FIVE STAR FUN

SUPERYACHT OWNERS AND CREW ENJOYED TWO DAYS OF FIVE-STAR PARTYING AT THE ASIA SUPERYACHT RENDEZVOUS 2009 IN PHUKET.

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Put together the words ‘Phuket’, ‘superyachts’, ‘party’, and ‘fun’, and you have a winning combination. The Asia Superyacht Rendezvous is an annual event that was set up to provide superyacht owners, their guests, captains and crew an opportunity to get together and have fun. This invitation-only event, the only one of its kind in Asia, is open to any vessel, either power or sail, over 30m LOA.

Principal sponsor of this year’s event was Feadship, a world leader in the field of custom-build superyachts. Asia Pacific Superyachts and Jumeirah Private Island were co-sponsors, and the event was hosted by the five star resort The Chedi, Phuket, which provided a magnificent setting for both the Feadship challenge and the Gala Dinner.

Organised by Gordon Fernandes, MD of Asia Pacific Superyachts, and Captain Charles Dwyer of the Superyacht Yanneke Too, everyone agreed that this edition of the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous was the best one ever.

Capt. Dwyer reflected that, “If I had to imagine a perfect Rendezvous it would involve sitting on a multimillion dollar superyacht, in a crystal clear bay with white sand beaches. There would be a five star hotel with spa and a fine dining restaurant, serving incredible Thai and fusion gourmet food, accompanied by fine wines. And to make it even better I would invite a few friends to join me.” Of course, this is exactly the recipe and script for the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous, and the reason why it continues to be such a hit with all involved.

Eleven superyachts took part in this year’s event, and according to Capt. Dwyer, “It is not often that you get power and sail yacht owners mixing together at one event. The yachts return each year because they enjoy the great camaraderie and bonhomie that is at the heart of this event.”

Some of the world’s most magnificent superyachts were present and this year the sailing category was represented by Yanneke Too (36m), Naos (36m), Obsession II (36m), Thalia (48m), and Bristolian (37m), as well as the traditional Indonesian phinisi, Silolona (50m). On the power side there was the newest and largest Feadship Archimedes (67m), as well as Vie Sans Soucis (46m), Bravheart (49.5m), and Maverick II (46m).

Francois van Well, Director and CEO of Feadship America, said, “Once again, we are absolutely delighted to welcome these superyachts to Asia. As the world’s premier superyacht builder we support the Rendezvous and its goal to introduce superyachts to the myriad delights - and advantages - of cruising in Asia.”

The two-day event offered a diverse range of activities, featuring activities both on and off the water. The highlight of the Opening Party was the ‘Feadship Challenge’, in which crews build and race model yachts made from a collection of flotsam and jetsam. It turns superyacht crew into boat builders for the
evening, and when combined with the cocktail party it makes for plenty of good-natured rivalry! "What a blast!" summed up one competitor. Capt Dwyer has participated in a number of Feadship Challenges over the years, and describes it as "the noble art of match racing at its very finest."

Prizes are awarded for both the fastest and the best-designed boat, and this year the competition was especially hot. A good deal of skullduggery went on, with spies being sent out to gather information about the opposition’s creations. The aim of the challenge is to get the model yachts up and down the prescribed course as fast as possible - propulsion of the yacht is limited to ‘wind’ blown by the designated skipper, and no other assistance can be rendered during the racing. Boats cannot be tested in the tanks before racing, which means that stability factors are often a problem.

“We added a new twist to the racing this year.” said Fernandes. “As they reached the turning mark, each skipper was required to consume a bowl of Thai delicacies including deep-fried grasshoppers, grubs, and other creepy crawlies.” None of the contestants balked at consuming these goodies but there were a few grim faces as the contents of the bowls were downed in the name of racing.

Yacht crews competing in the ‘Feadship Challenge’ this year were M/Y Archimedes, M/Y Vie Sana Sosiec, M/Y Maverick II, M/Y Bravehearty, S/Y Yanneke Too, S/Y Naxos, S/Y Silolona, S/Y Obsession II, S/Y Thalia, and S/Y Bristolian. Also present were teams from The Chedi and Jumeriah Private Island who made up the total number of teams to 12. Chief Judge for the Feadship Challenge was of course Francois van Will, Director and CEO of Feadship America, who presided over the racing amidst tumultuous cheering and whoops of joy.

The eventual winner for the ‘Best Designed Model Boat’ was Silolona. According to the Judge, "it was the only model boat design that included an actual 'superstructure' instead of just a hollow hull." The winner of the highly competitive ‘gutter race’ was M/Y Vie Sana Sosiec, who – although newcomers to this event - obviously had hidden skills in design technology and hidden reserves of puff!
A magnificent buffet of delicious nibbles and local delicacies was accompanied by champagne and cocktails, and completed what was a most enjoyable and entertaining evening for all.

The following day the action was out on the water, with five supersize sailing boats competing for bragging rights. With a steady 15-18 kts of breeze, the conditions were well-nigh perfect. The sight of six superyachts within a few boat lengths of each other was truly spectacular – not to mention the Naos crew’s ‘drag’ Christmas outfits.

The first yacht to cross the start line was Yanneke Too, and she led the first rounding of the triangular course in what was more of a ‘sailing event’ than a race. With two circuits to complete this gave the yachts plenty of opportunity to stretch their legs, and a fierce competition ensued between Naos and Yanneke Too on the second circuit. In the end, however, it was the 48m Thalia who was to stand out from the fleet, taking line honours and winning the race. Naos, who had tacked on an early shift, laid the finish line and was second, while Yanneke Too fell into a hole and had to be content with third place.

With racing over it was time to party again, and the fleet decamped to S/Y Silolona for a sundowner. “Yet again Patty Seery and the crew of Silolona were the most gracious hosts,” said Capt. Dwyer. “Merely getting on board this boat is a huge cultural delight, as every detail of the boat and its décor are stylish and absolutely authentic to its Indonesian heritage.” The musical performance by the 15-strong Indonesian crew, on traditional instruments and singing local chants, was yet another treat for the Rendezvous participants and another treat for the guests.

As the sun went down, it was time to adjourn to The Chedi’s beachfront pavilion for a Gala Dinner, where more bubbles and entertainment greeted the guests. A display of Thai dancing was followed by a sumptuous gourmet Asian fusion buffet, accompanied by live wines. The prizegiving was next on the agenda and the crews of Thalia (winner) and Naos (best dressed) were presented with bottles of Dom Perignon. The final event of the evening was the lighting of Chiang Mai lanterns, which made for a beautiful end to a perfect day as they floated away into the gentle tropical night.

At the end of the evening, organisers Gordon Fernandes and Capt. Charlie Dwyer were seen deep in discussions about the 2010 event. “We want to position Phuket as the Superyacht Hub of Asia,” says Fernandes. “More and more yachts are coming through the region on a regular basis, and we are working diligently to ensure the best possible hospitality and service for the superyachts who come here.” Capt. Dwyer adds, “We seem to have found a winning formula with this event. 2010 will be the 10th anniversary of the Superyacht Rendezvous, so we are hoping that the event will be even bigger and better than this year.”

This annual celebration is the only event of its kind in Asia, and Fernandes and Dwyer believe it repositions Phuket’s coming of age as a major yachting destination within the international community. But above all, they both agree that the most important thing is to have fun - and there is absolutely no doubt that this is a super event for superyachts.