

FISHING FOR ADVENTURE

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For first time boat owners and avid anglers Dickson Loh and Jessica Lee, their Cranchi Z35 has provided no shortage of family fun and a healthy dose of misadventure



Helming a boat well is a skill typically measured in years. Starting from scratch, the skills required to expertly maneuver a boat, along with that sixth sense for avoiding storms, rocks, and other boats, can seem daunting. Intimidating even. Yet clearly not intimidating enough to unsettle Dickson Loh.

So what if he did not have a boating license? The IT entrepreneur did not let that technicality prevent him from buying a boat. And a very nice one at that. Now this is perfectly acceptable if, like many yacht owners, he planned to delegate skippering duties to an experienced hand. Dickson had every intention of piloting the boat himself. This route to boating proficiency has not been smooth sailing but it works, judging by the way he handles this 35-footer twin-engine cruiser. Berthing the boat in a storm, waves crashing against the jetty at Lazarus Island, Dickson helms the boat expertly, taking his time to slide the boat, stern first, gingerly alongside the pontoon. A year into ownership of Little Wing, Dickson and Jessica graciously relate their nice and not-so-nice experiences aboard the vessel, and their transformation from bored landlubbers to avid, competent boaters.

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- What got your started into boating?

— **Dickson Loh:** I was introduced to boats by Edward Tan (Hong Seh Motors) after I had bought a car from him. That was three years ago. Before that I was involved in boating casually via charters but nothing serious.
- What changed your mind?

— “We are always looking to try new experiences we love the sun and sea. In fact, Jessica and I met when we were in the Navy. So, the whole family went for the PPCDL course and my eldest son Sean passed on his first attempt and was actually able to starting boating before me. I got my license two weeks before taking delivery of the boat.”
- Why a Cranchi Z35?

— We have a big family so we didn’t want too small a boat. The Z35 can sail with 12 on board. Having a cabin is also useful because we were planning to take long trips. But we didn’t want to go too big with our first boat.
- Was it intimidating learning to sail on this boat?

— It was difficult initially. This boat is obviously very different from the boat you pass your test on. At 11 metres (and with twin stern-mounted Volvo Pentas), it is considered a big boat to start out with. A 21-footer would be nicer sized boat for someone just getting into boating.
- Anything bad happen?

— We got into a minor incident when I couldn’t stop the boat in time. There was a small scratch to the other boat but it still cost quite a lot of money to fix.

The love of new experiences saw Dickson and his family enrol for the PPCDL course together



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it’s better to get people to pilot the boat
so that we can enjoy it better.”*



DL: Well, we grounded the boat once while fishing off Pulau Tekukor (off the southern tip of Sentosa).

Marcus, Dickson’s youngest son adds: It was between five and six pm, the tide was going down and we were drifting towards the island. Before we knew it, we were stuck on the rocks.

DL: I called the marina but there was nothing they could do. At that point, I just wanted to make sure everyone was safe. We had to wait for the tide to come back in, which it did at 10pm.

Another time, the anchor got stuck. And every time we tried to bring it up, the electrical system would trip. We radioed for help and a couple of guys came and started pulling on the line and eventually we freed the anchor.

Getting grounded was a good learning experience. Boating is about keeping watch all the time. Things can happen very fast. Steering a boat is also so much different from driving a car. There are so many things to consider. If you are not sure about what you are doing, it can be very stressful. Then it would be better to hire someone to drive the boat for you. But I bought it mainly for the family and because we enjoy the boat so much, I feel it has been worth it. And I’ve since learned that there a lot of ways to retrieve an anchor – now, if my anchor is stuck, I’m less worried.

It helps to be able to diagnose and respond to situations. Warning lights and alarms will go off and you need to be able to find out what’s wrong. One time, a system alarm was triggered because some water had got into the engine room. We didn’t know what the alarm meant so we had to dig up the owners’ manual and find out the fault. Once we knew what was wrong, we worked to pump all the water out by hand.

These things are fun to laugh about on hindsight but can be very stressful when they are happening. If you are in Singapore waters, it’s usually alright, you can easily radio for help. The MPA are there and the Coast Guard, they are everywhere. But it’s important is to take your time and never rush.

— Any other adventures to share?

— Sounds like an eventful year of boating

Where have you sailed to?	— We sailed it to Port Dickson last year. But mainly, the boat is used for fishing trips to the Southern Islands.
So how would you rate your overall experience with the boat?	— In general, it’s fun but can be hard work cleaning up after. We enjoy the boat fully and sometimes, it’s better to get people to pilot the boat so that we can enjoy it better.
How would you rate the performance of the boat?	— This boat has good power, and the 290-hp twin stern drives perform well. Good enough to cruise comfortably at 20 knots all the way to PD. Nothing has gone wrong so far.
What are running costs like?	— On average, we need to set aside between \$2,000 and \$3,000 every month for general maintenance and berthing.
A year down, what would you change about the boat?	— With the benefit of hindsight, we would probably have wanted a boat with more shelter. Or shelter that requires less manual labour to remove and install – working the zips is slow, and very troublesome if the weather suddenly goes bad. That, and a larger deck with a glass door access to a salon – that would be ideal. But then you are probably looking at a 50-footer.
Would that be your next boat?	— Before deciding on the Cranchi, we also considered a catamaran. You get more space but less speed. But you can take a lot more people. That could be our next boat. Or something with joystick control steering. Something easier to steer, and to dock without having to drop anchor. <i>Jessica Lee:</i> Or a boat with a fly bridge! That would be very nice.
Any voyages planned?	— Pulau Tioman could be a possibility. Hong Seh Marine are planning something to Phuket as well. That would be interesting. 

CRANCHI Z35

Length overall	11,70 m
Beam	3,53 m
Draft (incl. props)	1 m
Height above waterline	3,4 m
Engine	Volvo Penta 260 hp x 2
Dry weight	7.250 kg
Passenger capacity	12 / 1.140 kg
Fuel capacity	600 l
Fresh water capacity	190 l

PERFORMANCE

Top Speed	34 knots
Cruising Speed	27 knots
Effective Range	268 Nautical Miles @ 2500 rpm
Fuel consumption	2.2 L/Nm @ 2500 rpm
Price	\$60\$530,000



Left to right:
Dickson, Jessica,
Marcus and Natasha