

SAFARI 50

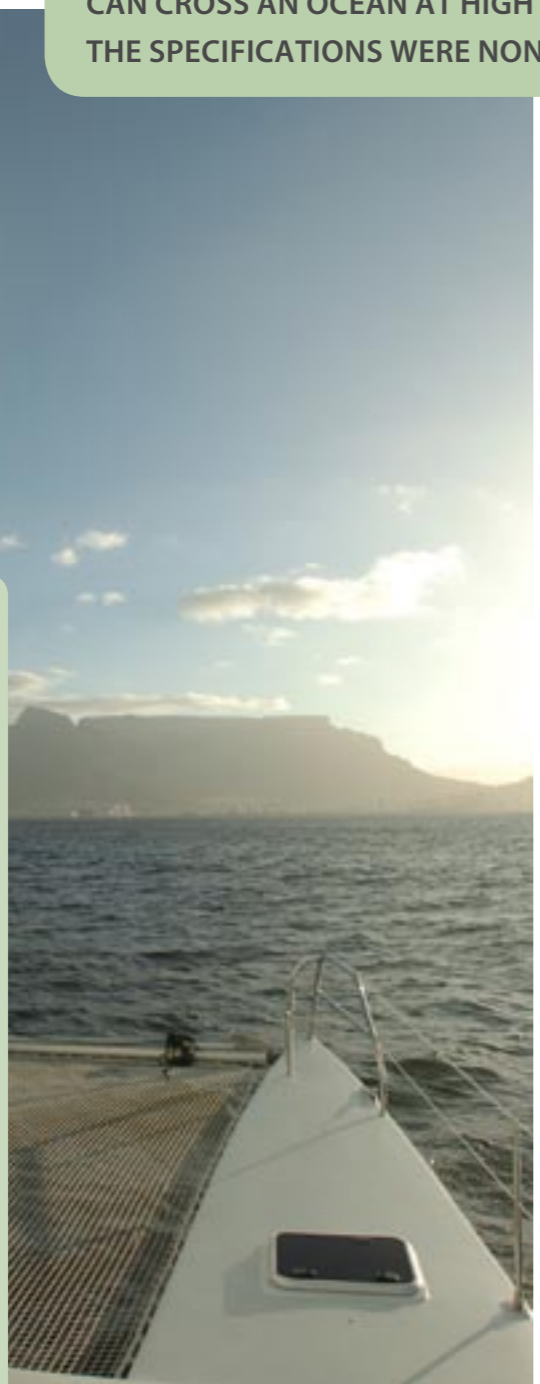
a fast, stylish & practical catamaran

Words and pictures by Bruce Tedder

NEED A DAY-CRUISER-STYLE SAILING CATAMARAN, THAT CAN CROSS AN OCEAN AT HIGH SPEED AND IN COMFORT? THE SPECIFICATIONS WERE NON-NEGOTIABLE ELEMENTS.

THE DESIGN BRIEF TO DU TOIT DESIGN WAS SIMPLE:

1. Very light (7.4 tons) and fast 22 knots boat speed in 28 knots wind.
2. One meter bridge deck clearance above the water/no slamming.
3. Two person operation and only 4 winches allowed.
4. Simple foolproof onboard electrical, water and fuel systems.
5. No centerboards.
6. Forty-five passenger capacity, if used in day charter mode.
7. Four double cabins and 2 crew bunks, Safari style.
8. Sexy dockside appeal.



“GQ” WAS LAUNCHED in November 2005. Brewing giant, Miller Genuine Draft, to be used as a corporate marketing tool in Cape Town, over the December holidays, immediately chartered her. During a test sail we managed to sneak aboard to check her out.

ABOARD THE SAFARI 50:

The first thing that catches the eye is the vast open space. No unfriendly fittings, and no sharp corners, just smooth hand shaped rounded ergonomic friendly seats, corners, and decks. Even the simplistic old mooring cleats were elevated to an “art form” like status on the “GQ”.

The boat has stunning lines, with a sleek roof design canopy. A high freeboard will keep the passengers dry and comfortable. “GQ” can be set up as a fully-fledged Day Charter, with 4 watertight compartments and a separate watertight engine compartment. It is certified to carry 45 passengers.

The huge open-center cockpit area, with a solid canopy roof, is a large and safe space for all passengers and crew, ideal for late evening socializing. “GQ” has 6 really funky custom made polystyrene, pellet filled bean bags, along with 3 shot



blasted 10mm Perspex tables, all of which compliment the informal atmosphere created by the rest of the furniture. The beanbags double up as toys for the kids, and the tables can be lowered to create extra "day beds" in the spacious cockpit. All the lighting in cockpit and canopy area is fitted with low consumption LED's. Onboard, the "GQ" appears to be practical and refreshing, and it requires minimal maintenance.



BELOW-DECKS:

Access to both hulls are via custom built Armadillo aluminum slatted sliding hatches. Starboard hull: Double cabin en-suite up front. Port lights and Lewmar hatches give good ventilation.

Moving through the aft is a small but functional galley, fitted with a 4 plate burner/cooker/ oven, double sinks, stainless steel Isotherm fridge and freezer, hot and cold pressurized freshwater, and a footpump to extract sea water. There are huge storage areas in the galley. The Aft is a well ventilated double cabin, meant for the skipper, with a small navigation area. The main switch panel and other electronics are also housed here. There are also built in modules and storage compartments in the Aft.

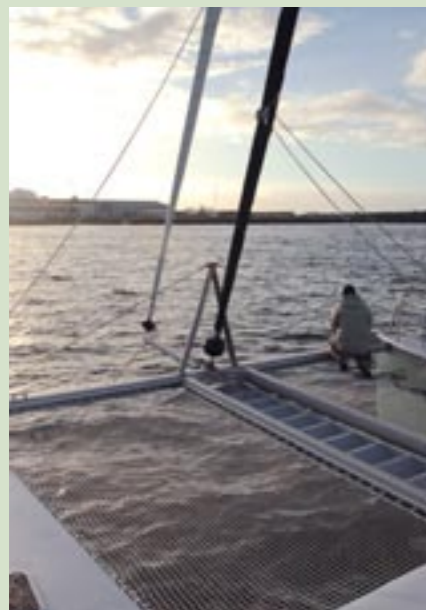
Port hull: There is a double cabin en-suite towards the front, a work area with workbench, and large hanging lockers.

The interior is finished in an off-white satin faired and spray painted finish, for low maintenance. Cherry wood is used for the trim throughout the whole boat. Classic, wide plank teak and sikaflex style laminated floorboards are used for the floor, and there is ample ventilation and natural light through all the hatches and opening portlights. Escape hatches are under the companionway stairs in each hull. The lack of centerboards gives even more open space below decks, and the excellent sailing performance justifies the decision to "ditch the boards".

STEERING:

The custom carbon-fibre-3 spoke wheel with standard Edson sprocket and a stainless steel cable tie bar, hidden under the aft bench seats, joins cable system. The eye-catching steering console is based on the 8 metre Gemini RIB Commander console. Handrails, windscreen and lockers are fitted.

The helm is light and responsive. Emergency steering procedure involved is a stainless steel tiller, to be fitted onto a rudderstock, at the aft steps, which can be done with a minimum of effort. The autopilot is fitted directly to the starboard quadrant, so this too can be used to steer if the system fails.



ON DECK:

In the front, on deck, are 2 large trampolines, which are split by the combination central compression posts, a drop down swim ladder and kayak stowage zone are some of the accessories on this vessel. The anchor and windlass are situated on the main beam at the mast base, keeping the weight of anchor and chain centralized. When anchored, the standard catamaran bridle system is used from each bow.

The self tacking jib sheets and furling lines are lead into the cockpit. The jib is on a Harken Furler 2.5 Unit.

The 3.1oz / 2.6oz Norlam Spectra Code Zero is

on a Harken Code Zero Unit 2 Furler and sits at the end of a 1.5m bowsprit, giving good separation from the jib if three sail reaching.

A 1.5oz / 2.5oz Norlon 150 Asymmetric spinnaker in a sock can also be flown from the bowsprit when running a bit deeper.

The mainsail is a 40% moderate roach full batten mainly built from Soft Norlam and all sails are from North Sails, Cape Town.

The mast is a double spreader Sparcraft rig. Hayracks on the boom, 2:1 halyards for mainsail and genneker and halogen light in the end of the boom, which doubles as an aft deck light, these are just a few of the unique features.





ELECTRICS:

The two hulls are kept as separate operating systems with the ability to cross link if necessary.

The two battery banks per hull are housed under the aft bunks with a 102 a/h dedicated engine start battery per engine and 3 x 105 a/h for a total of 315 a/h per hull for domestic use. When it is cross linked, you can have up to 730 a/h to play with. That translates to plenty CD and autopilot time.

Fresh water, with capacity of 750 litres are housed in two epoxy tanks in the front crossbeam, while 500 litres of fuel is stored in two stainless steel tanks under the aft deck. Water flow to the wash basins can be gravity fed if a real simple solution is required for day charter operations. "GQ" has a pressurized water system with separate hot water clarifiers in each hull. The fuel tank location will also allow gravity to assist the engines if the fuel pumps fail.

THE SAIL:

The weather forecast was for an excellent mid summer day in Cape Town and the temperature was already at 30°C at 11am. The wind was between 18-22 knots from the South East, definitely the right weather for a leisure cruise.

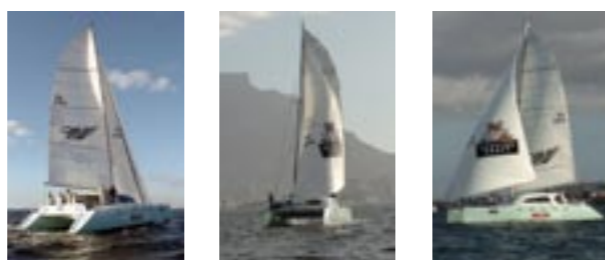
"GQ" is fitted with twin Yanmar 40hp saildrives with Gori 3 blade feathering propellers, which can take her up to a speed of 9.5 knots if needed and will cruise at 7 knots at 1800rpm with ease. With this sort of horsepower, we were out of the harbour in no time. The moderate roach mainsail by North Sails in Cape Town is fully battened with an Antal battcar system. The boom has "hayracks" for added sail control when lowering the main, but this also allows the lazy jacks to be attached further outboard from the boom, making mainsail hoisting a lot easier, without having to always adjust the lazyjacks, when they hook behind the full battens. The 2:1 main halyard is controlled by a powered Lewmar 52 CST winch under the canopy, so hoisting is a breeze. The jib is on a Harken furler, which is self-tacking with the sheets also leading into the canopy mast base area.

In no time we were sailing, props feathered and heading out to sea. This boat is light, yet very fast, and with just five of us on board, we began to accelerate instantly. With the apparent wind at 85 degrees and AWS of 28 knots we were doing 21 knots boat speed in flat water. "This is definitely not for the faint hearted", I thought to myself. We slotted in the first reef and was still comfortably sailing at 12 knots, smooth and easy using the autopilot.

Visibility from the helm was perfect helped by the state of the art canopy. Peeping through the front windows, by ducking down a bit, or looking above the canopy we saw the splendor of the sails, mast and the ocean around us.

Tacking was simple. Throw the helm over, let the jib backwind and then blow through. Helmsman needs only to travel down mainsheet on the other side, bring the helm back to midships, and went off at 20 knots on the other tack, incredible!

The owners of "GQ" are experienced multihull operators, having owned a series of 54ft and 58ft day charter cats in South Africa, Aruba and Dubai. They say that this new 50 footer is the sum total of all lessons learnt since 1990. I think that sums it up for us.



BASIC DIMENSIONS:

Displacement: 7400 kgs
Length: 15.3m
BMax: 8m
Draft: 1m
Bridge Deck Clearance above water: 1.0m
Mainsail: Approx 82 sq/m
Jib: Approx 44 sq/m
Genneker: Approx 85 sq/m

KEY FEATURES:

- 4 separate watertight bulkheads, 2 per hull
- Separate engine room in each hull
- Self-tacking jib
- Drop down bow boarding, swim ladder and kayak stowage ramp

WHAT WE DID NOT LIKE:

- Lack of grab rails/handles on sides of canopy and in large cockpit at high speeds.
- Lack of steps or handrails for easy access onto the canopy roof.
- Steep descent into engine rooms due to high free board. Needs a platform fitted.
- Steep descent into fore peaks due to high freeboard. Also needs a platform fitted.

WHAT WE LIKED:

- * Stunning visual appeal. Incredibly well built by Bongers Marine with fantastic attention to detail.
- * Light and stiff epoxy construction.
- * High speed sailing with ease, safety and zero slamming.
- * Huge, protected "play area" under canopy with unique "bean bags" for comfortable seating.
- * Perfect day/charter layout, with simple operating and sail handling systems OR fast and practical "safari-style" cruising for 8 guests. A poor man's 'Gunboat.'



"GQ" will leave Cape Town for the Caribbean in March / April 2006. She has a busy schedule ahead for the Cricket World Cup in late 2006 and early 2007. The boat is for sale and / or to charter.