

The IRC fleet in the inaugural Hong Kong to Puerto Galera Yacht Race got away this morning at 1120hrs in Hong Kong 's iconic Victoria Harbour. The Race takes competitors 650nm across the South China Sea to Puerto Galera on the Philippines island of Mindoro. 12 boats were on the start line with the three boats from the HKPN division having set off yesterday.

The fleet 120 sailors on board from 14 countries including Australia, Austria, Belgium, United Kingdom, Canada, China, France, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sweden and USA. Today 's boats started in a very light easterly breeze with an ebb tide helping the yachts out of the harbour. Once the yachts passed Junk Bay, slightly more pressure filled in from the north-east.

To prepare for the event, competitors go through a stringent preparation period, during which all participants are scrutineered to ensure that they satisfy the World Sailing Category 1 Offshore Sailing Regulations (with RORC prescriptions). The biggest push to get ready for the start was by far by the Philippines entry Ernesto Echauz 's newest yacht the R/P 75 Standard Insurance Centennial which only just had their new mast put in a few days before the start. Yesterday Ernesto commented, " We were only able to practise with our new sails this afternoon. There are still a few minor kinks which need to be sorted out before the start of the race. Nevertheless, we are quite happy on the performance of the newly refitted yacht and would hope for a good maiden voyage. "

To keep up with the racing, follow the YB Tracker or race alongside the fleet at sailonline.org.