



SAFFRON
CRUISES

HONG KONG CLASSIC



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The restored yacht Lady Isabel offers Hong Kong charterers a home-grown classic design that makes a perfect romantic cruise for two, or intimate gatherings of up to ten.



► **IN OUR TIME OF HASTE, THE LOOK AND FEEL OF POLISHED STEEL AND BRASS, AND FINELY FINISHED WOOD, HAVE BECOME SOMETHING TO TREASURE.** With so many fibreglass yachts and their faux finishes running around Hong Kong's waters, one gentleman in particular has decided to hang on to a piece of the past. That gentleman, Mak Van Waay, has started what you might call a retirement company, restoring and refinishing the old yachts that used to ply Hong Kong waters.

Having made his fortune in property dealings in Europe, the Dutchman splits his time between a house in Holland and a liveboard in Hong Kong, and is in the happy position to indulge his passion for the classics. To date, his pride and joy is certainly Lady Isabel, a 60-footer first commissioned in 1957 for use as a commuting yacht by the managing director of the Whampoa Dock Company, and later being used by the high and mighty at Standard Chartered Bank.

The Lady Isabel's classic look harkens back to a time when Hong Kong was a more genteel place and people had time to sit back and truly appreciate fine craftsmanship. A yacht such as Lady Isabel, Mak believes, will re-introduce the population to the beauty of classic lines, retro interiors, and a time when things weren't quite so plastic.

A chartered trip on the Lady Isabel, be it a romantic cruise for two or a day out with close friends, is quite a different trip compared to your traditional junk cruise. No other boat in the city remotely resembles her, and the enormous amount of original teak wood – from the decks to the walls to the furnishings – has been perfectly restored. Even the brass and steel fittings throughout have been returned to their proper lustre, giving the yacht a real classic feel.

The original steering at the helm has been maintained and lovingly restored, with a wheel for steering and twin wheels on either side to operate the basic gears (forward, neutral and reverse) for the twin engines. For a touch of history, be sure to take a look at the Lady Isabel's original plaque that bears her name, builder and date of build on one of the steel cross beams in the forward area below decks. Beside it features the plaque that honours her rechristening and brand new look.

Of course her restoration is more than skin deep. In the engine room accessed by a floor panel near the helm, a quick look reveals a pair of classic Gardiner diesel engines that have been perfectly refitted. In fact, they don't look more than a few days old, with no hint of rust or wear. During Van Waay's two-year restoration, the engines were removed from the hull by crane, the hull bottom refinished, the engines restored, and then planted back where they belong. Gardiner engines are legendary for the longevity and reliability, and to see a pair of Gardiners in

such good shape indicates a pretty thorough piece of work.

Lady Isabel's forward deck features a cozy seating area which is great for enjoying the sights during a leisurely cruise. The open bow design is quite a different experience, with no real barrier between you and the sea. The Lady Isabel is also very efficient in the water, cutting through most of the waves with relative ease thanks to her slender hull shape, and cruising at around ten knots. Van Waay gleefully notes that a single tank of diesel – about 2,000 gallons – is usually enough to last half the year. That cruise speed puts all sorts of destinations in Hong Kong within reach of Lady Isabel's home at the Gold Coast Marina, and makes for a delightful ride to places like Sai Kung and Repulse Bay.

Lady Isabel was originally built for just one family, but she can comfortably serve up to ten guests. Below decks in the bow there is a food prep area, with modern kitchen appliances there, Van Waay opted for modern comfort, though these measures are hardly noticed and cleverly camouflaged. From here, servers can offer drinks and meals to guests, who may choose to lounge in the main cabin or, more likely, opt for a relaxing time on Lady Isabel's top deck. For the comfort of all guests, a number of refrigerators have been discreetly installed

within easy reaching distance. A handy music system can also direct tunes to any place on the boat, or to the whole boat all at once.

But the really cool thing about Lady Isabel is what she offers a couple looking for a weekend getaway. There is just one main stateroom, which has a large and comfortable bed. In a slightly funky touch, dark-red varnished walls grace the spacious shower area – a tribute to traditional Asian lacquer techniques that are found in Vietnamese and Chinese architecture – giving the bathroom a retro feel that really makes it stand out.

The main stateroom is nicely arranged at the aft portion of the yacht, letting guests enjoy their room. Aft, there is private access to a small aft deck area to enjoy a morning cup of coffee at the transom, and a swim platform. This is accessed by a private door that enters into the cabin.

Lady Isabel is now available for charter in Hong Kong through Saffron Cruises, which has developed a set of more luxurious and unique charter options for Hong Kong residents wanting to enjoy the cool coastline of Sai Kung or Stanley, with a bit more style than the usual junk party. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

To charter: www.saffron-cruises.com
Restoration work: www.fancyocean.com