

Sailing in South East Asia is slowly returning, although the nature of Water based Tourism has changed dramatically since Covid. With a massive reduction in the number of yachts participating in racing or available for charter in the area.

Singapore continues to lead the way, with regular IRC fleet racing at Changi Sailing Club. Singapore now has 24 boats "Check measured", with most boats now holding endorsed certificates and the rest in process.

The 2023 Season saw 65 Boats registered under IRC in SEA, which is a small increase on 2022 but still 30% down on 2019. International events such as the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, Malaysia's Raja Muda, Langkawi Regattas and The Bay Regatta are slowly returning to normality, although numbers are considerably down on pre-covid days with less boats travelling and limited boats available for Charter.

For 2024, we will still be missing The Top of The Gulf Regatta and Phuket Race Week which remain casualties of COVID. However, on a more positive note.... The newly created Singapore Regatta has resurrected the Lipton Trophy as a circuit prize for Boats Racing participating in The Singapore, Raja Muda, King's Cup and Langkawi Regattas.

In Phuket, Rolly Tasker Sails (One of the world's largest Sail lofts) is currently waiting to become an IHC certified loft. They will also work with us to provide a measurement service for local and visiting boats and have sponsored the new SEA Measurement Sail Stickers.

In SEA, there is a large increase in resident RUS/BEL passport holders and boats with RUS Sail numbers. It is anticipated that the current directives from World Sailing on RUS/BEL, will influence participation in events for the foreseeable future.

With Asian governments taking a "neutral" stance, regional regattas (to comply with government policies to accept entries from these countries) will accept participation, while imposing a limitation that boats and competitors shall not display any sail letters, symbols, flags or anthems of RUS/BLR on any boat, competitor or place associated with the event.

During Spring 2024, we conducted a survey of our boat owners about the future of Keel Boat/Offshore racing. Below are summary of comments:

The issues are mostly a long list of self-evident challenges, the big issue is defining what is the end game, and how to get there.

1. The regatta scene had been pretty level for the previous 15 years, same regattas, same boats, similar numbers (much less now).
2. The current owners, that have driven the last 20 years, are retiring, have lost the energy, moved to cruising, can't keep up the increased costs etc.
3. Younger sailors face a challenge on time and finance, to either crew or own a boat. Their costs for mortgages, cars, high achiever focus, have been going up.
4. The newer, and fewer expatriates who brought a sailing passion, don't have the old expat life, time available, financial backing, and perhaps are only on the scene for 3 to 4 years so don't make a commitment.
5. Some jurisdictions have made sailing significantly harder with restrictions on sailing areas. - Singapore, Malacca Straits, perhaps South China Sea.
6. In Singapore the SB20 shows resilience. This is driven by a keen group of members, it's **affordable** - about the right price point. For example if an expat buys an SB20 even if he has to walk away from it after 3 years it won't break the bank. Local organisations such as universities and clubs can buy them, and there's a huge local participation from ex national sailors etc. The Step up to a 30' double hander, or even like J24 or similar is not easy to imagine.

7. There is an attraction for two handed due to all the other comments on availability and cost of crew. But it is a small sector in Asia and its hard to see how to build the fleets unless a national federations buy boats. About the only exception to this is the 8 ex- Swedish Match racing boats in the harbour in Singapore, but that is an exceptional set of circumstances.
8. Regular Competitors are starting to wind down the race circuit because finding and funding crew is challenging due to Pro/Am crew issues. Unless you have a pro crew, or have built up a long-term team, it just becomes too frustrating entering with inexperience on board.
9. There may be pockets of optimism perhaps in the Philippines, Thailand, HK, Japan. But a coordinated growth looks unlikely. There will be the RS21's, Platu, and odd J24, and one design events, and of course the China Cup, but these are all inshore events.

Going Forward, some ideas:

1. SEA Owners feel there is little mileage going after a double handed format. This just doesn't get enough people out on the water and involved vs the cost incurred. You can't build a national, regional program just for a few sailors. Leave double handed for a few older owners who want to do that sort of thing.
2. Define a format with five crew, one design boats about 30', with full offshore race safety. Not exotic One Design only boats, they must have an IRC life and have decent accommodation - a production boat to ensure longevity, quality, consistency, cost point. This is not about a latest foil assisted skiff participating in offshore racing.
3. Create a fleet that follows an Asia circuit, a mini Clipper type. Investor, a consortium, banks, regional sailing federation - each boat sponsored by each country. But not a private company - aka Clipper Ventures. It will be too expensive for participants.
4. On the back of this more boats might be bought by individuals to join one or more races in the circuit, and just perhaps a regional momentum.

The IRC-SEA will be on-site at the following regattas in SEA.

Phuket King's Cup Regatta – Phuket, Thailand

30th November – 6th December 2024

www.kingscup.com

The Bay Regatta – Phuket, Thailand

19th – 23rd February 2025

www.bayregatta.com

Koh Samui Regatta – Samui, Thailand.

24th – 31st May 2025

www.samuiregatta.com

The Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta – Selangor, Malaysia.

14th – 23rd November 2024

<http://www.rmsir.com>

The Singapore Regatta - Singapore

15th – 16th February 2025

<https://www.csc.org.sg/events/singapore-regatta-2025/>

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