

ON TEST CRUISING CATAMARANS

Lagoon 400 ■ Fountaine Pajot Lipari 41 ■ Broadblue 435



All photos: Richard Langdon and Alastair Hyde-Tetley/Ocean Images

COULD YOU LOVE

There are 32 cruising cats taking part in the ARC this year, proof of their increasing popularity among liveaboards. They may not be pretty, but they offer superb accommodation and extend your cruising ground. The Yachting World team spent three days on board three production cats. Toby Hodges distils their comments

Catamarans have a lot going for them. They're stable, fast, spacious, shoal-draught and beach-friendly, and above all they provide a comfortable platform. And they are becoming very popular indeed in liveboard, long-distance cruising circles.

There are 32 cruising catamarans taking part in this year's Atlantic Rally for Cruisers



A CATAMARAN?

(ARC), including 12 Lagoons and five Catanas. Lagoon are the third biggest production yacht builder in terms of turnover, behind their sister brands Bénéteau and Jeanneau, and ahead of Bavaria and Hanse. Digest those stats for a second.

We couldn't ignore this craze any longer and wanted to find out once and for all what a production catamaran has to offer. We chose

three popular, affordable family catamarans in the 40-45ft bracket and took them on a three-day test around the south of England.

The results were quite surprising. Perhaps we were too ready to be sold the dream, but while catamarans have obvious benefits, they come with an array of compromises that will be up to the individual to weigh up.

The first thing you have to say about

cruising catamarans is that they offer an unparalleled living platform for their length. But cats bring with them a host of preconceived theories and worries such as how they will cope in bad weather, where you can moor them and the expense involved, plus the disconnection from the sailing experience monohull sailors know and love. We addressed all these issues during our test. ►►

ON TEST CRUISING CATAMARANS

Broadblue 435

Fountaine Pajot Lipari 41

Yachting World's super cat rally

We took our three popular cruising catamarans on a three-day cruise: sailing, motoring, cooking, eating, anchoring and sleeping aboard. The test team included *Yachting World's* David Glenn, Elaine Bunting, Matthew Sheahan, Harriett Robinson and me, Toby Hodges. We were joined by multihull sailor Brian Thompson and multihull designer Nigel Irens, plus the agents and owners of the three test boats.

We sailed the boats from the Hamble River in Southampton, west to Poole, spent the

following day testing them outside and inside one of the biggest natural harbours in Europe – an ideal place to assess the shoal draught virtues of these vessels – before returning to Southampton on the third day.

During the second day's circumnavigation of Brownsea Island the boats joined in tight formation for a photoshoot. Only a few feet apart from each other, doing seven knots in 2m of water, it naturally progressed into a race, giving us a chance to compare the boats' handling and agility.



Taking the plunge

What drives people to buy a multihull in the first place? Because once they have sampled two hulls, owners don't tend to look back. The main impetus seems to be either a less keen sailing partner or the benefits of a level platform for a family.

Broadblue's Mark Jarvis told us that 60 per cent of the owners they sell to have owned a multihull before; 15 per cent are first-time sailors; 15 per cent are motorboat converts and ten per cent or fewer are monohull converts.

Our test boats do not pretend to be graceful sailing hulls, nor flaunt performance statistics. They sell on comfort alone. As you'll see, there were issues about aesthetics, performance,



Lagoon 400



motion and design, but before you read on, it's worth bearing the following questions in mind:

- 1 How often do you look at your own boat when it's sailing anyway?
- 2 How big a boat would you have to buy to get comparable space and comfort?
- 3 If you had a two-week sailing holiday in the Mediterranean or Caribbean and had the choice of monohull or a cat to share with another family, which would you go for?
- 4 Faced with the situation of not going sailing with your family again because they don't like it or trading in for a cat, what would you do?
- 5 What sort of boat would you actually want to live aboard, not cruise now and then?

You might be surprised by your answers.

What a catamaran offers over a monohull

PROS

- Supreme, home-like comfort
- For their LOA, incomparable space for entertaining and living
- Shallow-draught sailing/ability to dry out
- Increased choice of anchorages, no rolling
- Stable non-heeling platform, attractive to non-sailors
- Excellent stowage
- Virtually unsinkable
- Easy to operate short-handed
- Hard bimini covers, which can take multiple solar panels
- Permanent dinghy davits
- Wide side decks
- Twin engine manoeuvrability (all three of our test boats could spin within their own length)
- Having children/family aboard is so much easier on one-level living
- Stability reduces fatigue on long passages
- Redundancy of having two engines and rudders

CONS

- Looks
- Size/bulk
- Uncomfortable motion in a seaway
- Disconnection from feel of conventional sailing
- Windage at anchor
- Slow and cumbersome to tack
- Impractical to the point of dangerous in some cases to board/get off alongside owing to enormous freeboard
- Poor visibility (one agent admitted going ashore after anchoring before noticing the main was still up!)



The test team From Yachting World



David Glenn, Editor



Matthew Sheahan
Technical Editor/Racing



Toby Hodges
Boat Test Editor



Elaine Bunting
Features Editor/Cruising



Jonathon Medway
Staff Writer/Gear



Harriett Robinson
Editorial Assistant

Guest reviewers



Brian Thompson
UK's most accomplished multihull sailor, Thompson has broken 25 sailing records. He skippered the maxi-multihull *Doha 2006* round the world



Nigel Irens
Renowned multihull designer, best known for his racing designs, including Ellen MacArthur's *B&Q*, but also designs cruisers

LAGOON 400

Lagoon are the world's largest manufacturers of catamarans and the 400 follows their most popular model, the 380, which sold over 600. Designers VPLP know a thing or two about performance – they are the French racing multihull designers of choice – which suggests that the brief for the 400's high, angular design focuses on function over form.

But we were impressed with the space, light and ventilation throughout this boat. She's modern and simple, a safe boat to get around, so is ideally set up for multiple guests or charterers, with the requirements for outdoor warm weather living meticulously thought out.



Heading into the lumpy stuff

David Glenn sailed the Lagoon 400 in some tricky conditions on the second day and had this comment: "Heading out into the lumpy Force 5 conditions, she pitched like hell and Ancasta agent Ashley Overton made the point that when sailing upwind in these conditions, anything forward of the saloon becomes untenable.

"For the first time I felt ever so slightly vulnerable high up at the steering position as we lurched into the seas, without much to stop you falling sideways if you happened to miss a handhold. We had a reef in the fathead

main and full headsail – [Overton agrees that a reef is needed when it gets to about 18 knots (see Brian Thompson's guide to reefing on page 47)] – but she struggled with her angles and it took some getting used to, especially in a narrow channel. We needed to bear away after tacking to get her going and before winding her up into the breeze.

"Once we cleared the training bank and I could stop pinching, she charged off at six knots hard on wind and up to 6.8 when we gave her her head, with seven or more achieved on the broad reach back. I couldn't quite get used to the fact that the mainsheet

and jib sheets used the same winch, but the electric winches proved very useful."

Elaine Bunting found the volume of the hulls telling: "When sailing directly behind the Lipari in Poole Harbour, it was obvious that we were making far more leeway at the same wind angles upwind (low 40° apparent was as close as the boat would point) and were not as fast. The excellent accommodation and large heads has forced a compromise, because to achieve this the Lagoon has chunkier hulls and is beamier, with a bigger wetted surface area and chubby entries."

"The bluff bows are very full, which

This optional cover gives the helmsman full protection in inclement conditions, but hardly contributes positive aesthetics – our test team compared it to a diving bell dome and a potting shed!



We comment ...

David Glenn:

“Have Lagoon gone too far to provide the admittedly superb accommodation? She’s a vast boat for her size. I’m sure she’ll make someone very happy, but not in a big sea upwind. And I’d have to have a blindfold on when I row away from her at anchor.”

Elaine Bunting:

“I think this is probably the least rewarding catamaran of the three to sail, but I suspect it would be the one your kids and their friends would like most.”

Matthew Sheahan:

“I liked the simplicity of the design on deck and below, but this is a boat that pushes volume to the max and looks stubby and angular as a result.”



Above: Matthew Sheahan plots his way around to Poole at the comfy steering position. Below: the shoal draught is good for hugging the coastline



doesn’t help her upwind performance in a seaway; they seem to act as brakes when pitching,” agrees Matthew Sheahan, adding: “The cable steering does allow some feel and once you get your eye in on the wind angles and speed it is fairly easy to get her into the groove. If you do pinch her into the breeze or punch her into the odd wave, cracking off sees her accelerate fairly briskly.”

We found the long traveller on the aft bimini roof excellent for controlling twist in the fathead main – a sail with an extra lofty area that deserves to be treated with respect. The port winch is angled to grind the port

sheet or furler line, and while the majority of winches and clutches can be reached from the helming position, Elaine Bunting found that “manoeuvres still had to be done with help from a crewmember or the autopilot”. Discipline is also needed with rope handling if you are to avoid a snake pit of rope tails.

Clever ideas like the one-way viewable hull windows (during the day) and recessed hatches that limit toe-stubbing on deck have spread through the range. To try to save on the increasing weight of larger RIBs hanging off davits, Lagoon have produced their own lightweight aluminium RIB.

Lagoon 400 – Pros

- + Very clear, detailed owner’s manual
- + Sliding hatch to open galley into cockpit (seen on 440) and general galley layout is excellent
- + A simple sliding insert converts guest twin to double berth
- + Stowage throughout is phenomenal
- + Designated generator space below a cockpit seat (up to 9.5kW)
- + Largest guest heads/shower of test boats
- + Very easy to walk around, with attention given to comfort and seating

Cons

- Creaky floorboards and noisy locker hatches
- Poor comparative level of finish
- Liberal, untidy use of caulking around seals
- Raised steering position accentuates the multihull feel, and throws you around in a seaway

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As a relaxing area for guests, the cockpit with its sun lounger and table for eight is excellent, free from sailing systems and easy to get around – we seated nine for dinner. The tapered bimini allows some sun into the cockpit as well as providing shade and its more carefully finished underside contrasted well with the less well-finished moulding of the Lipari



Above: it's all in the beam – substantial volume in the floats provides phenomenal accommodation. Right: a basic but practical saloon, with excellent convivial galley



Lagoon 400

LOA	11.97m	39ft 3in
LWL	11.45m	37ft 7in
Beam	7.25m	23ft 9in
Draught	1.21m	4ft 0in
Displacement (lightship)	10,348kg	22,817lb
Water	300lt	66gal
Fuel	2 x 200lt	2 x 44gal
Designed by: Van Peteghem Lauriot Prévost		
Price: £217,212 ex VAT		
www.cata-lagoon.com		

“ The excellent accommodation has forced a compromise; the Lagoon has chunkier hulls and is beamier, with a bigger wetted surface area and chubby entries



Sumptuous space below

Her interior – available in light oak Alpi veneer only – provides sumptuous space, light and ventilation, combined with one-level living in both hulls. Getting around is a breeze, despite the huge seating area in the cockpit. The panoramic view from the saloon is notable and the vertical windows ensure little reflection.

Available in several layouts, with a saloon table that drops to form a double berth, the 400 certainly presents the best charter boat option, with no second class berths, twin cabins that easily convert to doubles and a galley linking outside and in. However, charter clients apparently represent only one in ten of agent Ancasta’s market.

The hulls create space for an island double in both aft cabins, while the owner’s hull includes the largest double wardrobe I’ve seen on a production boat.

Downsides include the quality of finish, which raised questions. “The laminate floor and Spartan feel looked cheap,” reckoned Elaine Bunting. “Upholstery and finish was all obviously down to a price – I wouldn’t like to think of buying a well-used ten or 15-year-old Lagoon.” There’s a fine balance, aboard multihulls in particular, between keeping fittings lightweight and erring on the side of underspec’ed. One wonders if the bare resin bilges are to save weight – bear in mind the specs show the 400 has the heaviest displacement of the three boats by a fair margin – or to save money.

The galley and navstation lack worktop, encouraging crew to ‘borrow’ the saloon table, which, considering the boat’s capacity to carry eight crew, could be a problem. Perhaps the biggest owner issue, however, could be the difficulty of ever being able to give the interior some personality.



Knowing when to reef

As David Glenn discovered while sailing the Lagoon 400 in a stiff breeze, it is important to know when to reef. For newcomers to multihull sailing, who are used to clear signs of when a boat is overpressed, this can be a problem and they have to learn to recognise the subtler warning signs. Who better to ask for tips on this than Brian Thompson?

Thompson says . . .

Perhaps the most important thing to understand is that the clues to being overpowered are more subtle in a multihull.

On monohulls extreme heel angles upwind or reaching make it obvious a sail reduction is required; downwind it may be hard to retain control as the wind increases and broaches are likely. Either way, the sound of crockery crashing to the cabin sole is going to give you a not-so-subtle reminder to reef.

Aboard a multihull you might sense the heel angle increase a couple of degrees upwind and reaching, as the



leeward hull sinks slightly deeper into the water. Downwind you might just notice the pitch angle change a degree or two, with the bows dropping a few inches as the cat is pressed harder.

At night, or if you are new to multihulls, you might miss these slight clues, so how to recognise being overpowered?

The first thing is to trust your instincts and be proactive. If you have that nagging feeling that you should reef the sails, just do it and see what happens. If you are going almost the same speed and feeling more comfortable, you have chosen correctly. Be particularly vigilant when sailing downwind when the apparent wind is low.

A good indicator is to use your wind instruments – any new boat should come with guidance on a schedule of sail changes for different wind speeds and angles, or other experienced owners would be happy to offer their input.

However, wind instruments can fail, or be badly calibrated, so learn to trust your gut instincts. One reliable method of sailing safely and efficiently is to use your boat speed from the log or GPS. So for instance, you can set a maximum sustained boatspeed downwind. For a 40ft cat you might choose a speed limit of, say, 10 or 11 knots, and after that you would reduce sail. You can work out speeds for upwind and reaching as well.

Generally, if you keep your boat speed within safe limits you should not get into too much trouble – and you can use this method to decide when to shake a reef out as well. If you are a couple of knots below your target boat speed, you can probably put up some more sail.



BROADBLUE VOYAGER 435

This was never intended to be a comparative boat test, but it's worth pointing out that the UK-built Broadblue 435 is a larger, more expensive and more robust product than the French cats. She is also an older design (2004). Her high topsides, rising sheer, raked bows and internal layout signal how far multihull design had moved on in the last decade. Matthew Sheahan compared her multi-level interior to a 'children's play area' and Elaine Bunting likened getting in and out of the cockpit to 'climbing into and out of a paddling pool'.

But Broadblue's build quality is high, reflecting their clients' bluewater aspirations. Hulls are handmade in polyester and the keels are integral to the construction and designed to

take the ground. Keels are topped, so if breached, they won't flood the hulls, and the rudders are skeg-hung.

Displacement is nine tonnes and Broadblue recommend clients not to overload her and keep to under 12 tonnes loaded weight. But judging by her performance in light airs, I'd be throwing everything, including the galley sink, overboard.

The upside is that the Broadblue 435 is comfortable and steady in stronger wind and sea, which is what most would prefer for going offshore – and she was the only boat able to carry full sail when the conditions got livelier.

Note that Broadblue are planning to produce a performance alternative in their new Rapier range.



Questions about performance

As if sailing a cruising cat weren't alien enough to a monohull sailor, we felt even more disconnected from the sailing experience aboard the Broadblue thanks to a complete lack of feel from the hydraulic steering. Performance was sluggish – in a Force 3 I'd like to be doing more than four knots reaching. Having two fixed props didn't help matters, but the two shorter boats left us red-faced in light airs.

Visibility from the helm is limited, with

a stackpack completely obscuring the view of the genoa on a starboard reach – I found rolling up the sides of the bimini and holding the wheel from the side deck a lot more reassuring. In fact, goosewinging in this way from Hengistbury Head to Poole entrance in just 2.6m of water felt very peaceful and easy.

But it was only when the wind rose to a Force 4 that any passagemaking performance made itself felt, as we hit six and a half knots on a beam reach. This was still not what you'd call electric and overall

I deeply missed the performance and feel a monohull would have provided in such idyllic conditions.

With the wind up the next day, Matthew Sheahan sailed the Broadblue in a Force 5 and said: "The finer-entry bows cope well with bigger seas, especially upwind. She also appears to have a bit more clearance between the underside of the nacelle and the water, but still bangs and crashes in a seaway.

"She's a rugged, go-anywhere boat and the engineering of her build, systems and fit-out

We comment ...

Matthew Sheahan:
“I wanted to find some good on this boat, but in the end there were so many areas that had not been thought out properly that she is more a reminder of what multihull design should avoid.”

Elaine Bunting:
“The narrower waterline beam of the hulls came at a price: multiple-level, cramped living. I think this difference would be

more acceptable if there really were a significant performance or aesthetic gain, but the Broadblue does not, in fact, outshine the others and looks quite dated.”

David Glenn:
“Although this was a bigger yacht in terms of LOA, it felt smaller than the other two down below, and the price tag looked steep in comparison.”



Above: the Editor and our photographer get to grips with alfresco dining. Below: the Broadblue is a rugged, go-anywhere boat, but shows her age



has been carried out with little regard for style and weight. While you might feel secure knowing that she's been overbuilt in most areas, she's on the verge of being too heavy for her own good and creating a new set of problems – a bad design spiral to get into.”

Unfortunately, the sail-handling set-up also showed its age, notably the control line arrangement that forced the helmsman to leave the wheel to tack if short-handed. “I think you do really have to assume with these catamarans that the skipper is sailing

with friends or family who are fairly reluctant sailors,” Elaine Bunting noted. A long traveller track crosses the aft deck, but you can't get to it quickly to depower the main, and with the winch in the centre there's a mess of sheets in the cockpit, with no defined route for going onto the side decks.

A larger cockpit table, which could seat more than four, might help update this boat. – there was never the option of getting eight aboard the 435 for dinner, whereas it was doable on the other two.

Broadblue Voyager 435 Pros

- + Large engine bays with standing room that you can access in a seaway. Also accessible from the aft end of the aft cabins
- + Hull windows and oversize hatches (which also provide easy access for the deck) flood her with light and ventilation
- + Joiner work, fittings and finish of good quality throughout

Cons

- Lack of practical stowage in cabins
- Older, narrower hulls constrain accommodation in comparison with modern designs
- Floorboard creak and bilge finish let down overall finish quality
- Only 400lt of water tanks (we ran out on day two), placing dependence on watermakers on passage

ON TEST CRUISING CATAMARANS



Contrary to popular belief catamarans do roll; you mustn't get carried away with the concept of leaving your G&T safely on the cockpit table



Good views from the raised saloon, but it is comparatively cramped for space around the table. The galley layout was rather awkward and the navstation faced aft (below)



Below-decks quality

The joiner work and fit-out was of a much higher quality aboard the Broadblue than the French production cats, with a more luxurious feel. American oak is chosen by most buyers to keep the interior light, in one standard saloon/galley layout, and the

amount of ventilation from the numerous large hatches is superb (especially in the cabins) plus light from those Adidas logo-like hull windows.

But she's awkward to move about in and feels cramped owing to her narrower waterline beam (2ft narrower than the 4ft shorter Lagoon), and there are far too many different levels, including berths that are too high to climb onto for no apparent reason.

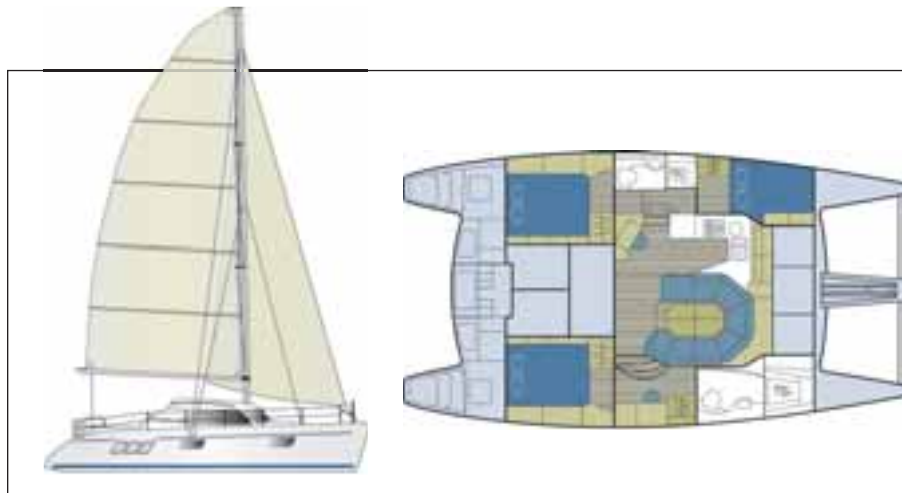
The port forward three-berth cabin could present an attractive option for a family, but the berths are too short and any more than two people in here would make the cabin space untenable.

This cabin also compounds the multiple-level living of the boat – I was forever tripping over the saloon sliding door, and there are

steps into all cabins and up into berths.

The forward-facing galley is not terribly practical. It's out of reach of the cockpit and there's a lack of handy stowage – kitchen utensils, for instance, were stowed on the other side of the saloon. "Some locker doors needed proper latches," said David Glenn. "Contrary to popular belief catamarans do roll; you mustn't get carried away with the concept of leaving your G&T safely on the cockpit table." There is ample stowage throughout the boat, albeit largely under seats and berths.

The saloon area is small for the size of boat, with an aft-facing navstation. The guest heads also felt cramped in comparison with those aboard the other two boats, with insufficient stowage.



Broadblue Voyager 435

LOA	13.25m	43ft 2in
LWL	11.38m	37ft 4in
Beam	6.7m	22ft 0in
Draught	1.25m	4ft 1in
Displacement	9,100kg	20,061lb
Fuel	444lt	98gal
Water	400lt	88gal
Price: £349,500 ex VAT		
www.broadblue.co.uk		

FOUNTAINE PAJOT LIPARI 41

Fountaine Pajot have been manufacturing in Aigrefeuille on the Atlantic coast of France for 34 years and have produced more than 2,200 cats. The one-year-old Lipari 41, kindly provided by owners Gerry and Wendy Addis, was the sleekest and, dare I say, most attractive of the catamarans we had on test, with wraparound saloon windows and considerably lower topsides.

The Addises chose the Lipari 41 after exhaustive research into what they could fit into their 40ft private berth in Hythe Marina, and had just returned from ten weeks away this summer, including a voyage to southern Brittany and another to the West Country.



Impressive under sail

The test team were surprised and impressed with the performance of the Lipari, largely thanks to a comparatively light and responsive helm, directly linked to the rudders via an arm and flexible drive system. Where the Lagoon targets all-out accommodation, the Lipari is sleeker, weighing nearly three tonnes less, which really shows in her performance. Crucially, she was also the easiest boat to get aboard from alongside owing to her shallow, sloping, cutaway transoms.

Although there is good all-round visibility from the open-top raised steering position,

Elaine Bunting had reservations: "It was virtually impossible to see anything to leeward of the forestay if using a code sail or asymmetric. To keep a proper watch you'd have to go below and look forward through the saloon windows."

But the double helm seat is very comfortable, with a sensible layout of sheet and halyard winches, including control lines to hand, which made simple work of short-handed sailing and short-tacking. It's also very easy for another person to work sheets or halyards from the side deck.

Rope tidy bins kept the cockpit free of

lines and the Lipari didn't rely on powered winches – although these are available as an option. A solution for mounting instruments that you can see at a glance is needed as accurate wind speed and angle information can be vital on cats – instruments are currently mounted on the bulkhead below wheel height.

Taking over the helm from Brian Thompson on the second day took some nerve, but I enjoyed having him trim sheets for me! With a Force 5 barreling down against the fast ebbing main channel of Poole Harbour, we had a good chance to 'race' the

We comment ...

David Glenn:
“Of the three I liked this yacht the most, maybe because she had been expertly breathed on by her owner. This boat seemed together, neat, easy to use.”

Elaine Bunting:
“The best fit-out of all the boats on our test, with a practical liveaboard feel and good accommodation. This boat is easy to move around on inside

and out, and arguably the best looking of the ‘ugly sisters’. Overall, I would pick it as the best for a private owner.”

Matthew Sheahan:
“While she’s still a way off from representing a new future for multihulls, she does at least feel right, light and sprightly. She’s the only boat of the three I’d be happy sailing downwind in a big breeze and waves.”



Asymmetric set-up

Owner Gerry Addis had added a Facnor continuous furling system which can be used for both an A-sail and a code sail, plus a custom-made flip-up sprit, which makes sail changing simple. The sail furls around a luff rope, with a short Spectra line attached to a foam sleeve on the middle of the luff rope which helps it furl neatly at the luff and prevents wraps. By furling to gybe, Addis avoids the need for long sheets, eliminating the risk of a wrap.

“It’s so much simpler than dancing on the foredeck with a dowsing line, cursing when the bucket gets jammed, or struggling when the wind pipes up and suddenly you’ve got a job on your hands to get it down,” enthused Elaine Bunting.



Above: very comfortable seating for two at the helm, with controls to hand, but downwind visibility was compromised when flying a code sail



three boats upwind. It was certainly an eye-opener to catch up with and overhaul the longer Broadblue, even though they were carrying full sail and a blade jib. Owner Gerry Addis likes to get the best out of his boat and, although he was annoyed his jib wasn’t cut to point higher, we still outpointed the Lagoon, tacking through 90°.

The traveller works well on the aft bimini roof, but unlike aboard the Lagoon, it seemed a bit of an afterthought on an aluminium rail that didn’t run far enough across the beam to keep full mainsheet tension when sailing off the wind. However, David Glenn was

impressed with her downwind ability: “She sailed really well off the breeze, especially with the A-sail and the Code O.”

The keels are glued on and, in extreme circumstances, designed to break off yet keep the hulls intact. Block foam in the bridgedeck and under aft berths make her virtually unsinkable, says Gerry Addis. “The great thing about cats is you’ll never need a liferaft, unless you catch fire – safety concerns were a big factor for me.”

There are also excellent oversized scuppers in the cockpit (abaft the saloon doors) to cater for any substantial poops.

Fountaine Pajot Lipari 41 – Pros

- + Relatively good performance and a much better feel on the helm than the other boats
- + Sleeker overall appearance
- + Practical layout, with good accessibility to interior systems
- + Lower topsides so easier to board
- + Running rigging/control line arrangement

Cons

- High helm makes for awkward motion in a seaway
- Poor downwind visibility
- Bland plastic veneer dominates the interior

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David Glenn says: "Gerry Addis had modified the luff reefing lines using Spectra with loops to clip into the tack snapshackles. The boat was supplied with webbing reef lines at the luff, but Gerry made the interesting point that when hauling down on these, the loops in the webbing closed up, making it difficult to hook on. Neat additions also included the Cunningham tackle and the use of soft shackles for halyard turning blocks."



Accessible interior

Spacious and well laid out, in a similar design to the Lagoon, the interior is well proportioned with space to move and hump kit bags around in – "proof that overall length isn't the key issue when it comes to good design and looks," as Matthew Sheahan pointed out. Flared sections to the inside of the hulls aft prevent the boat from squatting and provide room for spacious double aft cabins.

Everything is accessible, which made the Lipari appealing to Gerry Addis: "There's easy access to the fuel shut-offs behind these aft panels." He showed us: "Fridge compressor here, stanchion bases there, autopilot controls here... as an owner I don't want to have to cut holes in panels to gain access."

Weight is well considered, so while there are locker doors on the owner's side where they are in constant use, the guest hull does away with them in favour of canvas curtains. The bilges revealed tidy wiring looms and good general finish, sole panels are damped on rubber seals. Although joiner work is still clearly production quality, the Lipari is tastefully styled throughout.



Above: good-sized saloon table, galley to serve aft deck and interior, and forward facing navstation – practical, if unexciting. Left: Brian Thompson and his daughter Genevieve



Although not quite as large as the Lagoon's version, the aft deck table is easily spacious enough to seat six in comfort



Fountaine Pajot Lipari 41

LOA	11.95m	39ft 2in
LWL	11.82m	38ft 8in
Beam (max)	6.75m	22ft 2in
Draught	1.10m	3ft 6in
Displacement (lightship)	7,600kg	16,755lb
Water	2 x 265lt	2 x 58gal
Fuel	300lt	2 x 66gal
Designed by: Cabinet Joubert/Nivelt		
Price: €236,640/£206,000 ex VAT		
www.multihull.co.uk		

ANALYSING CRUISING CATS

1 Beauty or The Beast?

The main problem with production cruising cats is that they are slab-sided lumps to look at. But how can you get around that problem without increasing length drastically?

While some accommodation can be buried in the hulls, a large superstructure is required for the living space (saloon/galley). This is mounted on a bridgedeck that needs adequate clearance above the water for safety in a seaway and to prevent slamming – therefore headroom can't be hidden as well as it can on monohulls.

But do we just accept that the purpose of cruising cats is for space and comfort and keep ignoring aesthetics? "Sacrificing aesthetics in favour of accommodation is the soft option," reckons Nigel Irens, "but history shows that the smart money is in giving people what they want – accommodation."

Ancasta's Ashley Overton puts this down to an acceptance philosophy: "It's the same as if you go and buy a 4x4; it will never look good whatever the



brand. People go onto a cat at the boat show from the back, look inside and go 'Wow! Done!'

Ironically, the old Lagoons from the 1980s – models such as the 55 and 47 – were better-looking. Then Lagoon took the decision to opt for comfort, introducing the 'wedding cake' tiered look to bolster

practicality. 'Now more than ever, style must serve functionality,' is how Lagoon's newsletter put it.

I'm not convinced this is a move in the right direction, but aesthetics will always be subjective – as Lipari owner Gerry Addis put it: "It's all in the eye – someone will like it!" See Nigel Irens, page 59.



2 Loco motion

On the plus side, most of the time on a cat is spent in a level, leave-your-drink-anywhere state which is what attracts many of the less keen sailors and young families. "We wanted to sail again, but didn't want to be heeling with buckets of water thrown at us," admitted Wendy Addis.

But ironically it was the awkward, corkscrew motion of the cats in a seaway that surprised

the test panel. This was especially noticeable from the raised helm positions of the Lipari and Lagoon, and seemed far more likely to turn crewmembers green. The Addises, who have owned racing yachts, cruising yachts and motorboats say: "The motion in a big sea is something you have to get used to: it's halfway between a mono and a motorboat."

Nigel Irens describes the motion at the raised helm perfectly: "It's like riding an elephant."

3 Performance education

From the Lagoon 400 owner's manual: 'A catamaran presents six times greater heel resistance than a single-hulled vessel. The fact that the boat will not heel over could conceal an excessive sail area in use.'

Manufacturers of cruising cats include extensive, clear, conservative instructions about wind speeds, angles and reefing times – the French cats suggest a first reef at 15 knots. The diagram below appears on a Moorings charter catamaran. The indicators monohull sailors get used to using, such as apparent wind on the face and helm pressure loading up, aren't evident on a catamaran, so helmsmen have to get used to new subtleties in deciding how to sail them and when to reef.

"A good bottom, good sails, weight and sailing well make the difference to performance," says Brian Thompson, "but the special knack is knowing what the limits are." (See Thompson's notes on reefing, page 47)



4 Better by design

PERFORMANCE

We were surprised at the lack of performance of these bulky cats – often cruising speeds did not exceed those of monohulls and may actually have been worse, even downwind, where their swept spreaders limited angles. But how can a cruising cat's performance be improved?

"The displacement:length ratio is a very, very important number," Nigel Irens explains, reckoning that figures under 100 are good. "If you have a particular specification that you want it to go faster, then the best place to spend your money is on extra length ... although the problem remains the length of boat to park."

BOWS

"The sea puts energy into a boat and you can't lose that energy as on a monohull," says Broadblue's Mark Jarvis. "You either accelerate or pitch (like old catamarans, which gained a reputation for hobbyhorsing). Today's cats use fine bows to take energy out of the waves and are flatter in the sterns, which damps out the tendency to squat."

Most cats now have plumb stems to maximise waterline length. While destroyer-type reverse bows are used for their streamlined, wave-piercing benefits on performance designs (look at the AC45s), this creates viscous drag, which makes them very wet on deck.



SAILS AND EQUIPMENT

Square-top/fathead mainsails are used on cats to catch the stronger, cleaner breeze higher up, and their added twist is used to vent off gusts – as developed and demonstrated by windsurfers. They increase performance in light airs, but are more powerful so need to be handled with care and reefed earlier. Their giant roaches add weight and can lead to a situation where the tail wags the dog in a seaway.

"Cruising cat rigs are desperately old-fashioned and present too much windage, with complex arrays of rigging and spreaders," says Matthew Sheahan. "Modern materials and techniques can simplify this. And for boats that brag that they are not carrying around a lump of lead underneath, they do a good job of loading up decks with control lines the diameter of a cruise liner's warp and blocks to match. Cruising multihull design needs to unwind the design spiral that has led it into the chunky, cranky, agricultural cul de sac it finds itself in."





5 Weight issues

“All yacht design is a compromise ... Dick Newick was the first to point that out 20 years ago,” says designer Nigel Irens. He feels that pragmatism rules: “If it’s slow, it’s not so bad as long as it meets the other parameters for which it has been commissioned.”

Elaine Bunting voiced concerns about the water tankage, which was restricted to keep down weight: “A watermaker or additional tankage would be an absolute necessity if cruising with a full crew. The Lagoon carries only 300lt – to put this in perspective, a crew of five of us got through 250lt in five days using water only for food preparation and washing dishes.”



6 Parking problems?

It seems attitudes have changed over the last decade and the preconception that it could be a problem to find a suitable berth for a catamaran and that it will cost you double the fee is no longer true.

Over the last year Gerry and Wendy Addis, owners of the Lipari 41, were rarely charged extra, paying just 50 per cent more on a few occasions. “And we always get the hammerhead,” they declare, “which is the nicest spot, so even if you do pay more, the value is worth it, with no rafting and an easy exit.”



7 One giant step

Although the scooped transoms make it easy to board from astern or from a dinghy, the height of the cats' freeboard immediately presents problems when it comes to boarding the boat from alongside. Unless there is a step built into the topsides (pictured) this can be quite dangerous.



P. Mumford/Beiken of Cowes

8 Are they vulnerable to capsize?

Designer Nigel Irens says:

People who might be considering swapping their cruising keelboat for a catamaran are often spooked by stories of capsize. There's no denying that any multihull is, as is often said, almost as stable upside-down as it is right side up.

Look at any online cruising forum and the keelboat/multihull debate is as alive and well today as ever it was. When catamarans are slated for their vulnerability to capsize, your average multihull pundit is quick to point out that 'for every catamaran that capsizes, there's a keelboat that has sunk – which option would you choose?'

Either way, there's no escaping the fact that truly dangerous conditions will find the weakness in small boats of any configuration, so, at risk of stating the obvious, it's best to steer clear of trouble.

Beyond that, staying safe is surely only a matter of experience and good seamanship, so nothing new there. Any boat is only as safe as her skipper.

Final thoughts from the test team

Over the past 50 years designers of catamarans have been kept awake at night worrying about how to have both sparkling performance and loads of accommodation

Nigel Irens on the design compromise

I was once asked to design a car-top luggage box that doubled as a boat on arrival at the seaside. Well, far from providing the solution to both needs, of course, it turned out to be fit for neither.

Over the past 50 years or so, designers of catamarans have been kept awake at night worrying about how to make a catamaran that has both sparkling performance and loads of accommodation.

The truth is that those two qualities are mutually exclusive, so are certainly not available in any great measure in the same boat. Over the years, however, the designer's task has become easier, because buyers' needs are such that they have clearly



voted for the boat with the most accommodation.

Potential capsize was always another worry when trying to improve performance, but once it is clear pure cruising is the aim then with a relatively short rig and heavy displacement you'd have to be trying hard to put one 'on the roof'.

The three catamarans in this test are of this type, and the mini-cruise we embarked on showed the philosophy behind their designs working at its best. Shallow draught and fixed skegs allowed us to take the ground with peace of mind, while living space is so generous – perhaps equivalent to a 60ft keelboat – that it would have been tempting just to stay holed up for a week or so.

If this is the style of cruising these boats were meant to do, then I could get used to it!

David Glenn

These were all phenomenally spacious yachts for their length, but the downside was an appalling aesthetic which I personally would have an awful job to come to terms with. It's space and comfort buyers of these cats seem to value most. I value it too, but I could not sacrifice the vessel's looks to that extent.



Elaine Bunting

People talk about the better performance of multihulls, but after sailing these three I'm not convinced. The tacking angles were in the region of 100-110° and upwind the best performance I found (on the Lipari) was 7 knots upwind and 9 knots downwind under spinnaker.



This is comfortably within the capabilities of any modern 40ft monohull.

To double check this across longer distances, I compared last year's ARC crossing times of a Lagoon 380, 440 and FP44 against those of similar production monohulls such as the Dufour 44, Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 42i and Bavaria 42 Cruiser, and found no discernible difference.

But I think in many cases a catamaran provides the skipper (usually the man) with a ticket to sail to places and for a length of time that would be an impossible sell with a monohull. Another consideration is that cats don't suffer the incessant rolling that becomes so tiring on a long downwind passage so life on board in the Tropics may be easier on a multihull.

The opportunity to dry out is a big advantage and in the Fountaine-Pajot Lipari, we dried out twice successfully off Brownsea Island.

ON TEST CRUISING CATAMARANS

You are left wondering about the aesthetics of these catamarans. They are great to look out from, but unlovely to behold, in my opinion.

Matthew Sheahan

Building berths too high and wasting precious headroom will always place demands on freeboard.



Huge permanent biminis supported by chunky poles mean the lines don't flow and the units look like the afterthoughts they so often are.

Several generations of high-performance monohulls have helped to reshape cruising monohull design to a point where even the most conservative bluewater builders now allow themselves to use the 'performance' word in their publicity without compromising safety and security.

I hope the increased activity in high-performance multihulls can do the same for cruising cats.

Harriett Robinson

Having sailed dinghies and superyachts, but not so much in between, our Editorial



Assistant was perhaps better placed than us 'monohull-lovers' to pinpoint the attractions of the boats:

My first impression on stepping aboard the Lagoon was one of surprise. How could such a 'hotel' environment be fitted aboard a 40ft yacht, with the space, facilities and comforts that you would never find on a monohull?

I loved how the cats can boast double cabins, roomy heads and a fully equipped galley that's not going to shake all the glasses off the worktop when you tack. Non-sailors and perhaps those with limited confidence can enjoy a drink in the cockpit without struggling for balance and move around on deck without getting in the way or tripping over rigging.

And the cats felt far better ventilated than some monos, without that stuffy atmosphere.

CONCLUSION by Toby Hodges, Boat Test Editor



Modern production cruising cats offer an unrivalled social platform for families, guests and charterers. The test team, on the whole, felt the yachts on this rally gave neither

the sailing pleasure of a monohull nor filled them with the confidence to cross oceans. For me they certainly didn't offer the pride of ownership I'd need to pour my life's wealth into one.

For better performance you'd need to look at the carbon-infused Catanas, or the latest, sleeker Outremers (see right), which boast daggerboards and lightweight performance, but both come at a jump in price. True performance may mean opting

for a sleeker multihull such as the Dragonfly, which vastly constricts accommodation, or taking a huge leap up in budget with a Gunboat or the new McConaghy 60.

The current popular focus on multihull racing in the America's Cup and other high-profile events could provoke a surge in these performance designs, which we can only hope will help marry that gulf between the current functionality-based production cruising cats at the affordable end and the sleek performance designs at the luxury end.

But cruising cats are already popular and we set out to find out why. The answer is crudely simple: space and comfort. You simply cannot underestimate how much of both these boats can offer.

I loved how the cats can boast double cabins, roomy heads and a fully equipped galley that's not going to shake all the glasses off the worktop when you tack

What else is on the market?



Leopard

We were too early with our trials to include the new 44-footer from the second largest cruising cat builder, Robertson and Caine from South Africa. This boat is very much geared towards charter – it's available through Sunsail's Yacht Partnership programme – offering space and simplicity, hence multiple tinted windows and enough white plastic to rival a pub beer garden.

But an open forward-facing cockpit with direct saloon access and a covered eyebrow roof is a genuine USP, increasing outdoor living space and providing privacy when stern-to. The hulls have pronounced spray rails forward to increase volume higher up, while keeping fine entries and dry decks.

Accommodation is functional, with no dedicated navstation, a saloon table seating eight and four double cabins, four heads and two forepeak berths.

Expect to see them flooding the Caribbean and Med soon. £295,000 ex VAT.
www.leopardcatamarans.com



Catana

One production manufacturer dangerously close to challenging Nigel Irens's thoughts about combining speed and comfort on a cruising cat is Catana. To achieve this new level of performance, a strict diet plan added to advanced construction techniques has been put in place at their factory near Perpignan.

All new Catanas now use a carbon infusion

See our in-depth video of the Cruising Cat test at yachtingworld.com/video



OR IF YOU HAVE AN IPHONE, USE THIS CODE TO VIEW THE CATAMARAN VIDEO

1. Search for QR Reader in your app store. Download your selected app.
2. Scan the code with your phone, using the app.
3. View *Yachting World's* exclusive video

process, with carbon in coachroof, structural bulkheads and all reinforcements – Twaron (aramid) is also used in the sandwich for further weight saving and rigidity. Daggerboards boost upwind performance.

The result is that the first of the new Catana 47s recorded 19.6 knots on sea trials, according to the builders, which shows a remarkable potential to eat up the bluewater miles. The downside is it comes at a price: €578,867 (£506,393) ex VAT. Look out for the new 59 soon. www.catana.com



Nautitech

In Rochefort, France Nautitech are building some of the sleekest of cruising catamarans, especially the new Marc Lombard-designed 542 which launched this summer, with interior design by Frank Darnet. Price: €798,490 (£698,679) ex VAT. www.nautitech.fr



Gemini

The only catamaran builders to launch more than 1,000 of the same model, Gemini can claim the 105MC to be the most popular cat ever. This is an astonishing number of boats, but Tony Smith's design has been around since 1980 and they do only have the one model.

This is a sleek 33-footer with low freeboard. Some clever design additions by Smith over the years have kept it reasonably current. Centreboards and a roller-screacher on a curved track that pulls to windward help increase performance, while a double cabin over the bridgedeck offers comfort. Built to a budget of £114,000. www.gemini-catamarans.com



Seawind

Australia's largest multihull manufacturers have been around for 30 years and produce 25 boats a year. A popular charter boat around Sydney and the Whitsundays, Seawind have four in their range from 30-40ft. €450,000 (£393,750) for the 1250. www.seawindcats.com



Dazcat

Darren 'Daz' Newton started Dazcat in the late 1980s. His boats have accrued an impressive race record, and are still being built in Millbrook, Cornwall. £174,000 ex VAT for the 10E. www.dazcat.co.uk



Discovery

The first Discovery 50 was launched last year by company founders John and Caroline Charnley to go world cruising and the second model made its debut at the Southampton Boat Show this year.

Bill Dixon kept the hulls narrow, with a bilge step, and the Ken Freivokh-designed interior is luxuriously finished, including an option for a full-beam 7.8m (25ft 6in) owner's suite over the bridgedeck.

The build process is impressive, with every part weighed and controlled; carbon and honeycomb bulkheads have been introduced throughout. Large tanks also help make her a true go-anywhere choice. Price: £845,000 ex VAT. www.discoveryyachts.com



Outremer

Under the banner 'seaworthy, fast and simple', Outremer have launched over 200 boats and are known for producing the most performance-orientated of production cats. Their 49 scooped the European Yacht of the Year multihull prize two years ago, really impressing the judges as a lightweight cruising cat that's fun and simple to sail. In 2007 they joined with aluminium builders Allures. The VPLP-designed 5X is the latest product at a cost of €895,000 (£783,125) ex VAT. www.catamaran-outremer.com



Privilege

Started in the mid-1980s by Vendée Globe creator Philippe Jeantot, Privilege have proved very successful in the mid/large range of cruising cats, building 800 from 45-75ft (including 60 over 60ft), and have been part of Alliaura Marine for 15 years. The 445 starts at €479,000 (£410,000) ex VAT. www.alliaura.com



Sunreef

One of the world's largest producers of big cats, Sunreef was the brainchild of French father and son Francis and Nicolas Lapp. The yard is based in Gdansk, Poland, and produces a semi-custom line from 58-80ft and a custom line up to 150ft in classic and modern styles. The 58 is the latest. Designed to be sailed without crew, it starts from €850,000 (£730,000) ex VAT. www.sunreef-yachts.com