



LIVING THE DREAM

SEVEN ADVENTUROUS SOULS FROM CHINA ENJOYED THE BEST LANGKAWI HAS TO OFFER IN A FOUR-DAY CATAMARAN CRUISE MANAGED BY DREAM YACHT CHARTER.

*Text Roy Huang & Sue Li
Translation Chermaine Lee
Photos Ersey Wang*

OUR CRUISE AROUND LANGKAWI, exploring its exotic 'sea islands' among a group of seven new-found friends, will remain one of the most treasured experiences of our life.

What's better than enjoying the azure sky, rolling with the waves, exploring nature and star gazing? It's doing all these with friends, undisturbed by others, in what seemed like our own private world.

I've always been a big fan of the Japanese manga series *One Piece*, yearning to sail to the far end of the world with a group of friends who would die for each other.

Since graduating from university, I've dreamt of having a boat that will sail me out of the stifling cycles of daily life and bring me a life of adventure.

I don't need a large yacht, but she needs to have an area for relaxation and be seaworthy enough to take me anywhere in the world.

This dream was finally realised when I embarked on my first-ever sail - a four-day, three-night catamaran journey with Dream Yacht Charter in Langkawi.

The big blue

Langkawi is situated off the northwest corner of Peninsular Malaysia - just south of the border with Thailand - and is an archipelago comprising 99 'sea islands', separated from the mainland by the famous Strait of Malacca.

Only Pulau Langkawi and the islands of Tuba, Singa Besar and Dayang Bunting are inhabited by humans. Langkawi itself is not actually set up for mass tourism. The best-known 'tourist spots' are not especially eye-catching compared to other cities in Southeast Asia.

Prestigious resorts like Four Seasons stretch out along Pulau



Langkawi's coastline, but what we were about to enjoy was the pellucid blue waters around the archipelago.

It's the area's beautiful waters that make it a premium vacation spot and, for a true adventure, the perfect way to explore the area is by chartering a sailing yacht.

The waters all around were tranquil and calm. Wherever we sailed, we could dive into and swim in crystal-clear water, enjoy the sea breeze and sunbathe, whether on the yacht or the beach.

The area is large enough that it was rare to see another yacht, certainly few with many

people onboard, so for four days it felt like Langkawi was our exclusive wonderland.

Tailor-made itinerary

Taking into consideration stability, spaciousness and the number of travellers, we chose to sail a catamaran from Dream Yacht Charter, which handled all maritime matters for us.

Each day, the Captain would design a navigation route based on the weather, the waters and level of interests, as well as a discussion with the guests.

You can select anywhere to your taste, such as going into a secluded harbour or wandering through villages, trekking along the coastline, finding your way through forests or lazing on beaches.

The views at night were unforgettable. The Captain chose a different harbour to anchor each night. You could engage in different kinds of activities, board games or enjoy a drink while looking at the sunset. Of course, enjoying some rare alone time was also a nice way to start an evening after the lights went out.



Stargazing on the stable netted bow deck, complemented by the sounds of the waves washing on the catamaran, was a moment in life that I'll remember for many years.

Supreme service

It's a common misunderstanding that the price to pay for a charter expedition is the quality of the food.

This could not be more wrong. Our chef, Elise, was a local and the food was just fantastic each day. We learned and savoured so many regional specialties at each meal.

Ahead of every serving, we wondered aloud what kind of dishes she would come up with – think green curry chicken, fried rice Southeast Asian style, fried prawns ... culinary heaven.

Providing options for navigation routes and yacht models, Dream Yacht Charter has a dedicated crew team in each of its 45-plus destinations across the world. Two to three crew members, including professional chefs, sailors and lifeguards, are allocated to each yacht to serve your party exclusively.

After creating the most delectable dishes, the multi-tasking crew are then cruising into a harbour and, the next thing you know, they're guiding you on a snorkelling trip.

On our side, we had a fun and varied group of people, all connected by having a sailing dream, a passion for adventure and never-ending conversation ...

Flying on Malaysian Airlines from Beijing at 1:30am, we arrived in Kuala Lumpur at 8.00am and then took the one-hour flight to Langkawi.

Knowing that fresh water on board would be limited, we all rushed to take a shower at the pier before jumping on the catamaran.

After everyone was allocated their own room, the first thing we did onboard was unpack – each bedroom had limited space so we all travelled light. And after a tour of the catamaran, the journey officially started.

Day one

On the first day, the Captain weighed anchor at 3.00pm and we made our way out of the harbour. The route went around the main island

of Langkawi with stopovers at scenic bays or pristine beaches. The afternoon sun was warm and bright enough without being too chilly. Sitting at the bow deck, I enjoyed the sea breeze.

Tropical islands come with mercurial weather. Clouds usually bring the rain. Sometimes when you've lost yourself in the golden sea view at sunset, a shower suddenly poured.

We had taken enough photos by the evening so we started playing UNO (card game) and got to know each other. At about 6:30pm, we had our first meal prepared by Elise. What a treat. I was amazed at how she created so much and such a variety of food from what seemed a small fridge.

The catamaran anchored adjacent to a fishing farm for the first night. There were many long, slender fishing boats coming in and out of the bay. After dinner, the Captain took out a waterproof Langkawi navigation map and told us the plan for the remaining days.

Since Langkawi is located near Thailand, our phones received signals from Thailand when we went north. The Malaysian sim cards were of no use here. As such, it was the first time I spent time with my friends without using my phone – something I would eventually cherish.

At night, we lay on the netted bow deck. Watching the clouds floating and the shining stars, I almost fell asleep, remotely hearing the conversations between my friends. I'd rarely felt so relaxed.



Left to right: Cece Wang, Erscey Wang (sitting), Shishan & Quan, Chef Elise, Captain Allen, Tommy Tang Mijiang, Sue Li (sitting) & Roy Huang

CREW & GUESTS

Cece Wang – Organiser: The Beijing lady based in Shanghai organised the trip and assembled the group, with all of us becoming close friends over four memorable days.

Erscey Wang – Photographer: With more than 10 years of diving experience, the Yunnan lady is among the first generation of Chinese underwater photographers, and is passionate about photography, diving and yachts.

Shishan and Quan – Traveller & Designer: The energetic, romantic Shishan is married to the shopaholic Quan. The couple fell in love in university and have been on many quirky trips together.

Tommy Tang Mijiang – Traveller (without a camera): Roy's friend, the Dalian native did a half-year exchange in Sweden during his Bachelor

degree, and taught in Finland before finishing his master degree. He wandered Europe alone. Works hard to collect points for membership programmes.

Roy Huang & Sue Li – Authors: A Taiwanese guy and a Dalian girl who quit their jobs to travel around the world. They created their own blog to upload music videos of their journeys and share their travel stories.

Allen – Captain: The Frenchman looks similar to Leon in *Leon the Professional*. He was in the navy and came to Malaysia after retiring.

Elise – Chef: The easy-going Malaysian kept us full and happy onboard. She loves social media, frequently takes selfies and is a specialist in filter options.



Day 2

We were woken up by the pitter-patter of rain on the windows. As it was raining, we played games in the dining room – singing contests, word solitaire and character guessing.

This is the life on a yacht: we go when we want and we rest when the weather doesn't allow. Going with the flow eased my day-to-day stress bit by bit.

After a few hours, the sun came out again and we arrived by another island. Staying some distance away were some eagles hovering in the sky, searching for their prey in the water.

The Captain lifted the mainsail and started sailing after lunch. Until now, we'd used only engines.

Under the Captain's guidance, the guys released the ropes while he ran to the mast to lift up the mainsail. I felt like an ancient sailor in the movies, when the whole army of the ship worked together. In my mind, the stereotypical symphonies clicked in as background music.

We had returned to the tradition of sailing and made our way propelled only by the forces of nature. The actual sailing was one of the most rewarding parts of the trip.

At night, we arrived close to a private beach near a hotel and kayaked to the land. We ordered a few drinks at the bar there, although it was not our original intention, which was to use the public shower next to the swimming pool.

Day 3

Each day started with surprises. After the rainy second day, we saw a rainbow on the third morning. Fishes of iridescent colours gathered around the catamaran. Quan borrowed the fishing gear from the Captain and was determined to add some



extra fish for lunch, but unfortunately his efforts went unrewarded.

At noon, we arrived at a harbour. Since the fresh water was used up, we needed to refill the supply. When the Captain was busy refilling fresh water and fuel, we used the half hour to shop at a store there and bought packs of chips, ice cream, other snacks and drinks.

Shisan came up with the idea of buying up all the water pistols for kids and having a water war in the afternoon! After we got back on board, we filled up our water pistols and after lunch, our battle began ...

At about 4.00pm, the catamaran stopped at a magnificent bay. In perfect weather, we could all finally change to our swimwear to swim or kayak.

Not every spot is suitable for water activities, though. Some are filled with jellyfish or have an undercurrent, which can be especially dangerous for inexperienced swimmers. It's also dangerous to go into the water after dark, so the Captain always confirmed the safety of any location before we plunged in. Today, the Captain himself also jumped in.

Shisan and Quan paddled their boat to a beach nearby and met a hippie. He didn't mention where he was from or how long he had stayed here, but he was living in seclusion in the forest next to the beach.

He had built his own house and sourced water from the hill. All his clothes were made from the garbage in the sea. He appeared delighted whenever travellers visited this beach and he could strike up a conversation. Otherwise, when no one was around, he spent time with his dog.

He ate the seafood he caught and asked travellers if they had any leftovers on their yachts. He would ask every visitor to leave their email address as he planned to return to the civilised world one day and email everyone he met.

When the shades of red, scarlet and orange from the sunset mixed with the

turquoise water, I made a mental note of the picture. Saying goodbye grew closer and more difficult.

Day 4

The sun was especially bright on the fourth morning, radiating the whole area. I woke up very early to fly the drone for the last time, capturing more moments in this catamaran.

After breakfast, we asked the Captain if we could stay for a while, but he cruelly refused. Actually, he was in a good mood and the only reason I could think of was that he could catch up on some sleep after we left!

It took an hour and a half to reach our final stop. The weather was far from pleasant and immense dark clouds were dominating the sky. A symbol of our mood?

The few days we all spent at sea brought me much more enjoyment and fulfilment than any of our other trips. Not only did we get to know our diverse and energetic onboard companions, we also made friends with a couple who travelled around the world on their yacht with their little daughter. We heard about many adventures and stories.

The world at sea seems different to the world most of us familiar with. It's free and everyone strives to live the way they want. We opened ourselves up to let more people come into our lives, and were inspired by their different values that broadened our world view.

Everyone has a yacht in their heart. You just have to sail it.

www.dreamyachtcharter.com
contact@dreamyachtcharter.com
 Phone: +852 59 13 29 80

