

PADDOCK LIFE™

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THE DECADENCE ISSUE

HOT ROCKS

Three days in Thailand for the Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous - Decadence redefined

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a part of "Infinite Luxury" a group owning luxury resorts that has won over 40 awards, Kata Rocks is fast becoming the jewel in their crown.

Bright and early on Friday morning we meet on the pool terrace for breakfast as today the Superyacht Rendezvous has two boats heading out for a mornings cruise. The beautiful sailing boat Zen, and a new Princess 32 metre, both stunners but today for our first day at the KRSV I was pleased we were guests aboard "Sauvage", Princess 32, for a brunch cruise. There had been quite a storm through the night and you couldn't really appreciate the size of the swell until we were on the floating pontoon of Kata Rocks private jetty. It was like having a surf lesson, this was great fun and we hadn't set foot on a boat yet... we climbed aboard the Rib tender with about 5 or 6 other guests and made our way out into the bay where we disembarked onto the bathing platform of the 104ft Princess Superyacht. At the top of the steps to the aft deck we were greeted with Champagne, 9am is a little early for me, even on this time zone, so a glass of fresh orange was far more fitting I thought. The staff of the Sauvage hosted us brilliantly whilst the team from Boat Lagoon Yachting, the local dealer and charter company were unobtrusively on hand to show us all this beautiful craft and answer any questions. This configuration had the owners or 'master' stateroom on the main deck with panoramic views, whilst the lower deck gave 3 double cabins, all ensuite and all magnificently appointed, with the VIP suite benefiting from the full beam of the boat. The spacious decks were complimented by a flybridge that was easily big enough for alfresco dining and entertaining.



Even with today's swell, she was quite stable at anchor and once all the guests had boarded and we were under way you could hardly feel her move. The food was excellent the Champaign flowed and we were able to meet some really interesting people, a mixture of residents of either Kata Rocks or other developments close by, fellow yacht owners and invited guests, all had their own story to tell which is one of the best things about these kind of events, you meet such diverse and interesting people.

By early afternoon we were back at anchor in the bay at Kata Rocks and the tenders took us ashore. We had work to catch up on, so decided to make the best use of our marvellous villa. Laptops on, pictures downloaded, emails checked, Chris was in charge of cold beers while Jenny bomb-dived the infinity pool and we all took time for a little relaxation before watching the sunset over the bay and heading down for the opening night cocktail party.

Friday evening put the Rocks in Kata Rocks, as we arrived on our buggy from the room we were greeted with Cocktails and a very funky silver anchor on a leather thong, this wrapped and hooked around your wrist, or in Jenny's case her ankle and was basically your ticket to all the events, a much cooler (and more nautical way than the usual lanyard and pass) as we entered the terrace we met some of the guys from the previous night and from aboard the Princess. After a few cocktails pretty much everyone had introduced themselves to each other, so we are now partying with friends. Richard Pope (the man who built the place) was casually circulating and chatting and although a large percentage were here from the Asian continent, there were a few (like us) who had travelled the distance to check out the second year of this Rendezvous. DJ Fabuloops lived up to her name and banged out supercool grooves



now sleep so we decided the best plan was lunch. So, freshen up, shorts on and we call for a buggy.

We take a table on the terrace by the main pool area which had both shade and sun and ordered lunch. The menu was amazing, a good selection of western food and a quite spectacular Thai menu. I was pleasantly surprised by the wine list, both in its diversity and pricing, we had a great bottle of Italian Gavi de Gavi with our lunch. During lunch Michael our host introduced us to some of his team and ran through the itinerary with us. There was so much happening over the weekend, but tonight we were all invited to a private cocktail party for the Contest Yachts launch, which was a great opportunity to meet some of the people involved and the residents of Kata Rocks. By late evening the three of us were starting to feel it so we retired to our penthouse, made our plans for the morning on our terrace and called it a night.

Kata Rocks resort and private residence was born out of expat British entrepreneur Richard Pope's vision. It's 34 Superyacht inspired villa's range from 1 bed studio rooms to our palatial 4 bedroom penthouse, all with private pools ranging from 7-14m in length. It is easy to see the superyacht influence from the apartment terraces, but when you see the resort from the water the "decks of the yacht" become obvious. The property is perched on the rocks on a small cape between Kata and Kata Noi with it's own private jetty, which is accessed down a pathway leading to the rocks, which gives it an almost hidden romantic feel, like you are planning a secret rendezvous. Each villa has a view of the island of Kah Phu usually with a few very nice boats shimmering in the Andaman Sea. The all year round Phuket destination attracts a very discerning international crowd, during the weekend we met with a few villa owners, mostly living between here and other destinations and as one summed it up. Buying here was a lifestyle choice, but it also seems to be working as an investment. The usual spa and services one would expect are all available, but served up with a hybrid of traditional Thai hospitality and western attention to detail. As

I had never been to Thailand, so for me it was a place I would have associated with a cheap life style, where you live like a king for a few bucks a day... so when we were invited to a super yacht rendezvous it was very tempting.

When the invitation arrived from Kata Rocks for the Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous (KRSV) on the 8th to the 10th of December, we checked out the venue and pretty much had no choice than to book flights. Flying out of London City at about 10am on Wednesday and landing in Phuket at 7am Thursday morning where there was a chap with a Paddock Life sign from Kata Rocks waiting to collect us in a mini van limo. Landing us directly in the Phuket rush hour, our journey to Kata took the best part of two hours (normally just under an hour) as we reached Kata we turned up a narrow winding hill to the entrance to the resort.

A very warm Thai welcome at the reception with cold drinks and cold towels, before being assigned our very own "Rock Star" who was basically our personal concierge for our stay. We were then taken in a golf buggy up the very steep narrow and winding maze of roads between the villas. We arrive at 104 our villa, take the lift which then opened into the apartment, which we didn't even notice as the view from this penthouse villa was nothing short of mind blowing. The floor to ceiling glass wall out onto the terrace afforded a view (across the infinity pool) to the ocean. The large open living area had a kitchen, sitting area and dining table, with a laundry room and twin bedroom. Then the stairs led up to the top floor with two identical but opposite master double rooms either end, both with balcony's looking over the sea (and the rest of Kata Rocks) with Jacuzzis and sun chairs. The middle room was a large twin with floor to ceiling windows, so suffice to say the Paddock Life crew were happy.

By the time Chris and I had opened our bags and come down for a cold beer Jenny was already in the pool. After our 17 hour journey we had an easy day to ease into the time zone - none of us could



all night, to the ready crowd of willing dancers. That's the thing about a crowd who are a little older and have made it in life, they just want to have a great time, none of this "to cool for school" London club set, these guys looked great and partied hard. It started to rain just after 11pm, which by midnight had turned into a tropical storm so many sore heads were saved as the night came to an early close. Which with another Bam breakfast booked for Saturday morning, before an hour's cruise out to a beach luncheon as a very good idea.

We took our table near the pool for breakfast and waited for Tim (the events manager) to call us down for a tender. Once on the Rib we were dropped off on a lovely Ferretti 720, it's modern Italian styling setting apart from similar sized craft. At 72ft this was a very different kind of craft to yesterdays 32m. This was a little more my style, something you could captain yourself. This time there was no Champagne waiting as we boarded,

which was perfectly fine for me. We waited a while then another tender arrived and tall a Dutchman with a group of friends introduced himself as JC, he was the owner of the boat and didn't know we were aboard, a bit of an admin glitch on the pontoon we think... I recognised him as the chap who happened to arrive at last night's party the same time as we did, but he (and his friend) got out of two McLaren's so we had the instant ice-breaker when he realised we were the magazine he had been reading at the bar. I laughed that his reaction to finding strangers on his boat was better than mine might have been, but he said we are all petrol heads so how can we be strangers.

It took about 40 minutes and a lot of radio chatter to get the 14 superyachts all lined up for a photo shoot from the drone, before we finally got the green light to follow the Lady Christine, a 70m leadship and most definitely the star of the show off to The Surin at Pansea Beach. This was about

an hours cruise, but with a boat full of petrol heads JC decided we should be first there and by the time we were past Koh Phu island we were already overhauling the 63 Manhattan, the next we pass is a peculiar looking boat, a goldish coloured 86ft from a company called Monte Carlo Yachts, Jenny was hanging over the sides and back shooting the action as we carved across the wake of the 70m leadship to stream out ahead of the pack, JC at the helm on the flybridge proudly showing us what his slick looking Ferretti could do. Once out front we eased back to cruise at around 20 knots.

Arriving at Sarin Beach club we dropped anchor and waited for the tenders, this beach had no jetty so this was going to be fun, wet fun. We watched the first tender come in, they basically swung it around so it went in engines first then you had to time your jump with the waves to stay knee deep - wrong timing and you were up to your chest. It was our turn, the Paddock crew are all pretty used to this stuff so we made sure our phones were in the camera bag and passed it across to Jenny who was already in the water. She'd been waiting to swim in the sea since our plane landed. By this time the waves were also getting bigger as they broke over the front of the tender, as all the other yachts arrived. One of JC's friends, a Russian girl in her mid twenties was wearing some very expensive looking silk trousers, so being the gent, I offered to carry her ashore, sitting on my right arm, I delivered her to the beach dry as a bone. As we made our way up to the beach club we were greeted with a flower garland and a glass of bubbles.

Over the next few hours we were treated to a marvellous spread of fresh lobsters, crabs and oysters, a Thai bbq and succulent Ozy steaks all washed down with an array of cocktails, champagne and excellent wines. Just in time for a refreshing dip in the clear blue sea before it was time to return to Kota Rocks. We decided that our trip out on JC's Ferretti was fast and exhilarating, we would travel back with Pawel Marczak. We had



met Pawel on Thursday evening and he offered to host us on Friday, but I wanted to see the Princess, so this was the perfect time to take up his kind offer. So we once again took to the tenders to make our way back to the superyachts in the bay.

Arriving alongside Zen, a beautiful 53m Phinisi Schooner, a magnificent wooden boat, which seemed even bigger as we boarded from the side, very dramatic. We were greeted with cold fresh orange juice and cold towels. The first thing that strikes you as you board Zen is the huge wooden masts and rigging, this is a real yacht. Zen has such a wide beam that it allows so many usable areas. It's wooden saloon entrance leads to a large saloon with a library feel about it. A bar and galley flow from a huge lounge area, then leading down to the lower deck, with master suite at the bow, with two double beds and it's own external balcony - very cool. The lower deck has a further 6 cabins, all double or twin, with en-suite's so this is a great charter boat as she easily sleeps 14. On the main deck double steps lead up the huge sundeck, which has more in common with a hotel pool deck than a boat, it's massive. The wheelhouse is just ahead of this deck and there is a small deck right at the sharp end, so there are plenty of places to breakout and chill.

The main deck has the sea toys to the aft, with a good sized Rib and jet ski, but also has large booth spaces for dining and sun decks, all wrapped around the rigging and imposing masts that make this motor sailor and really supercool party boat, very sociable, but plenty of space to get away from your guests, which can be quite difficult on a modern motor-yacht. Our sail back on Zen was really relaxed - Chris slept the entire journey, whilst Jenny and I chatted with Pawel about how he commissioned the build, which is a fascinating story for another day as something tells me the Paddock Life team will be on this boat again next year.

As we arrive back, it is almost sunset and the orange light over the bay is amazing, the lights



of Kata Rocks give it a "Thunderbirds, Tracy Island" look as we approach the floating pontoon. Saturday night is the Feadship Dinner in one of the villas which Chris is going to attend so we are very pleased to take a sunset swim in our pool, casually change and take dinner in the hotels restaurant. Food as ever was spectacular, but an early night was in order as we had an invitation to breakfast and a busy Sunday ahead.

Sunday opened with breakfast in Villa 401, a good chance to meet a few people we'd missed, like the Feadship guys, they deliver an average of 4 superyachts a year, which at around the 200 metre mark are some serious ships, but we were also introduced to an interesting looking character we had noticed around the hotel. Every time we walked (rather than took a buggy) down the steep winding hill past reception to the bar area, both Jenny and I always commented on the statues and art installations we passed, so when we were introduced to Arnaud Nazare-Ago, the Hank Kong based Frenchman responsible for these creations we were captivated. (See Arnauds work in a feature of its own in this issue.)

So, it's our last afternoon at Kata Rock and there is so much to do. Wine and Coviar tasting in



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the basement, Yacht Hop and Big Boys Toys, frustratingly its all at the same time, so the wine and caviar dropped out of schedule, we were down on the pontoon to test some crazy sea toys, and who better to test them than our very own World Champion adrenaline junky - Jenny. SeaDoo Jet Ski was first, she was gone, off onto the horizon to say hi to Pawel as she ran rings round Zen, then flying back in to jump the wake of passing boats. Next up was a James Bond looking gadget, which Chris had been playing with, the Seabob, goggles on and we just saw her feet as she dove to the ocean floor behind this powered diving toy. "I saw a stingray" she shouted as she surfaced. But what she really wanted to try was the jet board. Yes those boots on a board with water jets driven by a jet ski through a big tube, it looks like fun and looks easy... it is not.

So a quick explanation from the guys who been doing the demo and Jenny's feet are strapped into the bindings (a bit like a snow board) then she floats on her back in the water and they power up the jets, by the third attempt she was up and out of the water, in 10 minutes she was moving around from side to side and back and forth at a height of about 2 metres, as champion skater, this was quite a natural step, but we also think she may be half dolphin... a great time was had by all. Time to Yacht Hop.

I really wanted to see the Azimut, so that was our first port of call. As we boarded the 64ft Flybridge yacht the Italian design was very clear, a really minimal and stylish treatment, with modern materials gave this 64ft boat the feel of an 80ft. Clever use of space on the rear deck into the salon with open galley and steps down to three beautifully appointed cabins, I used to spend a lot of time on a friends 65ft boat, but it never had the feeling of space the Azimut gave. The flybridge was the finishing touch and a great looking boat as well, I only wish we'd had time to take her out for a blast. Next was a real sail-boat, a full keel topsail 97ft craft, traditional in every way. Zen was great, but you could take the short cut and use the engines, this Dallinghoo Schooner was a full sailing craft that harked back to the romance of the seas. I could just imagine after a weekend of



motorsport sailing out of port with sea spray and wind in my face and no noise but that of the flutter of the sails - heaven.

So, it's Sunday night and the closing party of the Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous, cocktails flow and the buffet spread is as impressive as ever. We've made lots of new friends, from owners to charter companies, builders and residents of Kata Rocks. Chris is holding court at the bar, and Jenny who shares her birthday today with one of the other guests is leading the pool dancing in the swallow part of the pool where it's calf deep, the place is Racking. So to sum up our whistle stop tour to Thailand, this is not the cheap Thailand you hear about, this is the super stylish Thailand where quality and attention to detail come first, the service was world class, the people fantastic, the weather? Well it's Phuket so it hot and sunny. This is the second year of the Rendezvous, do I think it will grow? - Hell yeah, this is the place to be in December so make it a date for next year because the name of the venue says it all.... Kata Rocks baby.



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