

HELM

Superyacht Asia Pacific

ISSUE 1 JULY/AUGUST 2010

40-metre Sunseeker is Phuket bound
Escape to the Andaman Islands
Opening up Vietnam's coast
Karaoke Cruising

ASIA RISING

*The world's next big
superyacht destination*

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MICA (P) 148/06/2010

Features

PROBLEMS SOLVED

Yacht Solutions anticipates the needs of superyacht owners and charters in Thailand and takes care of them. With concierge services based in Phuket and refit and new build operations in Bangkok, the company takes a three-pronged approach to the business. From delivering elephants to the Similan Islands to constructing new boats in Bangkok, Yacht Solutions has the Kingdom covered.

BY BYRON PERRY





Features





Gareth Twist



Phuket-based Yacht Solutions started in 2001 when Managing Director Gareth Twist took a job delivering a yacht from Hong Kong to Phuket. After delivering the yacht he had to take care of a lot of vessel management and shoreside support for the boat. He saw a gap in the market and thus began Yacht Solutions as a service company. The company has now evolved to take a three-pronged approach into the superyacht market – acting as a yacht agency, providing refit work, and building completely new superyachts.

The yacht agency component is basically a concierge service, says Gareth. “We act as an agent in the whole of Thailand, not just for superyachts but for any size yacht. We’ve got our people in the office here who deal with everything. We have contacts everywhere.”

A superyacht visiting Phuket would ask Yacht Solutions to handle absolutely everything it might need – from refuelling and docking logistics to more whimsical requests.

“We’ve organised weddings in the Similan Islands where the guests requested elephants and monks to be part of the ceremony. We put the elephants on a barge and shipped them over for the day. I’ve had phone calls at one o’clock in the morning asking if can we get some Haagen-Dazs ice cream out to a yacht anchored in Phang Nga Bay because one of the owner’s guests fancied some ice cream. It cost nearly 100,000 baht to organize, but that’s what an agent is there for,” says Gareth.

Time is of the essence when dealing with these requests and money is besides the point. When the owners want something they want it on the double. “Most of it’s quite regular, simple stuff but there are some obscure things like that,” says Gareth.

All in a day’s work for a superyacht agent.

Yacht Solutions is part of a worldwide association of agencies called SuperyachtGLOBAL. This allows the company to take advantage of a worldwide network to provide services for a yacht they’re working with. “A perfect example of how this works is when we were contracted by the captain of a 40-metre Benetti from Europe. I met the captain in Monaco two or three years ago, he was interested in how to get the yacht to Asia. Once they decided to come over we assisted with the passage offering shore side support along the way. We then acted as agent for them here in Phuket, doing a lot of work for them while they were here. We then sent them onto Myanmar and the Andaman Islands. They then cruised throughout Asia with the support of

Features



The Fox began as a British survey vessel...

THE MY FOX WILL UNDERGO A TRANSFORMATION FROM WORKMANLIKE, TOUGH-LOOKING VESSEL TO A SLEEK AND GLAMOROUS "WHITE BOAT" SUPERYACHT.

SuperyachtGLOBAL and a year and a half later returned to Phuket and engaged our services again to undergo a complete Awlgrip paint job before heading back to the Med," says Gareth.

The second arm of Yacht Solutions' business – refit and rebuild work – grew out of their work as a yacht agency. Since refitting became such a large part of the services they were doing on yachts, Gareth decided to focus on that aspect and make it a main component of the business.

"A lot of the yachts we work with in Phuket or elsewhere in Thailand have refit work done while they are here. Thailand is the ideal place for refits as we are able to offer the highest standard of quality at a very competitive cost due to a lower cost of labour. As the marine business grew we got refit work through our management fleet and the projects just got bigger and bigger," says Gareth. "Initially we were working with 40 to 60ft yachts and now most of our work comes from 100ft plus yachts. Thailand's reputation is excellent with very good quality craftsmanship. We do a lot of work here in Phuket."

That side of the business kicked into high gear in 2007 when Yacht Solutions was contracted to rebuild an old 60-metre British survey vessel called MY Fox into a luxury superyacht. For that, they needed to set up operations in Bangkok. "Unfortunately at the present time we can't bring them out of the water here. The maximum size you can haul out in Phuket is 45 metres,

dependent on the hull shape. There are discussions now about new dedicated superyacht yards being built in Phuket and in Krabi, when either of these become a reality it will in turn increase the amount of marine business in Thailand," says Gareth.

Gareth found a shipyard called Mits Decisions in Samut Sakhon about 45 minutes southwest of Bangkok that had been building commercial vessels for about 30 years – at Lloyd's class for the last five or six. The vessel came to Thailand from the US through Hong Kong and Yacht Solutions stripped her down to a bare hull, sandblasted her, and did a complete rebuild. "We also raked the bow out and her lines are now that of a superyacht. Over the last two years, we've stripped her down to her bare hull and literally re-built her," says Gareth.

Fox is scheduled to launch in August, and the transformation that ship has undergone is striking. Yacht Solutions did major steel work, major alloy work, complete re-wiring and plumbing, and a new interior fit out. What began as a very workmanlike, tough-looking vessel will end up as a sleek and glamorous "white boat" superyacht, judging by the CGI renderings.

Gareth says the shipyard is excellent. "We've brought together all our top contractors, all of whom we have a fantastic working relationship with, which has spanned 10 years. Our refit team comprises of the best local craftsmen being brought together under the Yacht Solutions banner in Bangkok." Local Thai companies



...and will end up as an elegant superyacht.

AS THAILAND GAINS POPULARITY AS A MARQUEE DESTINATION FOR SUPERYACHTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, GARETH TWIST HOPES YACHT SOLUTIONS CAN GROW ALONG WITH THE REGION.

have done all of the work on Fox, with the exception of the interior design which was by Warwick Yacht Design of New Zealand. Yacht Solutions is building a 70-metre aluminium shed to act as a fabrication workshop for the yard. "We're continually upgrading the shipyard so we can offer the same high standards as the quality yards throughout the world, the shipyard has recently been awarded its ISO 9001," says Gareth. "The people we're working with are very keen to work with superyachts as they see it is a great future business."

With a quality shipyard humming along - and considering the amount of work that had to be done on Fox - it's not surprising that Yacht Solutions has now decided to go into the business of building new yachts.

"We researched the new build element of the business, discussed it with some of the classification and code societies, as well as marine lawyers. We then engaged our designer and naval architects to create the yacht put the pricing together. We believe we can build an excellent yacht. So yacht building is our next main business focus as well as managing refits and conversions," says Gareth.

This division of the company has been branded Ruea Yachts, after the Thai word for "boat". "In Thai, the term 'ruea yacht' means luxury yacht," says Gareth.

Construction will take place in Bangkok, but Gareth says a buyer will have to commission a yacht first. "We're setting up a network of brokers and agents who are interested in working with us to promote this. Our

main focus is Asia because we believe that Asia-based people are far more interested in building locally which means being closer to the yacht."

As South East Asia - and Thailand especially - continues to gain in popularity as a marquee destination for superyachts from all over the world, Gareth hopes that Yacht Solutions can grow along with the region. He does think that Thailand could do a few things to attract more superyachts, mainly building more marinas and amending some rules and regulations to allow superyachts a more hassle-free stay in the country. But in general he sees the future of superyachts in the region as very bright.

"Asia is now becoming the third cruising destination in the world after the Med and the Caribbean which are already saturated and well cruised. Owners are looking for new grounds and Asia is firmly establishing itself as a beautiful cruising destination with the professional shoreside support. The cruising grounds in Asia are world class and a yacht can operate here year round as the area is so huge. The facilities are improving significantly and so more yachts are permanently basing themselves here. We are seeing more yachts returning here year on year," says Gareth. "Additionally, the Asian yachting scene is developing quickly and we are seeing the market expanding. There are now more Asian superyacht owners and also more Asian-based superyachts. The next five years will see a huge growth in the superyacht industry in Asia. It's a very exciting time."