Captain Charlie. “It is a new place for superyachts that is really opening up. There are no marinas still but there are hundreds of anchorages. It is the perfect place for the owners who are not looking to be at the dock every day.”

A part from the unrivalled cruising waters, a major draw for owners to the region is the potential for financial savings. According to Captain Charlie, the price of keeping your yacht in Thailand can be up to

30% or cheaper than elsewhere in that part of the world. “With *Yanneke Too* we were in Australia and the owner was looking for a place to keep the boat since we were going to be in the Pacific for up to six months,” he says. “I suggested Phuket because the cost is so much lower here, it is safe and comfortable and the crew love it.”

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While chartering is still a relatively new idea to the country — there are only around 10 to 15 superyachts out there available for charter at the moment according to Captain Charlie — it is a growing industry. “You see more and more owners coming here with the intention of chartering,” says Captain Charlie. “Between here, Malaysia and Indonesia chartering is really starting to take off.” Merlin tells us that *Calisto* is quite successful as a charter yacht out there but for him the key to success when basing your yacht out of Thailand is having a great captain that you can trust. “There are very few large boats in this part of the world, so there are very few professionals to support the operation of the boat,” he explains. “But I have a great captain who has been a captain of yachts in Phuket for almost 20 years, so he knows the place very well.”



*The owner of Yanneke Too and his crew.*

Questions about safety and security are always at the forefront of owners' minds, especially in relation to slightly more exotic destinations, but Captain Charlie is keen to highlight Thailand as one of the safest places to cruise: “Thailand is probably one of the safest places in the world. All of Thailand is — there has never been any attacks on superyachts ever.” However he does recommend that if you are thinking of bringing your yacht to Thailand you go via the Pacific, stopping off at the South Pacific islands, New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia, avoiding the traditionally unstable route via Red Sea.

“For years we did the Med to Caribbean and it is just the milk run,” says Captain Charlie. “This is such an eye-opening place. It is like nothing you have seen before. The views, the backdrops, the culture, the people, the beaches, everything is spectacular. The Thai people really love to have superyachts and guests come in. Not only does it bring in money, but they are interested in the people too.”