

DOUBLE VISION

New rig, level living area and sweeter lines – small changes make the new Lagoon 42 a slick package, *Sam Jefferson* finds

In 1877, budding yacht designer Nathanael Herreshoff decided to campaign his latest yacht, a catamaran named *Amaryllis*, against the cream of the New York Yacht Club's fleet. His yacht saw off allcomers and was duly banned; the development of multihulls was set back many decades in the process.

It says an awful lot about the hidebound nature of yachting that it would take almost a century for the true potential of catamarans to be fully rediscovered. It wasn't until the 1960s that the multihull as a concept – certainly for racing – was once again gaining credence. What is amazing was that the potential for cruising multihulls continued to go largely untapped.

Perhaps that's because the early efforts looked boxy and sailed

poorly. All that is now long gone. The potential space offered by catamarans has been utilised, while great strides have also been made to improve their styling and sailing ability, particularly on the wind.

One company that has been at the forefront of reinventing the cruising catamaran has unquestionably been Lagoon. Set up in 1984, the boatbuilder was originally a subsidiary of Jeanneau and was later taken over by Beneteau, operating under the CNB moniker. Although the first generation of Lagoons came out in the late 80s, it wasn't until 2003 or so that the company truly established itself as one of the biggest suppliers of cruising cats. The 42 is part of the latest generation of Lagoons and sits between the 39 and the 52. She is the successor to the hugely successful Lagoon 420 →



ALL PHOTOS NICOLAS CLARIS



in line with the coachroof which extends back over the cockpit to form a solid, fixed bimini, giving her cleaner deck lines while improving visibility for the helmsman.

Yes she's still a high-sided cruiser and, as such, is no oil painting, but there is a definite concession to sleekness and styling and a knuckle running along her topsides does a good job of breaking up those great wall sides.

Yet the most notable change is in her rig and keels, which are stepped noticeably further aft than on her predecessor and mean the yacht features a far larger headsail and a narrow, high-aspect main.

She comes from the drawing board of VPLP – a hugely experienced design house with serious racing pedigree that includes the record breaking super maxi *Comanche* and the 2010 America's Cup winner *Oracle*. The design of the 42 is not a radical one – it's evolutionary rather than revolutionary – and there is no attempt to make a raucous statement of intent here. Her construction is interesting in that she is built in three sections: base, deck and sides, almost like a layer

and, with 80 orders already secured, you can rest assured you will be seeing a lot more from this yacht.

Finer lines

The first thing you notice on approaching the 42 is how strikingly different she is from her predecessor, the 420. This is certainly not a straightforward rejig or rebranding exercise. Where the old model was boxy, the new one is altogether more curvaceous.

The cockpit has also undergone a thorough reworking and the helming station is now raised up

● **ABOVE**
The bulkhead helming position gives visibility over the coachroof, but still allows the skipper to take part in cockpit conversation



● **MAST MOVE**
Designers VPLP moved the mast back and added a self-tacking jib

● **PLATFORM**
The cutaway freeboard makes it easier to step onto the bathing platform when alongside

● **ON THE LEVEL**
The saloon, cockpit and aft deck are now all on the same level

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cake. This is significant as the entire bottom section of the hull, including her stub keels, are moulded as a complete section, giving her excellent rigidity and latitudinal strength.

Stepping on deck, the first thing that strikes you is the effort that has been made to keep everything on the same level. This approach has also been showcased by rival multihull builder Nautitech in its Open 40 and means that there is a smooth, unbroken transition between cockpit and saloon.

There is a roomy dining/seating area outdoors which links seamlessly with the saloon area while large patio-style doors can be slid back entirely to create a huge indoors/outdoors living space which is very sociable. There are two generous bathing platforms out on the sponsons and I was impressed with thoughtful touches, such as decent-length bathing ladders and also a clever davit system for the dinghy. This kept the dinghy raised high up, so even the

largest following waves can't catch it, but also features a clever two-stage raising and lowering system, that does most of the hard work for you.

Stowage space is adequate rather than spectacular but there is another deep locker on the foredeck which is accessed by strolling along lovely wide side decks.

The bulkhead helming station is offset to port and accessed via a couple of steps up. This keeps it out of the way, but the positioning is such that the helmsman is not completely divorced from what is going on in the cockpit and saloon. This is not only more inclusive than some of the 'bridge deck' arrangements – it's also much safer, as communication with the crew is excellent.

To windward

Of course, we all know that nowadays cruising catamarans generally have a considerable edge

over their single-hulled rivals in terms of interior comfort; it is on the water where the real worth of a cruising multihull is measured. I tested the Lagoon on a slate-grey, ice-cold early spring day in La Rochelle, painfully aware that the true testing ground for this yacht was the Caribbean. In a poetic twist, it emerged that the gentleman I tested the yacht with had just returned from testing a different 42 out in the Bahamas and he showed me some quite inspiring footage of the 42 doing 16kt in about 22kt of breeze. It looked thoroughly invigorating and illustrates the potential for thrills this cat possesses in the right hands.

With 17kt of breeze blowing, there was ample opportunity to test her capabilities while a strong tide showed her ability to manoeuvre in a tight space. With twin engines, she is surprisingly nimble despite her great windage but, it must be said, handling a catamaran takes a bit of getting used to. Switching

● **LEFT**
The small bowsprit makes it easy to fly downwind sails with deep sheeting angles, while a self-tacking jib runs on a track set into the coachroof

from a 42ft (12.8m) monohull to a 42ft cat is like switching from reverse parking in a Renault Clio to being asked to do it in a truck.

The helming station gave excellent visibility, with only the starboard quarter slightly obscured by the bimini unless you stooped to look under it. Once out of the marina and setting the sails, the helming station really came into its own. Its positioning has clearly been very carefully thought out and all the key controls are well within reach, while you are only a couple of steps away from the foot of the mast, should there be a snarl-up when hoisting.

There are two winches, one electric, one manual and these are both within easy reach of the helmsman. Combine that with a self-tacking jib, and single handing while under way really is a doddle, although if you choose to use the much larger Code 0 then you might need a hand. Under sail, the Lagoon behaved in much the manner of all these big cruising cats: she was →



TESTS

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● **ABOVE**
On any catamaran, it's the saloon living space which most impresses and the Lagoon 42 excels with a sophisticated design and flush entry to the cockpit

● **ABOVE LEFT**
Plenty of beam aft means there is room for a good sized double berth. Note the extensive portlights and hatches

● **LEFT**
In the owner's layout, the master heads to starboard have extensive storage space



refreshingly quick off the wind and on a beam reach, but not as close-winded as a monohull. It has to be said that she was noticeably better than many of her predecessors. That big headsail seemed to give her a good deal more power and she was certainly thoroughly obliging when tacking, showing no inclination to stall, although the water was flat, which undoubtedly helped. The

biggest revelation was the steering, which is often lamentably lacking in feel on these big multihulls. This was not the case with the Lagoon, which was responsive and immediate. This enhanced the sailing experience.

Speed-wise we hit an impressive 10.5kt off the wind and a perfectly respectable 5.5kt hard on it. At no point did she feel even vaguely ruffled. Despite this excellent performance, perhaps the 42's greatest asset, given the frigid test conditions off La Rochelle, was the combination of a hugely effective diesel heating system combined with the fact that you can seat yourself indoors at the nav station and steer the yacht using the autopilot. After an hour or so of sailing this was the only sensible place to be. Chilly night watches would never be quite so daunting with the Lagoon.

Room to live

Of course, the real beauty of the cruising catamaran is that huge central living area which generally feels more like the interior of an apartment than a yacht. The Lagoon is spacious and pleasant in this respect, and the premise of keeping

everything on one level works well in maximising the feeling of space by blurring the boundary between indoor and outdoor space. Interior design is by Nauta and is resolutely modern although not stark. The galley was particularly well thought out as it was nicely self contained, with everything to hand.

All-round vision is also excellent thanks to huge windows and those massive patio doors aft. Overall, there is no question that this is a wonderful space that most monohull owners can only gawp at in envy.

I tested the owner version of the 42, which features a substantial owner's suite in the starboard hull and two smaller cabins plus a crew berth to port. All three cabins boasted their own ensuite and all were comfortable. The owner's suite was impressive, featuring lots of storage, a drawing room area with a desk, and roomy heads and shower. The four cabin version dispenses with the washing machine and seating area to find the extra berth. The finish was good, although there were the odd bits of raw, untreated plywood and plastic fittings just to remind you that this is a mass-produced yacht built to cost. ✦

SAM'S VERDICT

Cruising catamarans are not to everyone's taste, but the pros and cons versus monohulls are well known. The Lagoon, however, enjoys more sympathetic styling than some of her contemporaries. Beneteau clearly has the financial muscle to indulge in some serious R&D before commissioning a new boat and it shines through in the Lagoon. She has been carefully and thoughtfully put together and represents a refinement and distillation of all its considerable experience in this field.

The helming station was a prime example of this approach, as it delivered most of the benefits of a bridge deck helming station

without leaving the helmsman isolated, as is often the case with this arrangement. I was also impressed by the directness and 'feel' of the helm, which was a refreshing contrast with many cruising multihulls.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
COMFORT: ★★★★★
BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 42ft 0in (12.8m)

LWL: 41ft 0in (12.5m)

Beam: 25ft 3in (7.7m)

Draught: 4ft 1in (1.25m)

Displacement: 12,000kg (26,460lb)

Engine: 2 x Yanmar 45hp diesel saildrives

Sail area: 968sq ft (90m²)

PRICE

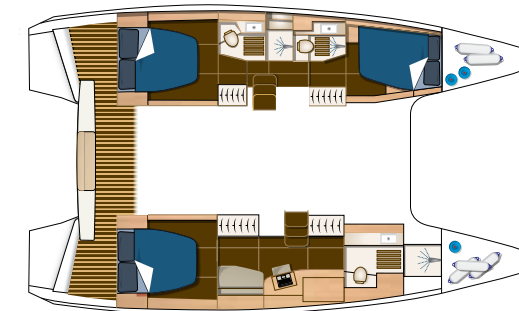
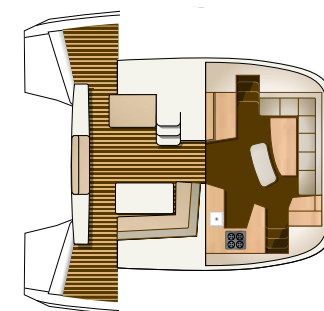
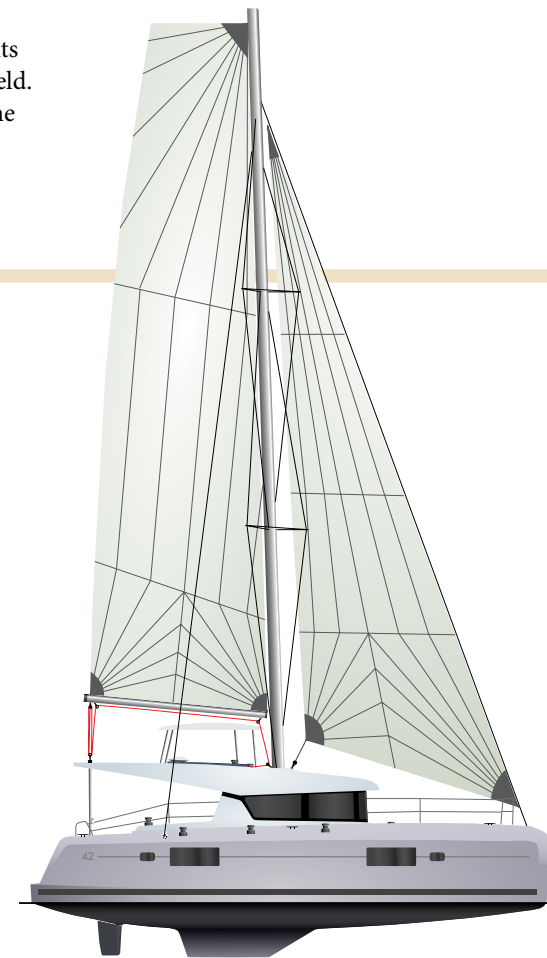
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keyyachting.com

craftinsure quote: £992.76



CATANA 42

PRICE: FROM £293,000

This innovative boat features daggerboards instead of fixed keels, with the emphasis on performance.

She has carbon infusion in her construction and has 'inclined, tulip-shaped bulbous bows'.

catana.com

craftinsure quote: £1,802.37



FONTAINE PAJOT HELIA 44 EVOLUTION

PRICE: FROM £301,000

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fountainepajot.com

craftinsure quote: £1,434.82