





Hong Kong

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The Peak Hong Kong  
Building Asia's Superyacht Hub



holds us back, and sponsorship is very, very difficult in Singapore – we're looking overseas now for financing. If we could get the support, we would all immediately see the show evolve into a truly international marketplace – we should be able to host overseas media, celebrities, and thousands of potential buyers, and get business moving for everyone.

So I'm not as satisfied as I could be. But what I am really proud of is the amazing team that we always seem to be able to bring together every year. They are all exceptional people, and I'm proud to say they're my team.

**TP: Exhibitors at past shows have included a range of things outside yachts, including art galleries, aviation and property. How have the segments outside yachting grown (or decreased)?**

AT: We've been asked to add more complementary lifestyle stuff – entertainment, retail opportunities for F&B, fashion, and so on, as well as the property and

private aviation vendors who yacht buyers generally want to meet – so that SYS appeals to a wider audience. But whilst it's good to give visitors more reasons to come, I don't really want to go too far down that route – we've got a very limited space, and we need to keep it a boat show. It's more important to showcase more of the marine lifestyle – water sports, fishing, diving, surfing etc – all the accessories that you'd find on a big yacht.

I'd rather do other new shows in different but closely aligned sectors that appeal to the same community we've built up through our yacht shows. That's our plan.

**TP: In terms of visitors, where do most come from, and what countries do you see as potential markets in future? How important is the show for mainland Chinese buyers?**

AT: About half our visitors come from Singapore, and the other half – around 7,000 last year – come in from elsewhere in Asia. We could attract many, many more

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01 A view of the 2017 Singapore Yacht Show at Sentosa Cove, Singapore

qualified buyers if we had the marketing budget to go out and get them. It's not all about China - every country in the region has its fun seekers and its growing affluent community - but China is obviously a very important market.

There are no proper boat shows there, and the government is actively discouraging people from buying foreign-built boats or anything else that points to conspicuous consumption. This means that the high-end lifestyle seekers from China are susceptible to come to Singapore to buy boats, and then keep them in Thailand or Indonesia.

Indonesia is not really working as a boating destination either, because they have even more draconian import duties and difficulties with regulation - but I think that will all start to change once Thailand takes the lead and gets people coming to the region.

**TP: Can you describe the Phuket show - has it been going as you hoped, and what is your expectation from this new show in future?**

AT: The Thailand Yacht Show (TYS) was launched by the Thai Government - not by us - in 2015, and we were chosen to organize it on their behalf. It was specifically conceived to grow the yacht tourism industry, with a major focus on foreign superyacht charter, and to develop Thailand as a hub for the regional boating industry. They support it financially to an extent, which is great, but we don't yet get enough support from the industry or from corporate sponsors to make up the rest of a decent budget. It's a shame, because it's a demonstration of the government's intention to develop this sector - and having worked very closely with them for the last three years, I can assure you it's very genuine - so all the industry should be playing their part in pushing that.

If we want to develop the industry, then improving regulations - harmonizing and simplifying them throughout the ASEAN Economic Community should be obvious and easy enough - and allowing foreign yachts to come here and charter is the best place to start. Thailand, and specifically Phuket, is the best destination for that, in terms of infrastructure as well as cruising grounds. Although it's not a business destination, it is where you can go and get out on the water and try stuff out. That's what we want TYS to become - not just another boat show, more an experiential festival of boating. Singapore is the brand show, taking place in the business, financial and luxury capital of Southeast Asia. So the two together cover all the aspects of the industry that that we need to be promoting.

One of the principal, stated objectives of the Thai

government is to get some of the 5,000-strong global fleet of superyachts to start coming to Thailand and Southeast Asia, to make this region a new winter destination. Currently, nearly all of the big yachts spend the summer season in the Mediterranean, and those that want to cruise all year round go to the Caribbean for the winter, where they can charter freely. But they have been doing this for 40 or 50 years, so it is time to try something new, and there's a fantastic amount of cruising areas to discover in ASEAN.

Our aim with the two different but complementary events is to raise Asia's profile overall as a yachting destination on a global scale. We are highlighting its amazing cruising grounds and working to improve the infrastructure for captains and brokers around the world. In order to do so, we need to engage governments in Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam in the northern part of the region, with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Has it been going as I had hoped? No, not quite. It has been fantastically motivating to work with Thai government representatives who have always been enthusiastic and proactive in trying to get this whole yachting project moving. However, one of the biggest problems we have had with the first three years has been the slowness of the process and the delay in getting the definitive go-ahead to launch each year. We totally respect that that's the way the funding process works, and there have additionally been periods of national mourning delaying things for the last two years. It has meant that we have ended up with only two months each time to promote and execute the show, which makes it not easy. So now I am asking them for a three-year plan and a decision to change the VAT regulations and allow foreign superyachts to charter in Thai waters.

**TP: Do you anticipate bringing an exhibition like SYS to Hong Kong in the future? If so, what are the main obstacles, in your view?**

AT: I do believe there is room for a proper show in Hong Kong to support the local industry there - and also because it is by far the most mature market in Asia (dare I say the only one for superyachts, anyway), as well as being the gateway to the biggest potential buying market in China. But for a show there to work, again, it would have to have the right strategic objectives, have the support of the whole industry, and preferably the government too - and be organized in the best venue by a professional show organizer. ®

*(This has been lightly edited for brevity)*

The 2018 Singapore Yacht Show runs from April 12 to 15, 2018, at Sentosa Cove.