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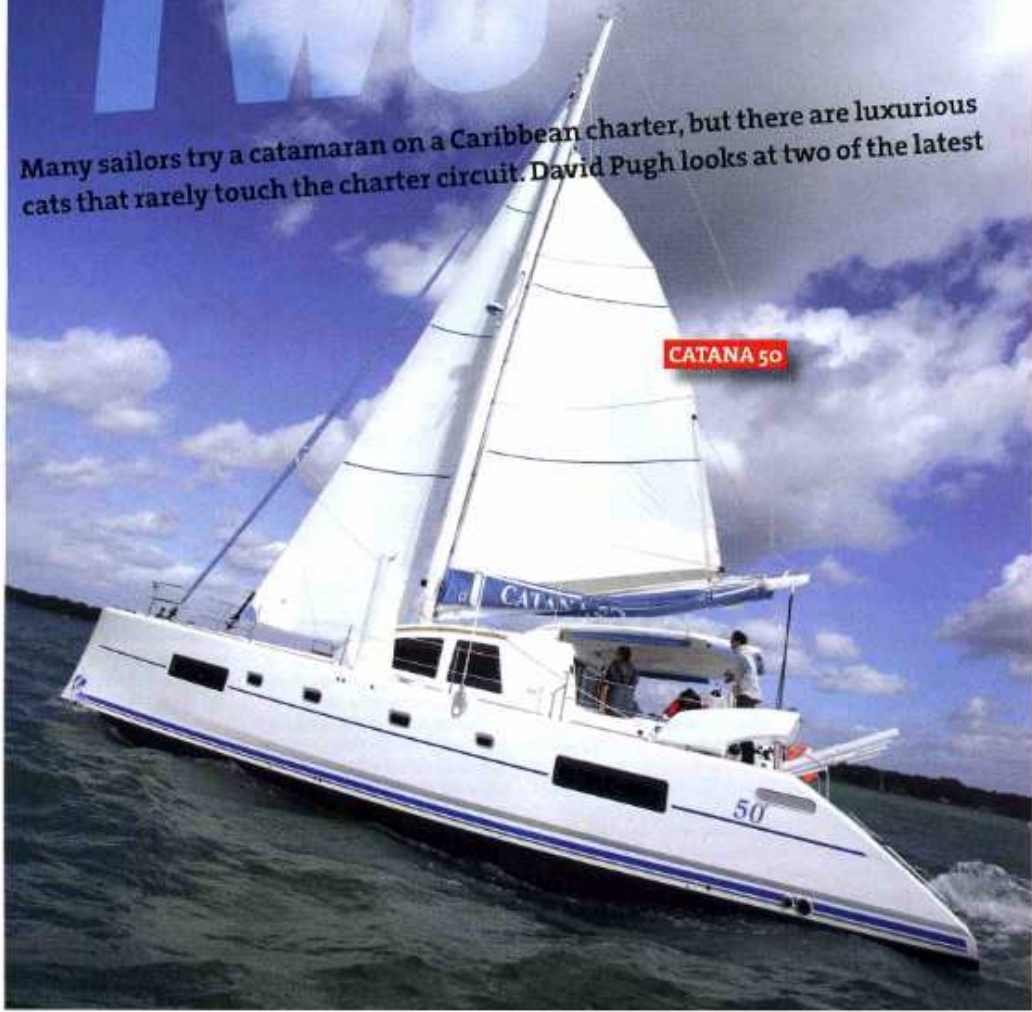
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YACHTS
ON TEST

THE POWER OF TWO

Many sailors try a catamaran on a Caribbean charter, but there are luxurious cats that rarely touch the charter circuit. David Pugh looks at two of the latest



Catana 50



Christophe Barreau's design for the Catana 50 places her at the sportier end of the spectrum, with her asymmetric hulls, angled daggerboards and 'tulip' bows, an unusual arrangement with a concave stern ending with a slightly bulbed section at the waterline. The forward crossbeam, often little more than a length of aluminium mast section on many cats, has been elegantly incorporated into the mould and strengthened with carbon fibre and this strikingly modern design continues aft with one of the features of which Catana's engineers are especially proud – the solid bimini top, cantilevered over the cockpit from the coachroof with no additional supports.

Weight has been kept out of the boat as much as possible to allow a full cruising package to be carried without compromising performance. For instance, a white lacquered carbon mast is fitted as standard and the interior uses foam-cored joiner work – even where heavy materials such as

Corian are used, their thickness is kept to a minimum.

On paper she's a fast, comfortable boat, perhaps most likely to be seen in the sun-drenched Mediterranean. Which is why a windy day in the Solent, just after Southampton Boat Show, seemed an ideal opportunity to put her through her paces.

Conservative approach

Like most cats, the Catana is rigged with a reaching sail on the forestay and a smaller, flatter-cut staysail on a cutter stay. With 18-20 knots of breeze sweeping down Southampton Water, the team from Catana advocated a moderate approach, using just the staysail and a double-reefed main.

In retrospect, this was perhaps too conservative, as speeds off the wind were less dramatic than I had hoped, but nevertheless she easily managed around 7.5 knots upwind, while bearing away quickly gained up to two knots. Leeway was noticeable, but this can partly be explained by our sailing with



Excellent for socialising, the Catana 50's cockpit is spacious and uncluttered, with open access to the saloon

BELOW DECKS



the daggerboards only halfway down owing to shallow water.

Tacking is often regarded as the multihull's weak point, but the Catana tacked reliably each time, making an angle of around 90°. With no option to back the self-tacking jib, turns were slow, with each tack taking several seconds, so when beating in a seaway timing is likely to be crucial. Under power with both engines running ahead, her turning circle is over 1.5 boatlengths, giving a measure of the space needed to tack.

Steering is via chain and rod, which gives very direct control, while the twin rudders showed themselves to be powerful enough to handle the yacht as she powered up. I didn't find helming to be a great pleasure, however, as feedback is limited and it was noticeable that the Catana team tended to steer via the autopilot.

The cockpit layout is quite different from most of her competitors. First, most of the running rigging is led aft to a bank of clutches and a large electric



Far left: the Catana has an imposing presence. Centre: a vanity mirror is neatly concealed in the dressing table. Above: a spacious, modern saloon. Note the diagonally folded saloon table

winch mounted in the centre of the aft cockpit coaming, forming a central control console. Catana have tried hard to keep the decks clear of lines and a nice touch is the spinnaker tacklines under each deck, emerging at the bow.

Another crucial difference is the helm layout. The most popular arrangement for cruising cats is a single position set well forward under the bimini at one side. Catana have chosen twin helms, set well aft on each hull outside the bimini. This worked well on the test sail, giving excellent forward visibility when sailing – often cats have a large blind spot from the helm. Every silver lining has a cloud, however, and the helm positions are exposed to sun and spray.

For the crew the huge cockpit, uncluttered by helm positions, offers a

generous space to relax – you can even lift the backs of the seats to create armchairs when in port. If you fancy soaking up the sun for a few minutes, Catana have thoughtfully included a full-length sun lounger let into the cabin top. Deck storage is excellent, with huge bins under the cockpit sole and large lockers in the foredeck.

Both helms have fly-by-wire engine controls and under power the boat proved easily capable of cruising at around 11.5 knots with a 9.5 knot top speed. Manoeuvrability is superb – with the two engines opposing each other, she can turn in her own length.

Modern feel

Accessed by a huge transparent door, flanked either side by windows to allow an unbroken sightline from the interior to the cockpit, the saloon has a modern feel thanks to intelligent use of space and the stainless steel and light oak fittings. To port is a huge U-shaped galley, with plenty of stowage. There are two big fridges here, plus an extra fridge in the cockpit for a few cold beers. The worktops are a thin layer of Corian laminated to a lightweight foam-cored substrate.

Opposite to starboard is a big



The cockpit offers a generous space to relax – you can even lift the seats to create armchairs in port



drained wet locker, while forward of this is the main interior living space, with an L-shaped settee surrounding a large square table. There's plenty of stowage under and behind the settee.

The navstation, forward to port, is the least successful area in the saloon. It gives an excellent view forward and is well laid out for electronic navigation with plenty of space for instruments, a computer and the breaker panel to one side, but it seems odd to have provided such a huge chart table without giving much thought to paper navigation. None of the multiplicity of stowage spaces is big enough for unfolded charts and the table itself is pitted with



Left: stylish reading lights in the saloon. Above: the helm positions are set well out on the hulls for good visibility

panels – the result is a surface full of gaps instead of the smooth, unbroken area needed for chartwork.

Our test boat's hulls were laid out as separate owner and guest areas, with the guest hull to port. This has two cabins, both ensuite. The forward cabin has a triangular double berth with a sprung, slatted base, as found on all berths on board. Stowage is well provided for. The ensuite heads and shower has plenty of headroom and is an easy to clean one-piece moulding.

The aft cabin can be a twin or double – by pulling some infill boards across the walkway between the two berths. Once again stowage is excellent.

Crossing to starboard, the owner's hull has a huge double cabin aft with a writing or dressing table forward of that. The forward part of the hull houses more hanging space, a washing machine and a huge separate heads and shower, again finished in thin Cortan. The shower is separated from the heads area by a frosted green door, and is a similar size to a standard domestic shower stall.

Well laid out for electronic navigation, the navstation is less good for chartwork

Conclusion

This is a yacht that will achieve what she sets out to do – fast, comfortable passages. On the water she shows good speed and, although not a thrill to sail, it probably doesn't matter – set the autopilot and this yacht will reel off the miles while you sit in the cockpit or saloon and enjoy the well thought out recreational areas. The interior is finished to a high level of comfort and should allow owner and guests to socialise while giving each plenty of private space. From the outside the yacht looks strikingly modern and will certainly make a statement in harbour.

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SPECIFICATIONS

Catana 50

LOA	16.00m	52ft 6in
IWL	15.00m	49ft 3in
BEAM (MAX)	3.90m	12ft 7in
DRAUGHT (BOARDS UP)	1.20m	3ft 9in
DRAUGHT (BOARDS DOWN)	2.91m	9ft 7in
DSP (LIGHTSHIP)	16,500kg	36,376lb
SAIL AREA (MAIN POWERHATCH)	141.2m ²	1,520m ²
BERTHS	6	
ENGINE	2x Volvo 300DIVE	
POWER	56kW	25hp
WINDS	8005	110kph
FUEL	1,075lt	236gal
SAIL AREA (DIP)	223	
DISP. LWL	136	
PRICE (EX VAT)	£215,000	