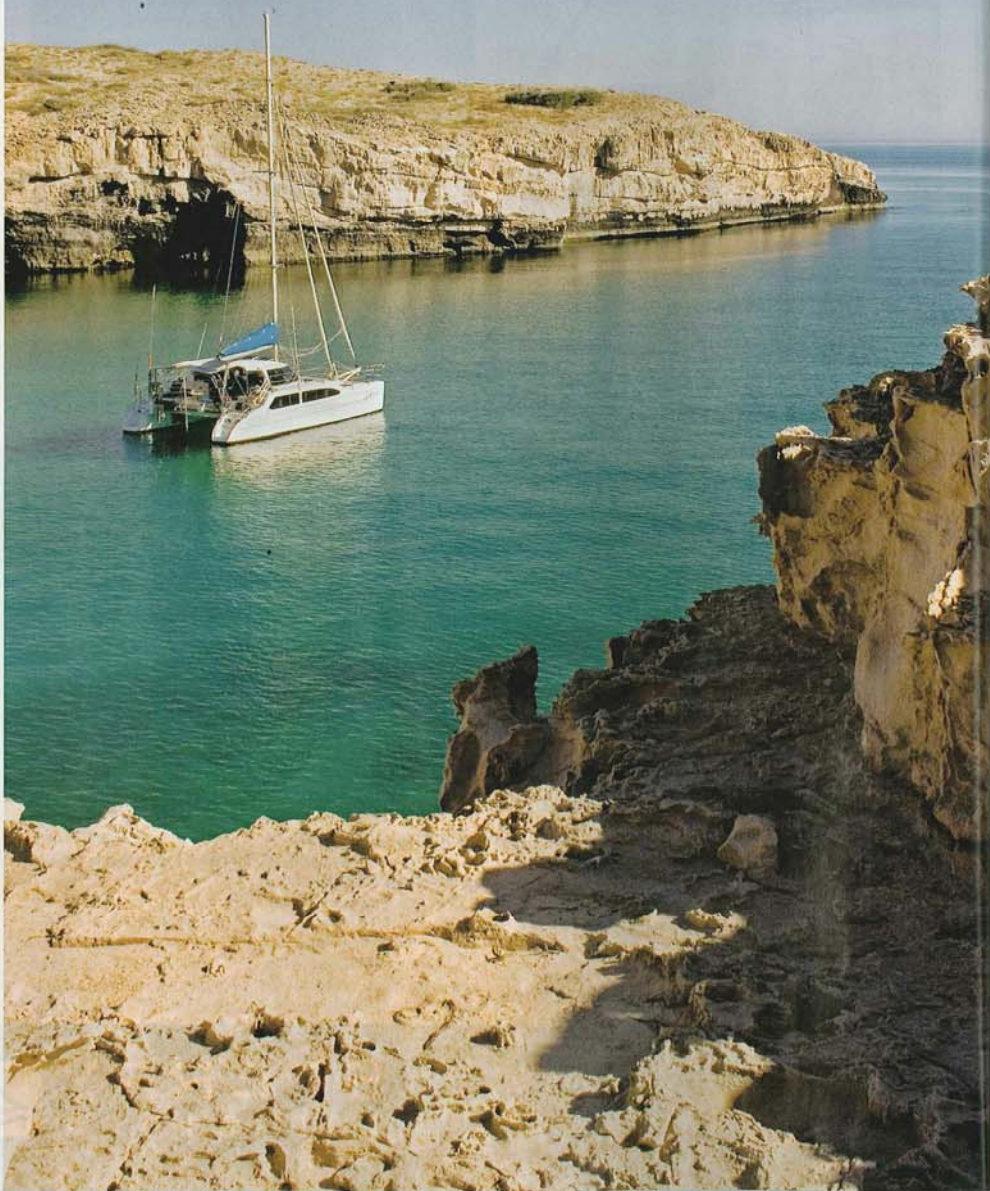


» A quiet Baja cove frames this Seawind 1000



Starter Cats

SEVEN CATS UNDER 38 FEET, IN THEIR OWNERS' WORDS

BY PETER NIELSEN

» Newcomers to two hulls are often intimidated by the sheer size of these boats. A big catamaran can easily be 30 feet wide, and until you become accustomed to it, it feels a bit like sailing an aircraft carrier. Also, the amount of usable space down below always comes as a surprise to those who have cut their sailing teeth on monohulls. Often, 40-foot-plus cats have more space than a cruising couple requires.

So, as even the smaller cruising cats have much more accommodation space per foot of length than any monohull, many newcomers to multihulls are happy to start off small—and many of them are even happier to stay that way. If there's one thing the people interviewed for this story have in common (apart from the obvious), it's a real fondness for the boats they own. Size isn't everything.

SEAWIND 1000

Lowell McCulley, together with his wife, Frankie, Bill Hensler, Rick Quant, and Dave and Ellen Redden, co-owns *Gato Loco*, which they bought new in 2002. They sail out of Puerto Penasco, on the northeast Sonoran coast of the Sea of Cortez. You can follow their adventures at www.gatolocossailing.com.



» Our first cruising catamaran was a Stiletto 27, which set our standard for sailing performance but lacked comfort. We wanted a light, shallow-draft cat that could make the 75-mile crossing to Baja during daylight hours. We chose the Seawind

1000 after chartering and stepping on as many catamarans as we could.

We were impressed with the amount of room and the use of space aboard this 33-foot cat. Its 20-foot beam, plus the ability to merge the saloon and the rear cockpit area, creates a large community area that will seat up to 14.

We spend about 60 percent of our time daysailing and 40 percent doing extended cruises in the spring and fall sailing seasons. We've experienced almost every sailing condition the Sea of Cortez has to offer (hurricanes excluded), and the 1000 has proven to be a very strong, stable cat, able to handle 30-knot-plus winds with ease.

The layout works well for cruising with up to six crew, although the boat sleeps more. The galley is down in the starboard hull, but is airy and well lit, making it more comfortable for cooking under way and especially in big seas.

Marinas are scarce in the Sea of Cortez, and all our electricity needs are met by our

solar panels. Some other things that we consider important are the power winch to raise the 485-square-foot full-batten mainsail and the retractable dual 9.9-horsepower Yamaha outboards. And yes, of course, we love the Seawind signature stern-mounted grill for open-air cooking.



» *Gato Loco's* performance impresses her owners

FACT FILE > SEAWIND 1000

The Seawind 1000 is one of two sub-40-foot cats built by Seawind Marine in Australia; the other is the Seawind 1160. The boats, characterized by good performance, offshore capability, and a clean, wide-open layout that's ideally suited to hot climates, are attracting a loyal following in the U.S. The latest version is the 1000XL.

LOA: 33'

BEAM: 19' 5"

DRAFT: 3' 3"

DISPLACEMENT: 10,143 lbs

ENGINES: (2) 9-hp outboards

PRICE: \$260,000 (sailaway)

www.seawindcats.com



PHOTOS BY LOWELL McCULLEY; BOAT ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANÇOIS CHEVALIER

LAGOON 38

Buddy and Melissa Stockwell, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, bought *Indigo Moon* four years ago and have lived aboard since 2004. They are currently cruising the Caribbean and Central America and recount their adventures on www.indigomoon.us.

As full-time cruisers, our strategy from the start was to purchase an ocean-seaworthy catamaran large enough to live on comfortably while also keeping expenses down. The Lagoon 380 owner's version offered a perfect balance. It is a luxurious home and is ocean-seaworthy, but it also fits into 70-ton Travelifts and under ICW bridges.

The general layout is excellent. The engines are separate from the accom-



modations, which increases stowage in the cabins. All three queen-sized bunks are aligned fore-and-aft. The interior is finished mainly in wood, making it an attractive, warm environment. The sliding saloon door and adjacent sliding window over the galley transform the saloon and cockpit into a single airy living space with 360-degree views. We have not seen any other catamaran, of any size, execute this

feature so beautifully. We recently "pushed the envelope" and cooked Cajun shrimp étouffé for 16. Guests sat comfortably in both the cockpit and the saloon without feeling segregated.

All four corners of the boat are visible from the helm, and tight maneuvering is easy. All running rigging is led aft to line clutches and cockpit winches. Offshore, we never have to leave the security of the cockpit when reefing.

We've traveled over 11,000 miles and have undertaken long offshore passages, including a seven-day, 1,130-mile "I-65" passage from Fort Lauderdale to the British Virgin Islands. We have seen our fair share of big seas and bad squalls, and *Indigo Moon* has performed flawlessly. If *Indigo Moon* were lost today, we would go looking for a boat exactly like her tomorrow.



Indigo Moon has visited New York, among other places. Inset: Buddy and Melissa Stockwell

FACT FILE > LAGOON 38

There are more than 500 Lagoon 38s afloat, attesting to the popularity of this design. The boat is the smallest in Lagoon's six-boat range. It's available in two levels of trim, both with a choice of three- or four-cabin layout.

LOA: 37'11"
BEAM: 21'5"
DRAFT: 3'9"
DISPLACEMENT: 15,655 lbs
ENGINES: (2) 18-hp
PRICE: \$300,000 (sailaway)

www.cata-lagoon.com



MAHE 36

Larry and Eileen Winchell bought *Kokomo* last year. Based in Miami, they sail her in southern Florida and the Bahamas.



After owning a monohull and then a trimaran, we spent several years searching for the perfect boat. We knew we wanted a cat, but which one?

We had two lists of requirements: Must Have and Would Be Nice. Under Must Have we listed quality construction—we plan to keep the boat for at least 10 years; easy handling—not too big, and able to be sailed by one or two people; roomy—enough volume to allow friends to join us and have

their own space; and galley up—no one wants to be fixing lunch down in a narrow hallway away from the social center or carrying food up and down steps.

When we called on Fountaine Pajot at the Miami Boat Show and saw the brochure for the new Mahe 36, we were hooked on the spot. It had all the Must Have items and many of the Would Be Nices, including a lack of wood trim. This means no time spent varnishing and more time spent sailing.

Our boat was delivered last summer, and we've been getting to know it. We're happy with it, but realize that there is no such thing as a perfect boat. We find the saloon area to be warm and lacking in ventilation in the climate of South Florida, where we live. The standard under-the-counter fridge is small



Left: Eileen and Larry Winchell. Above: Fountaine Pajot's entry-level boat is proving very popular

for a boat of this size, even for a short cruise; we're looking at adding a freezer. We ordered the optional bimini, only to find that when it rains, the water runs right off onto the cockpit seats.

Those are our only complaints, and they can be dealt with to fit our needs. We plan to do just that before heading off to the Abacos.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LARRY AND EILEEN WINCHELL (LEFT); COURTESY OF FOUNTAINEPAJOT.COM (RIGHT)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BUDDY AND MELISSA STOCKWELL (ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT); COURTESY OF MICHAEL AND KATE LEVY (BELOW)

FACT FILE > MAHE 36

The Mahe 36 was launched last year as the successor to the Athena 38. Fountaine Pajot makes no bones about the fact that it is an entry-level cat, intended to introduce new customers to the brand. It's available in two- and three-cabin versions, both of which feature a generously proportioned galley-up saloon.

LOA: 36'2"
BEAM: 19'5"
DRAFT: 3'7"
DISPLACEMENT: 11,025 lbs
ENGINES: (2) 20-hp
PRICE: \$242,000 (FOB France)
www.fountaine-pajot.com

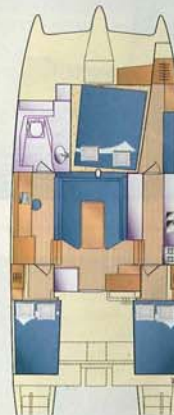


FACT FILE > GEMINI 105MC

Hull #1,000 of this popular catamaran was launched late last year. Designed by Tony Smith, the Gemini offers an attractive blend of performance, comfort, practicality, and value for money. One of its unique features is the unusual outdrive leg hooked up to a Westerbeke diesel. The outdrive turns with the rudders and can be lifted clear of the water when sailing. Geminis are marketed as coastal cruisers, but at least one has made an Atlantic crossing.

LOA: 33'6"
BEAM: 14'
DRAFT: (board up/down)
 1'6"/5'6"
DISPLACEMENT: 9,600 lbs
ENGINES: (1) 27-hp
PRICE: \$154,500 (sailaway)

www.gemini-catamarans.com



GEMINI 105MC

Michael Levy grew up in New Zealand and now lives in Royal Oak, Maryland, near the Choptank River on Chesapeake Bay. He and his wife, Kate, bought *Kotuku* in 2004.

We owned a small daysailer, and I was desperate to upgrade to something bigger, like a Beneteau 331 or 36. Finally I read an article that convinced us to buy the Gemini. I liked the accommodation and the 18-inch draft; we live on a creek that gets as shallow as 3 feet.

I've never regretted buying the boat. It's roomy, stable, and easy to sail. For novices like us, it was a great boat to learn and make mistakes on—forgiving yet comforting. We brought all the lines back to the cockpit and added solar panels, hot water, and an Airhead composting head. My wife and I have both worked on board using the saloon as an office, with no problem.

Both love and hate the Sonic outdrive—it can be brought clear of the water when sailing, so there's no prop to catch the crab pots—but it's temperamental and sometimes lifts itself out of its yoke at a crucial moment in reverse. And there's not much room to work on the engine even for routine maintenance, but aren't most boats like that? I'd like bigger diesel and water tanks, and I'm not a fan of the narrow side decks. These are a trade-off for the excellent room inside. I love the performance, especially with our big black asymmetric spinnaker, and the integral bimini is great for fair-skinned people like me.

We love our Gemini. It's introduced us to the best of American sailing on one of the great waterways of the world.



Kotuku displays her silver-fern spinnaker. Inset: Michael and Kate Levy

MAINE CAT 30

Bob Goodwin and his wife, Staci Deaton, bought *Tiger Moon* in 2003 after looking at many other sub-40-foot cats. They sail her out of Sarasota, Florida.

» We wanted a cat for all the usual reasons—shallow draft, level sailing attitude, speed, comfort, unmatched entertaining platform. We chartered a Maine Cat 30 in the Abacos, and on that trip had our teenage daughter and her friend along. There was plenty of room, and we loved the ease of sailing the boat.

The size of the boat fits a niche that is, as yet, relatively untapped from a production-boat standpoint. We wanted a smaller cat for many reasons, not least because it would be a snap to get out for a daysail for a few hours after work and yet be comfortable and seaworthy enough to cruise on for a few weeks at a time (whenever we get that opportunity). We also wanted a boat on which we could entertain a group of friends.

The center-mounted helm in a wide-open cockpit with a 360-degree view has to be experienced to be appreciated. The hard bimini provides an ample platform for mounting solar panels and for putting away the sail. And the self-tacking jib makes singlehandedly ridiculously easy. Raise the twin 4-stroke outboards, and the boat sails like a dream.

I was also surprised by the boat's speed under sail; on one memorable trip *Tiger Moon* averaged 12 knots for 50 miles and had a top speed of 14.9 knots, while my wife and daughter were lounging either up on the hard bimini or out on the tramps, with cold drinks in glasses resting securely next to them. We've had up to 15 people on board under full sail and up to 21 people for a dockside party. We've taken an entire wedding party in tuxes and gowns from the church to their reception under full sail! There just aren't any other 30-foot boats that can do these things.

FACT FILE > MAINE CAT 30

As the name implies, Maine Cats are built in Bremen, Maine. The 30 and its bigger sister, the 41, share the same design philosophy; they are comfortable, quick coastal-cruising platforms with open bridgedecks that maximize living space.

LOA: 30'

LWL: 29'3"

BEAM: 18'

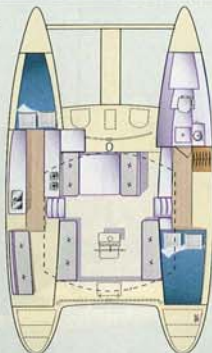
DRAFT: 2'5"

DISPLACEMENT: 5,953 lbs

ENGINES: (2) 8-hp outboards

PRICE: \$199,000 (sailaway)

www.mecat.com



» *Tiger Moon* made an unusual wedding transport. Inset: Staci and Bob Goodwin

ADMIRAL 38

Jack and Des Foard are cruising the Western Caribbean, accompanied by their Jack Russell terrier, Lady Pitkeathly.

» Shhhh, don't tell *Famous Potatoes* she's being included in an article about starter cats. She thinks she's at least 42 feet long, and she's about convinced me of it too. The most impressive thing about this boat is her incredibly spacious feel. Owners of larger cats have come aboard and exclaimed, "Wow, you have so much room! What a beautiful boat!"

I fell in love with her lines when I first saw her at the 2005 Miami Boat Show. She looks sleek and fast, and indeed she is. On passages I love to see another sailboat ahead of us, especially if it's a larger cat. I like to sail past and pretend I'm reading a book. She is capable, too. I sailed her from South



Africa to Florida with 25-to-37-knot winds and some 20-foot waves for the first three days. We reached top speeds near 20 knots while surfing down them. The autopilot and boat both handled it with ease, but I admit that on two occasions I had to grab my

wineglass as it slid across the dinner table.

The roomy, open galley-up is brilliantly laid out, a pleasure to cook in, and easy to clean. We entertain a lot and once had 26 fellow cruisers partying aboard. We have the owner's version, and our bed is huge; the fore/aft layout means there's no crawling over one another during the night.

The 2-foot, 9-inch draft put the Admiral on our "top three" list immediately. In the clear waters of the Bahamas and the Caribbean I can sail right through reefs that other cats (to say nothing of monohulls) fear. We love finding a secluded sandy beach and anchoring in 4 feet of water, then taking a stern anchor ashore so we can step off the sugar scoop and walk in to our private beach paradise.

What more could you want from a 42-foot—whoops, I mean a 38-foot—cat? She looks lovely, feels good, and sails beautifully. We love this boat!

TOMCAT 9.7

Bob and Beth Kchnavek decided to purchase a cruising multihull to put a little adventure in their lives. They bought *Godspeed* in 2004 and keep her on the Sassafras River off Chesapeake Bay.



» We settled on the TomCat for a couple of reasons. I'd read a lot about cruising catamarans, and I liked the way the boat was designed and built. It sailed well, too, and we were also very impressed with its looks; it's not easy to make a

small cat look good.

We've now lived with this boat for over three years. We didn't realize what a big advantage the shallow draft—18 inches with the rudders and board up—was going to be on the Chesapeake. The outboards are excellent for maneuverability, but they are louder than a diesel, not as efficient, have a limited charging capacity, and do not give us a ready source of hot water. The galley has an amazing amount of counter space, and while cooking and doing dishes you have a beautiful view of your anchorage out of the large glass windows. The door panels between the cockpit and saloon create a very open atmosphere when completely removed, but are a fiddle to replace.

The hardtop creates a well-protected helm position. While it provides a dry ride in

rough weather, sometimes it is difficult to see out of the windows when the rain is really coming down. But it is a true joy to sail this boat. We have done 9 to 10 knots on a few occasions, and 8 knots is common. All sail controls lead back to the cockpit, so singlehanded is easy.

We continue to go to boat shows to look at new catamarans. So far, we haven't seen anything we would rather have at this point in our lives. ♣



» *Godspeed's* shallow draft is a boon for Chesapeake cruising. Left: Beth and Bob Kchnavek

FACT FILE > TOMCAT 9.7

TomCat Boats is a small Canadian company that also builds the TomCat 6.2, a 20-foot trailerable cat. The TomCat 9.7 made its debut in 2005. It has snappy performance along with spacious accommodation in a three-cabin layout with a convertible dinette in the saloon.

LOA: 32'

BEAM: 16'

DRAFT: 1'4"/5"

DISPLACEMENT: 4,851 lbs

ENGINES: (2) 9.9-hp outboards

PRICE: \$159,500 (sailaway)

www.tomcatboats.com



FACT FILE > ADMIRAL 38

Admiral catamarans are built in South Africa; there is also a 40-foot model. The 38 is available in two versions—sailaway and executive—with varying levels of trim and equipment.

LOA: 38'

BEAM: 23'1"

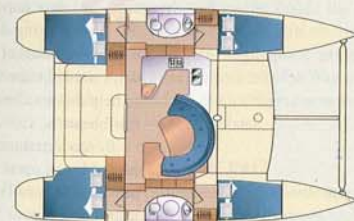
DRAFT: 3'4"

DISPLACEMENT: 18,700 lbs

ENGINES: (2) 29-hp

PRICE: \$349,000 (sailaway)

www.admiralachtsusa.com



» *Famous Potatoes* has proved to be an excellent cruising home. Left: Jack and Des Foard