



PUBLISHED 18 FEBRUARY 2016 19.00

# New show hits the mark

The first Thailand Yacht Show fulfilled its aim of shining the spotlight on Thailand as a pristine and fascinating cruising region.

**Images** Thailand Yacht Show/AIMEX

The inaugural Thailand Yacht Show was held on Phuket's eastern seaboard, in Phang Nga Bay, at the region's most modern marina, Ao Po Grand Marina, 11 to 14 February.

The show aimed to combine the best aspects of yacht charter, boating industry and luxury lifestyle events.

At the official opening, Andy Treadwell, Managing Director of the Thailand Yacht Show and creator of the now world-renowned Singapore Yacht Show, acknowledged the invaluable support of the various Government Ministries and the management of host sponsor Ao Po Grand Marina.

“When we first started this project a couple of years ago the business plan that we shared with your Government was to turn Thailand into the principal hub for the yachting industry in South East Asia, with Phuket as its epicentre.

“Our declared mission to help make Thailand and Asia the world’s ‘third destination’ for superyachts (after the Mediterranean and the Caribbean) is now changed. The news that the required VAT on charter yachts entering Thailand will soon be waived opens the doors to all those potential visitors who know about Phuket, and want to visit Thailand and Asia. Asia should now become the ‘second destination’ not the third.”



Ministers and VIPs celebrate the opening of the inaugural Thailand Yacht Show, with Andy Treadwell (fifth from right).

Guest of Honour for the Official Opening was Deputy Prime Minister General Thanasak Patimaprakorn, accompanied by an entourage of Ministers and Directors from the Marine Department of Thailand, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Sports.

Treadwell admitted that organising a boat show in a matter of months was no easy feat. “It’s been a rush,” he said. “We have put this together in a little over three months – just imagine what we can do with a full year’s promotion and organisation!”

43 sailing and motoryachts were on display ranging from 13 to 73-metres, showcased by respected local dealers and international brokers including Lee Marine, Boat Lagoon Yachting, Simpson Marine, Burgess, Marine Max and MGC Asia, Northrop & Johnson Asia.



**There was plenty of hands-on fun and demonstrations to create the mood at the Thailand Yacht Show.**

The indoor exhibitors comprised property companies, bespoke furniture manufacturers, cruise charterers and marine equipment suppliers.

According to exhibitors and visitors, the show had a truly 'international' feel about it, and achieved its aim of bringing a new standard to Thailand.

"In order to stimulate growth in the leisure marine industry in any strategic location, you have to look further afield. We have to encourage overseas yacht owners to come to discover Asia with their boats, and at the same time persuade wealthy lifestyle-seekers from all over the region to come and try out yachting," commented Treadwell. "TYS is all about visibility, not only locally, but also internationally."

'Quality visitors' and 'quality enquiries' are making an impression on the dealers and brokers. "Usually at boat shows in Asia we expect to meet a large number of people who have never been on a boat before, and want to 'have a look' out of sheer curiosity," said one of the international-brand brokers. "But here at the very first edition of TYS, we are immediately talking to visitors with genuine interest, who have done the research already, and now want to see what the product really looks like. It's very refreshing."

Leading global superyacht broker, Burgess Yachts reported a number of 'quality inquiries' and potential business generated by the yacht show.

Simpson Marine CEO Mike Simpson said he was delighted to finally see big names and big boats here in Phuket. "This is the first time superyachts have been able to get into a boat show in Phuket, which is the natural first port-of-call for superyachts arriving in Asia," he said.

"This show is the shape of things to come – and they will soon be bigger and better," said Mr Simpson.



The team from Lee Marine, from left: Achara Kanghae, Oraphan Holmes, Tassaneeya Pumma, Josh Lee, Founder and CEO of Lee Marine, Danilo and Kuado Cecchini, Martin Holmes, Lee Marine's General Manager.

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osh Lee, founder and CEO of Lee Marine, said that the event was a 'proper international show' and was looking forward to a bigger and even better one next year.

According to organisers, the function of a boat show has changed in recent years. The internet has placed huge amounts of information within everyone's reach: you can find out the full specifications of any boat that takes your fancy just by visiting a website, and it doesn't take a visit to a boat show to discover the tank capacity of an X-Ray 65. All of which means that boat shows are less technical and more experiential than previously.

At the inaugural Thailand Boat Show, there was plenty of experience being demonstrated at the on-water Demo Platform, with Sea-Doos, JetSurfs, jetskis, stand-up paddle boards and inflatable water toys. One highlight was an eye-popping display of daredevil antics by the reigning Flyboard World Champion, Suksan Tongthai.

Temperatures were exceptionally warm, with water, beer and shade on hand to increase marina-side comfort levels. When the sun went down the party crowd took over the show, with a glamorous VIP reception on board **MY Titania**, and a 'Rock the Dock' party.



Lee Marine toasted the opening of new premises.

Lee Marine celebrated the opening of their new offices at Ao Po Grand Marina, with Founder and CEO Josh Lee acknowledging the huge amount of teamwork that has gone into 30 years in the marine business in Thailand.

Lee Marine had a significant presence at the event, its home turf, displaying the largest fleet of boats in the company's 18-year history. The impressive line-up included the Pershing 92, 72 and 46, along with the Ferretti 731 and 720. Also being displayed were the Riviera 525 SUV, Riviera 48 Flybridge, Maiora 103, 35-metre Custom Power Catamaran, Sunseeker Manhattan 63 and the Jeanneau Yacht 57.

Simpson Marine displayed a four-yacht line-up including the Monte Carlo Yachts MCY 70, the Lagoon 560 Imagine, Lagoon 620 and the Aicon 85, listed for brokerage.



**Simpson Marine had the impressive MCY 70 on display, among other models.**

Superyacht Australia and key industry stakeholders from Australia visited the show, and were keynote speakers at the Thailand Yacht Forum held immediately prior. CEO of Superyacht Australia, MaryAnne Edwards presented on the superyacht industry in Australia and the importance of the region providing a consistent message to the global superyacht fleet.

“It is fantastic to see this event supported by the Thailand Government and I must congratulate Andy Treadwell on his initiative to put on this forum and yacht show,” she said. “We are looking forward to the opportunity to network with the Thailand superyacht industry and support their efforts to drive reform of their charter regulations.

“The key focus being to simplify crew visas and waive the current tax on importation. It certainly appears the industry has the support of government. If this goes through it will be good for the whole region.”

The Forum was well attended by Thailand industry stakeholders and key Government representatives. There was robust discussion regarding issues affecting the Thailand industry.

Following the forum was a networking event at Yacht Haven Marina partnered by Austrade, Superyacht Australia and Sevenstar Yacht Transport. There was Australian food and wine with plenty of information available on Australia’s capabilities in the global superyacht sector.

The event was well attended and provided an excellent platform for networking with key players in the Thailand superyacht industry. Paul Robilliard, the Australian Ambassador to Thailand attended the event and spoke about the importance of the Thailand-Australian relationship in this industry and the opportunities that are present going forward.



**Paul Robilliard - Australian Ambassador to Thailand, MaryAnne Edwards - CEO Superyacht Australia and Andy Treadwell - Managing Director Thailand Yacht Show.**

Australian companies present at the Thailand Yacht Show are Australian Marine Wholesale, AwlGrip, Carter Marine Agencies, Rivergate Marina and Shipyard, Sevenstar Yacht Transport and Superyacht Solutions. Steve Fisher, from Rivergate Marina is a seasoned show visitor, attending most of the world's major superyacht events.

"We attend specifically to reconnect with past customers and to inform the wider Superyacht Fleet of the Superyacht quality facilities, services and capabilities, available in Brisbane and Australia," he explained.

"The Thailand Yacht Show was well run, presented beautifully and as a first up entry into the Superyacht Show market, the event impressed. The venue is first rate and the island amenity and range of eating areas and bars was impressive. One just needs to be ready for the fact that it is Thailand and it's hot! A large light coloured umbrella, for personal shade, would be a good addition to your travel pack for next year's show."

Fisher confirmed Rivergate will attend next year's edition, and he said he believes more and more superyachts will embrace this show in the years to come, particularly if Thailand changes its charter rules to embrace the open door superyacht approach that has been adopted in Fiji and Tahiti.



**Government Ministers inspect some of the superyachts at the show.**

“The superyacht fleet traveling West to East through the Suez Canal, via Sri Lanka and the Maldives, is growing quickly and the reacceptance of this Western route into the South Pacific will see more yachts off the eastern Australian seaboard, now and into the future,” he said.

“The new superyacht berthing facilities available in Phuket at both AoPo and at Yacht Haven Marina, north of AoPo Marina, are truly impressive. The region lacks quality superyacht maintenance capabilities and it will be many years before the region develops this capability. The large vessel berthing options are impressive and well supported by Superyacht Agencies such as Asian Pacific Superyacht Services.”