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Plenty of choices for the sail set

NINA SUEBSUKCHAROEN

Phuket _ The recent King's Cup Regatta would have been incomplete without participants and spectators having an opportunity to check out the latest in sailing craft and accessories at the Phuket International Marine Expo (Pimex) at Phuket Boat Lagoon earlier this month.

First-time visitors would have been surprised to see that some enterprising property developers had made their way into the boat show and amid all the yachts and sailing paraphernalia were condominiums and villas for sale.

Manning the Seawind Catamarans booth was managing director Richard Ward. This Australia-based boatbuilder can build a Seawind 1000, a 33-foot cruising catamaran that made its debut in 1994 with over 100 sold since then, in two months for A\$300,000. The Seawind 1160, a new 38-foot sailing catamaran that won the 2005 Australia Sailboat of the Year award, costs A\$500,000 and takes five months to build.

Another exhibitor that has been based at Phuket Boat Lagoon for 20 years now is Asia Marine. This yacht charter agency and boat broker had a Hanse 315, a 31-foot cruiser/racer that has been nominated for European Boat of the Year 2007, for sale at 59,900.



Phuket Boat Lagoon is home to an increasing number of sailing enthusiasts attracted to the island.

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Also at the show was Bangkok-based Function Marine Company. Engineer Suntud Noiperm said the year-old firm so far had sold three small boats and one large one _ a US-made Signature 276 cruiser sold to a Thai buyer for 5.8 million baht and currently berthed in Pattaya.

The company also imports a host of other boats, the inflatable HSS 230 (Airmat) from South Korea being the smallest. Though small, it can seat two people and is very convenient because it's made of PVC and can be packed into a box. The price is just 25,600 baht.

Other imports include the Hypalon, a 14-foot, eight-seat inflatable boat from Venezuela, which costs 120,000 baht, and the 24.1-foot Sportdeck SSx 236 leisure craft from US at two million baht and up.

For sailing to be fun at all, these beautiful vessels have to be equipped with the latest gadgets. KVH Industries from the US displayed its TracVision marine satellite TV system at the show. Area sales manager Mads Ebbesen said the smallest unit costs \$5,000 with one of the largest ones going for \$17,000. The company is currently establishing a network in Southeast Asia and aside from Thailand has representatives in China and Singapore. It competes with Asian brands, among them Camos and Intellion, but as the baht has strengthened against the dollar, Asian-made systems are no longer as cheap as they were before.

For those not in the market for a boat, the developers on hand were led by Raimon Land, a principal sponsor of the 20th King's Cup Regatta.

Among the others was Layan Tara, a villa estate not too far away from Layan and Bang Tao beaches and also close to the Laguna resort complex. Under the management of 3K Property Management Co, it features 70 villas and a lake with the smallest 102 sq m, two-bedroom unit costing 3.89 million baht. The two larger styles are pool villas with 120 to 154 sq m of space and going for 4.49 million and 5.49 million baht respectively.

Competing with Phuket property developers at the show was Siam Royal View which is developing estates in Pattaya and Koh Chang off Trat province. While the



Pattaya project is not on the beach and actually lies on the other side of Sukhumvit Road, the villas are attractive with the smallest 181 sq m, two-bedroom one costing 4.66 million baht and the larger, 360 sq m, three-bedroom pool villa going for 7.34 million baht.

At Koh Chang, which has yet to be discovered by the large majority of tourists, the company offers beach bungalows of several styles and sizes. The Villa Palang has three to seven bedrooms with the former costing 8.23 million baht and the latter 10.78 million.

On the Net:<http://www.asia-marine.net>

<http://www.functionmarine.com>

<http://www.kvh.com>

<http://www.layantara.com>

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