



# Nautitech Catamarans

and  
**testing the  
Nautitech44**

■ by ANDREW CRAWFORD

**The Nautitech Company has recently appointed Ian Douglas and the team at Mooloolaba Yacht Brokers as the Australian and New Zealand agents for the Nautitech range of catamarans.**

**T**hese boats come from the design office of Alain Mortain and Yannis Mavrikos and the company is based in La Rochelle, France. Whilst I like to think Australia is a pivotal point in terms of multihulls, there are those who would contend that La Rochelle is the world's heartland of catamarans. The Nautitech range, composed of a 40, 44, 47 and 82ft boats has drawn much interest in both the charter and private ownership fleets and it is great to see a local availability of these interesting boats.

The production facilities are modern and allow for a boat to be produced every 15 days at La Rochelle (the 40 and 44 are built here), and a 47ft boat every month at the facility in Lorient, also in France. The 40, 44 and 47ft range offers versions in both four cabins and three cabin owner's

layout. The boats reflect the French preference for galley up layouts.

The Nautitech designers and builders operate under some fundamental principles, the factory states that 'fine entries and free flowing curves ensure the miles effortlessly slip away on a passage', and that 'the clear cockpit allows maximum comfort at anchor or docked'. One notable aspect of this range is that the bridge-deck clearance is more than adequate with the 40 footer having about 800mm. I can't stress enough the importance of having sufficient bridge-deck clearance on a cruising cat. I have found that if a boat has good clearance the company invariably lists this in their specifications and the reverse is usually the case. Nautitech list bridge-deck clearance of their boats as a key part of their technical data.

An interesting variation on this range is the outboard helmstations. On the forums I inhabit from times to time there is much discussion about outboard helm positions. The factory suggests that these helms mean 'clear vision of the sails is dramatically improved and that marina parking or dock line handling is a breeze when short handed'. The challengers suggest that outboard helms expose the helmsperson to the elements more than is necessary, but I suspect that most boats

**Saloon nav station and cockpit – with Peter Vermeulen enjoying it all.**





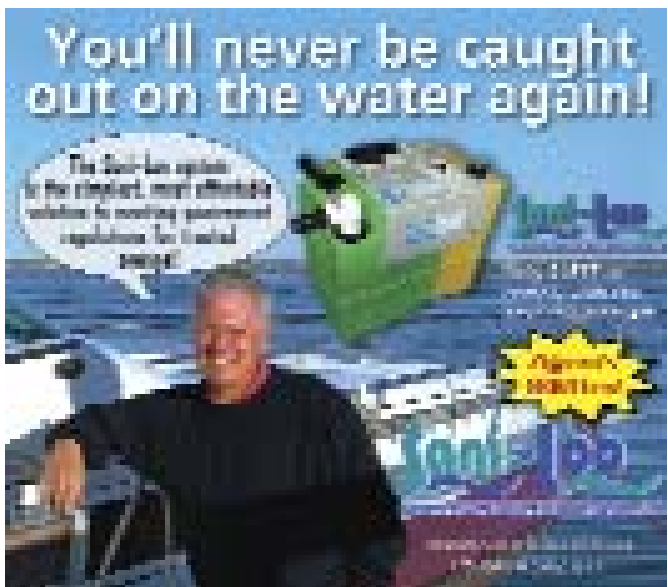


Galley counter (far left), saloon (above) and rear deck (left).

information is available at the website of Mooloolaba Yacht Brokers <http://www.yachtbroker.com.au/index.html>

Both the 40 and the 44 will be on display at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show.

The test boat for the day I visited was a privately owned Nautitech 44. This boat was interesting not only in and of itself but also from the point of view of its new owner, Chris Vermeulen (see *Two wheels, Two Hulls p48*).



The 44 has a beam of 6.81m with a draft of 1.2m. Lightship displacement is just on 9 tonne. Standard motor fitment is twin Yanmar 40hp. Fuel tankage is 400 litres across two tanks and water tankage is 800 litres. From an engineering perspective, the motors are totally sealed off from the interior of the boat. I like this in a large cat.

The layout of this owner's version is based on the owner's cabin occupying the starboard hull with a lounge area, study desk, ensuite head and separate shower. This cabin was quite stunning – it had the feel of a luxury hotel room and with the double berth located aft, the bed is at a lower level than when the bunks are on the bridgedeck, something that I hadn't noticed previously but Sonja was very impressed with the ease of getting in and out of the berth for a shorter person. The port hull includes two double cabins and a single bunk in the forepeak. Each double cabin has an ensuite.

As mentioned earlier the galley is of the 'galley up style'. It includes an impressive level of fittings and equipment and is stunningly finished. On a boat of this size the galley up configuration works well and allows sufficient space for both galley work and saloon relaxing as well as a forward facing navigation station. I did spend some time sitting at the nav station on the test sail and found that I had a good view forward and could easily see that on a coastal or offshore passage the on watch crew could drive the boat from here with a quite good security and could supplement that with a walk around the decks.

**Flat mast base area  
allowing for easy  
handling of lines.**

Rig and sail configuration is the well established roachy main handled by lazy jacks and a boom bag, along with a furling headsail. Sail configurations can be varied according the owner's requirements. The test boat was rigged for sail handling at the mast, halyards, reefing etc. The only controls in the cockpit area were therefore the headsail sheets and the main sheet and traveller controls. Obviously the lines can be brought back to the cockpit but there are those who swear by either method. Bringing the lines back adds convenience but also adds friction into the system.

From the outside the boat was aesthetically very pleasing, some French cats are a little on the wedding cake style for me, but this boat looked sleek and low profile, with the outboard helms having a payoff of keeping the saloon roof low and thus the rig having its area lower down. From the interior it was quite stunning, this boat was fitted with the exclusive finish pack which added some teak and other keynotes to the interior finishes, and it looked and felt very impressive.

The test sail was out of Mooloolaba in fairly bouncy conditions with winds ranging from 12 to 20kts and some reasonably large ground swells. The entrance to Mooloolaba has changed dramatically recently as a result of the different weather we have had in this part of the world, and there is certainly some challenge in entering and leaving the harbour, with breaking waves and strong swells. As you would expect of a boat this size, the Nautitech 44 handled it well.

Our sail took about two hours of windward and reaching work. When the winds were around the 12kts we slid along happily in the high sevens to high eights, when the winds got a bit stiffer we moved up in the 10kt range easily. All of this was achieved with a moderate sail plan and without 'extras' such as a screacher.



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# Two wheels Two hulls

This particular Nautitech is owned by one of Australia's most famous sportsmen, a particular favourite of mine, Chris Vermeulen. My interest in Chris and his career stems from my life long interest in motorcycling. His motorcycling career has seen him win the World Supersport Championship in 2003, and win a Moto GP race in 2007. He has had numerous race wins in the World Superbike championship.

Chris is currently competing in the world motorcycling championships in the premier class of Moto GP, riding for the factory Rizla Suzuki team. Chris is a local boy having grown up in Yandina not far from the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. He lives in Andorra in Europe as a result of a need to be close to where he does most of his racing but still lists Yandina and the Sunshine Coast as his favourite spots.

An interesting guy apart from his motorcycle exploits, he lists his favourite cars as the 1954 Ford F100 and 1933 Ford Coupe Hot Rod that he owns. He also lists tractor driving and cattle farming as favourite pastimes. He and his father Peter do almost all the work on the cars and I had a look at their latest effort – a 57 Buick in the carpark after the sail. What a beautiful outcome!

So clearly this is a guy who knows how to go fast and how to enjoy the simpler side of life. How did he come to choose a sailing boat in general, a cat at that, and a Nautitech in particular?

Chris had been talking with Phil Grey from the Mooloolaba Yacht Brokers team about powerboats but did express an interest in sailing. Like many of us, when the sails were raised and the motors turned off he was entranced by the silent movement of the boat through the water – as he said “I spend all my days listening to motors screaming and to not have that noise whilst still doing 12kts in comfort was fantastic”. He had little background in sailing but was fairly well taken with it and found an ally in Phil who is an Australian National 505 champion. Phil has been a professional sailor in the Med and Caribbean and other wonderful locations.

Chris had seen many boats in many exotic locations around the world, but wanted a boat in his home harbour that met his needs of strength, power and style. He also valued the support that being close to a local agent gives him, this is particularly important given the short periods he is at home for. On this sail he had just returned from the Qatar Moto GP and was heading off to Spain for the next round about 10 days later. I suspect may convert a few of his Moto GP colleagues to sailing cats.

A thoroughly nice bloke who is enjoying the challenge of learning to sail his new boat, and doing a damn fine job. He and his dad Peter, and sister Jess were also delightful company and very pleasant people.

The outboard helms were really good. I admit to being a sceptic of these, having never sailed a boat with them before, but the ability to see the sails and feel the boat was enhanced. I really enjoyed the set up. Obviously a long bash to windward in the middle of a dark and stormy night could be an issue but that is what autopilots are for! In any event I suspect the message here is don't reject something till you try it. I am not saying they are better than other helm positions, simply that they have there advantages and challenges like every other part of every other boat.

The decks were flat and wide and easy to move around on, the cockpit layout was sensible and easy to move round and there was a clear passage from helm to helm. Another interesting design feature was the sliding 'sun roof' in the cockpit roof. This opened up and gave more excellent views of the sails and I suspect on a calm night at anchor it would be just delightful to see the stars whilst relaxing in the cockpit, with the option to slide it closed in inclement weather. It's strong enough to stand on and thus you can get to the sail bag the full length of the boom. There are some storage bins in the transom steps – with the suggestion that one side is used for

Phil Grey with his lazy boat toy – the electric winch handle.



'wet storage' like snorkelling gear and the other for life raft storage.

Dinghy stowage is on davits with a very high load rating. The owner is intending to put an array of solar panels on the davits. In a location like Australia and especially Queensland I think this would be a good addition to the boat.

The anchor system is unusual. The anchor is located on the port bow, leading back into a chain locker in that location. The port stem has a heavy stainless rub plate to deal with any unintended contact. There is a bridle that has the anchor swinging from the centre of the boat after deployment. Perhaps the only concern with this arrangement is that a fair bit of weight is carried forward.

The Nautitech range is priced competitively, but as with all purchases of this magnitude, the devil is in the detail. Prospective purchasers of any new vessel will no doubt need to review full specifications lists of any boats they short list.

All in all an impressive entry into the market, interesting and different in some respects and indeed different enough to warrant at least a look before a decision is made.

I certainly liked it and would happily go to sea on one. v

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