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Why a Catamaran may be the right choice

Recently, I was reminded of the misconceptions held by those new to sailing and monohull sailors concerning catamarans.



We wanted to take my wife's family out for Father's day, as well as a couple of monohull friends. Surprisingly, there were a number of concerns expressed that demonstrated a lack of understanding. Everything from, "It will be too hot—I just nearly had a sunstroke sailing (monohull) earlier in the week." "He (my husband) get's seasick." "I can't be out that long." "I don't like the way catamarans sail." These are all actual quotes of some of our potential guests. They all came, many reluctantly—but because it was for "Dad" (who at 83, learned to sail last fall.)

Afterwards we got emails from our family/guests. "Had a wonderful time". "Thanks for everything you made it so easy." "The boat sailed great and I stayed out of the sun the whole time—didn't even need the A/C turned on." "The three cabin, 3 head layout was perfect Saturday nite." What turned these skeptics around?

For anyone that needs 2, 3, or 4 cabins and wants a comfortable cruise—catamarans are the perfect choice with the emphasis on the word comfort. (And we have 2,3 and 4 cabins available for charter for you to try out!)

Today's modern catamarans sail well. While they don't sail as close to the wind as a comparable sized monohull, if you crack off 5 degrees, you'll sail enough faster that you will get to your destination upwind just as fast as with a monohull (same VMG). On most every other point of sail, you'll be faster as long as the wind is about 8 knots or better. (In light air we normally motor sail anyway on monohulls or cats—or use a special light air sail.)



SIDE NOTE: Having said this, it's vital that the catamaran hull be cleaned regularly. We clean the hulls of our charter boats (Catamarans and Monohulls) about once a month. On a monohull, it makes a little difference—about ½ a knot improvement, but on a Catamaran, this can make a one to one and a half knot improvement! If you've ever heard someone comment on how one catamaran was so much faster than another, or how much better

their monohull sailed—it's likely that the slow catamaran simply had a foul bottom—even a thin layer of slime makes a difference! I've been on catamarans that I know sail well, but that couldn't even tack without turning the motor on! You guessed it—a foul bottom was responsible.



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Ease of sailing. On most of our new Fountaine Pajot catamarans and on the Orana 44 we were sailing, all sheets and halyards, including both Genoa sheets, are led to a control cockpit where one person can put the boat on autopilot and handle every task. As guests would join me from time to time in the bimini covered, 3 seat control cockpit, I could teach them a little about sailing and show them where we were and where we were going on the 12", easy to read (in the sun or shade) chart plotter, and control the boat totally by simply turning the dial on the autopilot. No one had to move when I tacked, as I simply pushed the tack controls on the autopilot which smoothly turned us through a 100 degree tack, and then released one sheet and pulled in the other from the two winches located right in front of me from the control station.



Comfort topside and below. Above decks, Cindy could sit in the shade of the hard bimini. She could walk inside (below we used to call it) to get a cold drink out of the refrigerator because there is not even a one step transition from cockpit to cabin. Inside, she was completely surrounded by windows that she could see out of whether standing or sitting. At some point, she forgot about the transition and wasn't even aware

of whether she was inside or out—except for the A/C turned on below the first day. (You can run the generator and thus the A/C because the boat always sails upright—with a monohull, heeling takes the generator intake out of the water and so it's not safe to run the generator. By the second day, she was so comfortable that we didn't even turn the generator or A/C on while sailing.

Meanwhile, Cheryl and the kids were up laying on the nets once they found out that the nets safely held all 6 of her family (and could have held more!) Patrick enjoyed the lounge behind the helm seat where he had a quiet, peaceful place to watch the wake peel of the miles from the stern.

The motion was so comfortable, that Mike never had a touch of his usual motion sickness. From time to time I would leave the control cockpit and join family members on the net or in the cockpit for lunch--as from either location, with the huge wrap around windows, I always had a 360 degree view and with the wireless remote on the autopilot, could always dodge the occasional crab trap from where ever I was—on deck or below!

Late Saturday we headed for Kentmorr restaurant on the Eastern shore where our shoal, 4' draft, allowed us complete freedom to come into the relatively shoal entrance from most any angle we chose. (Actually, a catamaran opens up many shoal anchorages and harbors simply not accessible to monohulls.) After a wonderful dinner of Chesapeake Bays favorite seafood dishes at the Kentmorr restaurant, we sat around in the cockpit as the sun dimmed and slowly sunk into the west over the beach.





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We debated turning on the A/C because the natural ventilation and fans seemed to keep things quite comfortable even at 80 degree temperature, however the comfort fanatics took over at about 10:00 as the humidity continued into the evening and everyone found their lovely private cabin. Each cabin was uniquely decorated and had it's own head, and there was plenty of room for extra guests around the dinette, in the bow cabins and in the totally covered, protected cockpit. We had our Bus at Kentmorr so we spent the night there with our friends Sara and Steve who also were visiting in their motor home to make more room aboard.

At the end of the day, comfort seekers were comfortable, monohull sailors had a change of opinion and realized that this wasn't like sailing a Hobie and we all had a chance to catch up on each others lives as clusters of us gathered on the nets, in the cockpit, on the stern seats or inside the boat.



If you haven't tried a cat yet, I know one group who would heartily recommend it!

Enjoy 2,3, or 4 cabins with extra berths from 36-48'. Cost per person, about the same or a little less than monohulls. You're sure to enjoy the shoal draft, comfort, and nice cruising performance.

Compare a cat vs monohull charter cost per person, per day (before discount-- even better for SS member)

2 days J42DS \$221.88 pp/day FP41 \$197.50 pp/day
 7 days J42DS \$105.71 pp/day FP 41\$85.71 pp/day



Eric

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