

Show includes impressive display of dream boats

Seminars, watercraft and accomplished sailors

BY CHRISTOF MARTI, VANCOUVER SUN FEBRUARY 13, 2014



BC Place held a bevy of beautiful boats during the show. Christof Marti/Special to The Sun

The Vancouver International Boat Show recently gave us a five-day glimpse into the coming summer. The weather was spectacular, with perfect conditions to wander around the many boats at the outdoor floating show on Granville Island.

Future captains could step aboard of a variety of recreational sail and power boats. Yacht brokers were readily available to praise the advantages of the different types of boats. It appeared to me that the average boat gets bigger every year, and I could not help noticing the resemblance of a Yaletown luxury condo and the interior of a new yacht.

Several boats were available to take visitors for a free ride around False Creek and sometimes out into English Bay. The rides gave many people their first view of Vancouver's skyline from the water and others were excited to go out on a sailboat for the first time. The Discover Boating organization coordinated the rides.

Looking between the big yachts with their polished hulls I spotted what looked like a spaceship from Star Wars. Up close, it turned out to be a row boat. Rebecca Berger and Leanne Zrum are showcasing Honey Badger, a 22-foot ocean row boat.

Berger said this of the endeavour: "We will be rowing her in the first ever Great Pacific Race. The race spans 2,100 nautical miles from Monterey Bay, California, to Honolulu, Hawaii. We will be the first Canadians and the first female pair to row the Pacific."

Having sailed to Hawaii from Victoria, I have a huge respect for the pair and wish them all the best.

The indoor show at BC Place featured an impressive display of the latest water ski and wake board boats, small runabout boats, work boats as well as luxury yachts. Looking past all the shiny, white hulls a little sailboat caught my attention: She was called the Iron Lady, a small dinghy specifically crafted for people with disabilities. Former U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (the "Iron Lady"), kindly donated this boat to Rick Hansen. The Disabled Sailing Association operates a fleet of boats for disabled people.

On the upper floor, some 250 exhibitors showcased their latest products and services from clothing to boat accessories, from cruising guides to fishing supplies and more. There was everything a boater's heart desires to get ready for the upcoming boating season.

Boating schools and charter companies were well represented, enticing visitors to take up a boating course and explore B.C.'s beautiful coast. If the luxury yachts are not your thing, many sailing co-ops and clubs with more modest boats were at the show looking for new members.

Dozens of seminars offered expert advice on a variety of topics such as where to find the worlds best cruising grounds (well, besides B.C. that is), how to prepare for an ocean passage or tips on how to cook a tasty meal in the confined space of a small cruising boat. Many seminars let us dream of sailing in exotic places such as the South Pacific, the Sea of Cortez in Mexico or the Caribbean.

My personal high point was a chat with Derek Hatfield, who is one of Canada's most accomplished sailors, having circumnavigated the globe alone in a sailboat. He became the first Canadian to race around the world twice. You can now get a taste of what this might be like by joining his program "Spirit of Adventure" and sail with him aboard one of those incredible boats.

No boat show would be complete without a get-together in the evening with fellow boaters. This year Yacht Sales West organized an evening with drinks and appies at their docks on Granville Island. What better way to conclude a day at the show with a glass of wine under a starlit sky, standing on beautiful yacht and chatting with fellow boaters. Share the dream!

Christof Marti is the owner of Simply Sailing School in Vancouver (simplysailing.ca) and is a director on the Board of BC Sailing. Trained as an engineer and with an MBA in finance, Christof is also a qualified sailing instructor and a certified Yachtmaster. He will be filing reports from B.C.'s coastal waters over the season.

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