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new world order

– WORDS BY REBECCA CURRAN AND
IMAGES COURTESY OF MARK ROBBA

Indonesian for New World, *Dunia Baru* is a lesson in patience, commitment and passion. Following a seven-year build at Indonesian-based Konjo Boat Builders, her owner Mark Robba brought the newly launched 51m sailing yacht to the Singapore Yacht Show and sat down with Rebecca Curran to talk about the build process and how he intends to make her worth the wait.



“HAVING BUILT FACTORIES IN MEXICO, INDIA AND INDONESIA, THE IDEA OF BUILDING A LARGE WOODEN YACHT IN INDONESIA TO WORLD CLASS STANDARDS, SEEMED LIKE A WORTHWHILE CHALLENGE.” – MARK ROBBA, OWNER OF S/Y *DUNIA BARU*

Opening page: *Dunia Baru* is ideal for cruising the unmatched waters of Indonesia.

This page: (top left) *Dunia Baru* took seven and a half years to build, (top right) the hull took three years to handcraft.

Next Page: (top left) Indonesia is the owner's favourite place to cruise, (bottom) the owner, his wife and son.

Based in Indonesia for over 20 years, Mark Robba's decision to take on the challenge of a new build locally, something that would make some owners nervous, was a no-brainer for the American owner. Looking for a yacht that would be well suited to the equatorial climes and exploration of Indonesia and the South Pacific, Robba felt that building new would help him ensure that the yacht would have the safety and reliability required for cruising off the beaten track. An experienced global businessman, the challenge of the build was also a major draw. "Having built factories in Mexico, India and Indonesia, the idea of building a large wooden yacht in Indonesia to world-class standards seemed like a worthwhile challenge," he tells me. "But in all honesty, it was one I completely underestimated the complexity of!"

What was conceived as a two-year project quickly grew into a major seven-and-a-half-year undertaking. "Throughout the process, getting the team to understand what defines a proper yacht has required patience

and perseverance," Robba admits. He has no regrets though. "The hull took three years to handcraft by fourth and fifth generation Indonesian shipwrights, deep in the jungles of Borneo where the large ironwood trees are available," he says. "Once the hull and superstructure were completed, she was towed 1,500km to Bali where I could attract and retain the foreign experts to provide design, project management and marine systems engineering, in addition to the local talented shipwrights, cabinetmakers and artisans. We worked to a result, not a time schedule, and we're very happy with how she's turned out".

Having grown up in New England and spending summers on the Cape, Robba was constantly surrounded by water. "Boats were always the love of my life and I dreamed some day I would captain a ferry between Hyannis and Nantucket," he says with a smile. Spending his teen years racing and working on smaller racing yachts, Robba eventually took to the crew life in Nassau, bringing a 1953 Bermuda Racer, *Bacchanal*, north to New York City. Quickly promoted to skipper,

he stayed on for three more years doing the same seasonal route, gaining true hands-on experience throughout.

Robba began to climb the yacht ladder with a few smaller boats before opening his own glove manufacturing company and relocating to Indonesia. While looking for activities for his family, he considered chartering a similar local yacht, but was instead inspired to pursue his dream of becoming an owner by building *Dunia Baru*. Committing such an extended period of time to one project has resulted in a finished product that comes straight from his heart and soul, and the owner is ready to make the most of it. "Now the yacht has been completed, my life of having basically two full-time jobs is over," he says, audibly relieved. "I can return and refocus on my business, and enjoy plenty of time on board".

As for others looking to make the leap and commit to such a lengthy process, Robba has some advice. "Firstly, surround yourself with a strong team and get involved in the project, which should help to make it an enjoyable 🏠"

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**"DO NOT LOSE CONTROL!
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S/Y *DUNIA BARU***



and rewarding experience," he says. "And do not lose control! The reason you are going the new build route is to build the boat that you want, and while you should always listen to the advice on offer, in the end, always follow your instincts. After all, it is your boat and your dream." While such a lengthy build period may leave others running for the hills, Robba has seen the beauty in the process. "Building her was an amazing experience as we got to see firsthand the skill and craftsmanship of the Konjo Boat Builders from South Sulawesi, Indonesia," he comments. "Their ability to do such intricate work with the simplest of tools, combined with the thrill and excitement of commissioning artisans in Bali to do primitive wood carvings, paintings and stunning glass works

of art is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Although *Dunia Baru* is currently for charter, Robba intends to use her as a family yacht predominantly. "She'll charter on a limited basis; our target market is families that want to have a great adventure in luxurious comfort and unparalleled safety," he says. Excited to get out and experience the long-awaited dream, Robba and his family have an aggressive cruise itinerary for the summer and into the autumn season. "She'll remain based in Komodo for the summer and in September we will take 14 members of the family and do a 1,500-mile trip leaving Bali and ending up in Papua." Having spent plenty of time cruising around the Caribbean and along the eastern seaboard, he still

believes that Indonesia offers something special. "It has to be my favourite place to cruise," he says. "The diversity and size is unmatched anywhere else in the world. Komodo and Raja Ampat are two prime examples as the scenery is stunning and the marine diversity is unparalleled. One day you can be snorkelling with 50 giant manta rays and the next day scuba diving in the underwater vents of an active volcano, while always surrounded by the warmth and charm of the locals."

With so much on offer, it is plain to see why interest in the region is on the rise, something that Robba intends to capitalise on with *Dunia Baru*. "The 17,000 islands of the archipelago are becoming a big draw for cruising and tourism, but so far, in places like Komodo and Raja Ampat, there have been limited high-end options so we see *Dunia Baru* as filling a gap in the market."

As they gain their sea legs, Robba remains hopeful that they will eventually branch off into more adventurous travel in the future, such as a two-month circumnavigation of Papua and Papua New Guinea with side trips to the Solomon Islands and Fiji next year. But he stresses that no matter where he and his family venture, it is always about spending time with those who matter most in life. "Yachting needs to be about spending time with your family," he says. "Kids are of course the most important part of this as the world truly is best seen through their eyes." Taking *Dunia Baru's* English name, 'New World', to heart, Robba is excited to see where the future takes them. "There is long list of adventures we hope to have and dreams truly are endless so who knows what the future will hold." □

