

Story : Kirstie Flood | Images : courtesy of Cranchi

The Phuket arrival of affordable luxury cruising



Cranchi, Endurance 41

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST CRANCHI (PRONOUNCED CRANKY) IN PHUKET AT THE END
OF JANUARY HERALDS THE BEGINNING OF ATTAINABLE LUXURIOUS MOTOR CRUISING
WITH A PRICE TAG THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS.



Edwin and Edith Ho



Cranchi, Endurance 41

Cranchi are a renowned brand in Europe producing over 700 yachts per year and their market share is now escalating into the Asian market largely thanks to their Hong Kong based agents Starship Yachts, a company owned by Hong Kongers Edwin and Edith Ho.

Edith grew up in the world-class yachting haven Cote d'Azur, before re-locating to Cannes with Edwin. Moving to Hong Kong in 1993 the couple quickly realised how limited the power boat market was and embarked on a mission to give people superior boating choices and so founding Starship Yachts.

Edwin and Edith could not be in a better position with their background knowledge of all the European brands. "Our philosophy was that we wanted to have something for everyone offering many different sizes and a variety of brands. One brand we started with and have kept over time is Cranchi which we knew we definitely wanted as it's one of the biggest brands in the French Riviera. This is because Cranchi offered the best value for money and good quality."

To give you some idea, Cranchi are from 20-30% cheaper than their main rivals British Sunseeker and Princess, they aren't top level luxury nor a cheap brand, but they offer mid range prices with excellent styling and quality.

Cantiere Nautico Cranchi was founded by Giovanni Cranchi in 1870 on the Italian banks of Lake Como making boats for local fishermen and for transporting goods and passengers. As the years rolled on and the lake traffic increased in both volume and vessel type Cranchi stepped up to meet the new growing demand yet remained true to their passion for cleverly designed lines, fine materials and impeccable finishes.

Post war they branched out into wooden models re-locating to a new boat yard with the fourth generation Aldo Cranchi at the helm. As new industrial trends gathered pace, the new Valtellina base set about the transformation and evolution of the traditional craft to a more modern automated dream.

Today Cranchi has the most modern boat yard in Europe, incorporating a lot of robotics and such is their staff care they



monitor humidity levels and even have heated floors for their workers. Impressively, they were the first yachting based company to receive an ISO 9001 certificate (when ISO first launched) ten years ago for their ship building. This boat yard was and still is the biggest in Europe for a single brand.

Cranchi currently produce three main products: an offshore open sports boat which includes the Endurance models 33 & 41; master cruiser Zaffiro 34, the best selling Cranchi model with 200 units sold/year - perfect for families with a spacious roomy interior, lots of deck room and 2 double cabins; and lastly the range comprises of a Flybridge 40 and a Flybridge 48. In total Cranchi have twelve models with bigger models on the drawing board.

There are many reasons why people purchase yachts in Asia and those reasons are often vastly different to European motives. The Andaman region however, is a reason in itself. Imagine the beauty of the Similian islands only one hour and a half away from Phuket in a Cranchi Endurance 41. Moreover, the wave height around Phuket is particularly appropriate for power boats, characteristically small it allows for motor cruisers to glide at top speed across the lake like surface.

The new Phuket based Cranchi owner first discovered this breathtaking cruising area when out on a corporate jolly "We hired a yacht for two days and had a beautiful time". Living in Singapore the owner had crucially realised that there simply isn't anywhere to go with a yacht, whereas in Phuket you can explore the multitude of islands with



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unbeatable coral reefs for diving and snorkelling and cruise past sheer mountainous cliff back drops.

Day cruising was not the only thing on the owners mind when looking to make a purchase. As a property developer on Nat Tai beach at Ban Klok Kloi, there was a two-fold agenda. “I wanted a boat that could get under the Sarasin Bridge at any tide and I wanted to be able to go out onto the ocean as well as into Phang Nga bay. Another reason is the access to the Similian islands; if I was renting out my villa I wanted people to have a boat they could use walk through the villa stroll through surf and jump onto the back and swing round to Phang Nga bay.”

Initially the buyer was looking at a number of yachts including a Fairline, a Riviera and a Sunseeker. A short list was drawn up which included Mustang, Riviera and Cranchi. “I was really close to buying a Riviera but went to the Singapore boat show for one last look. Firstly I dropped into the Mustang stand, approached the representative and asked ‘Tell me why I should buy a Mustang as opposed to a Riviera?’ The representative unfortunately did not know what a Riviera was”.

It was shortly after the prospective purchaser met Mr. Edwin Ho. “I spent an hour talking to Edwin, and then I went to Hong Kong to see an Endurance 33. The staff there really looked after us. The service was very good and Edwin knew what he was talking about. He (Edwin) also saw what I saw in Phuket as it being the yachting haven in Asia. I’d discovered a Cranchi yacht that was half the price, better fitted and from a looks point of view was more of a stunning boat”.

Before clinching the deal, the prospective owner spent a lot of time researching and discovered nothing but good reviews for Cranchi which he first saw in the British Motorboat magazine. “I liked the look and I did try to find bad reviews but I couldn’t”

A deal was made and the sports cruiser Endurance 41 was bought. To give you some idea of the sheer power of this boat it goes from a standing start to 25 knots in 9 seconds and has a remarkable top speed of 39 knots. The yacht was ordered in late August 2005 and the aptly named ‘Ciao Bella’ was cradle delivered to Singapore in January this year.

The new owner joined the arrival in Singapore. “My first impressions were that the boat “looked absolutely gorgeous. I’ve always liked the lines of the boat and prefer this more sleeker look. It is the sort of boat you can imagine swanning around Monte Carlo in.”

The trip from Singapore to Langkawi really tested the yachts ability. From a 4ft chop to a 2 meter swell the boat just kept on going averaging 26 knots. Australian Captain Paul Vockler of Charter Management company Phuket Charters reminisces about the trip up from Singapore via Langkawi. “It got into the groove and went with it. We were going into a 20 knot northerly wind averaging 26 knots. She made it from Langkawi to Phuket in under 6 hours!”

I join owner and Captain on board Ciao Bell the morning after her arrival up to Yacht Haven marina, Phuket. She’s easy to spot with her trademark blue sports line contrasting smartly against the smooth white fibreglass. Aesthetically she’s very pleasing with the trademark Cranchi sleek lines and everything else you could possibly imagine from an Italian designed yacht.

Stepping on board I notice the Cranchi crab logo gleaming on the transom; on deck I immediately appreciate that she is superb for day cruising with forward and aft cream leather sun pads, sports cream leather bucket seats providing the ultimate in helm station luxury and comfort. The gauges are smartly inlaid with walnut fascias and the cream leather cockpit lounge area neatly features a completely stowable table.

The aft sun pads lift at the push of a button to reveal a garage big enough to store a tender, a jet ski and some dive tanks. The engines are also stored under here.

They say it’s the details that count. I notice the shining stainless steel grab rails discreetly placed in all the appropriate places. The owners pointed out the drink holders that are hidden everywhere even on sun pads and the electric fitted barbeque which is apparently, “for an Aussie very important.”

It’s a predictable Phuket day so we head below deck to airconditioned heaven. The saloon is a heady mix of American cherry wood, lush Italian cream leather, navy sun blinds and a ceiling that is made of cream Alcantara - Italian suede upholstery. The navy and cream colour scheme is a Cranchi trade mark and the overall effect is elegantly stylish utilising the very best in fine Italian materials.



Cruising around the Phang Nga bay, there is nothing better than anchoring in a secluded inlet for a lunch stop. Thoughtfully Cranchi have included a swing door fridge, microwave oven and twin hobs. There will be no mosquito's to disturb you as Cranchi have kindly secured mosquito nets over all portholes. Below decks really is state of the art for the boats size - other redeeming entertainment features are a Clarion CD and DVD player, Samsung plasma screen.

The Endurance 41 has room for one double cabin, but with no master cabin at the front of the boat you receive heaps more saloon room. Of course the large horse-shoe shaped sofa (big enough for eight) will convert into a berth should you need it.

Captain Paul Vockler joins me in the plush saloon to discuss his first impressions. "It's value for money. I've seen a lot of boats around this size and you can't beat this one especially for a first time boat owner. We tested it very heavily and it handled it very well. It's truly a performance off-shore cruiser."

Working for Phuket Charters who specialise in luxury "full service" charters, I ask him what he thinks of the aesthetics of the yacht.

"The interior is not over the top but it's very practical from the electronics system to the overall presentation. It really is a very good buy."



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Paul goes onto to explain that it is a niche boat with Cranchi building them only to 50 foot. "It's a very specialised boat with an open sports design that really flows. 2 times 350 horse power Volvo Penta diesel engines are used, so it flies along. It's designed very well with access to all systems very easily; everything is very simple and can be serviced on a computer. You just take the software and plug it in." As you would expect the boat comes complete with global positioning system, Ray marine portable remote VHF, combines radar and sonar and auto-pilot.

According to Paul the Endurance 41 is "The perfect boat for a day charter in Phuket." Paul anticipates that the Cranchi might be available for charter next high season and would make a superb day charter boat especially with six diving tanks on board and the Similian islands only one and half hours away. It is also the perfect yacht for an evening cruise with collection from your five star hotel.

I ask Edith of Starship Yachts what she thinks the main selling points of an Endurance 41 are. Her reply, "Speed; performance; very quiet; very stable; finished very luxuriously" All for a price of 230,000 Euros.

But how are they 20-30% cheaper than their main rivals British Sunseeker or Princess?

It all comes down to the size of the Cranchi boat yard which enables them to buy in bulk and obtain discounts on materials such as fibreglass. Cranchi make a point of passing these discounts onto the client.

Starship Yachts advise that as with buying a car you need to look at what is standard to discover the true price. The Cranchi's standard list is vast compared to other brands for example they include the wind-up shore power cable and cream leather seats as standard, which on most yachts are only an option, and all of the engines are computerised.

Edith adds "A lot of people don't look at the standard list of equipment. With the Cranchi the standard list is very high and the list of options is low people generally only look at



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the base price when really they should look at what is included in the price."

Cranchi also build to last, the hulls are made of Kevlar, the same material used for bullet proof vests and with computerised engines any un-foreseen problems are swiftly rectified.

In conclusion, I have personally searched for reviews and comments for the Cranchi Endurance 41 and in short can only uncover praise for a stylish yacht with a sensible price tag. Starship Yachts are the main Cranchi Agent in Asia but also represent Moody and Dufour sailing yachts. ■

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To charter a chic yacht for stylish Andaman cruising visit Phuket Charters at www.phuketcharters.com or email sales@phuketcharters.com