



On investing into a cruising catamaran

by G. Tarjan

So you have saved some money and diligently worked towards realizing your dream - now it's time to act before you missed this unique window. Life is too short. Purchasing a cruising catamaran might actually be one of the most important ventures that you will ever undertake. Unlike the kids college tuition, purchasing a house or a car - a boat will be a substantial investment that will impact on your safety and well being. A bad decision could cost you a lot more than money.

- 1.) Design. The best built boat is worthless if she cannot survive a storm, her low bridgedeck pounds merciless or the boat flexes so much that the noises in the hull are unbearable. Only an experienced multihull architect will have the knowledge and skill to design a proper catamaran. Try not to stray off the beaten path when it comes to choosing your next multihull.
- 2.) Construction. A properly designed boat is worthless without proper build. If you are buying second hand - have it surveyed by the best in the business. What is the value of a great design if your catamaran develops structural problems in the first gale she encounters. Understand your cats build process and make sure that the boat you are purchasing comes from the most reputable yard.
- 3.) Test Sail. Ideally you should put your next boat through her paces. Any boat will sail in 10-15 knots of breeze. It is the extreme wind ranges where you will see the true character of your catamaran. Spend time below, live aboard for a week if you can and see if the boat feels right. Don't focus on the decoration and color of wood as much as proper storage space, access to bilges and a layout you can live with. See if you can make a deal with your broker - he might reimburse you the charter if you end up purchasing.
- 4.) Know your Broker. He will be more than just a consultant and guide throughout the purchase process. Is he merely a commission based sales person or a true expert in matters cruising catamarans. How long is he in the business or worked for the agency? Is he a sailor? How many times has he crossed the Atlantic, does he know about different aspects of construction and can he produce a customer reference list? Remember, he needs to be an absolute specialist in the field of catamarans and you might be working with him for maybe a year or longer. Make sure you and him have compatible characters; who knows, he might even become a close friend...
- 5.) Know your Builder. Even if it costs you several thousand dollars and part of your vacation days, go visit the yard that will build your boat. Have you met the owner of the company, do you know about the manufacturers financial past, are they involved in legal wrangling? These are important aspects that could turn a purchase either into a pleasant experience or a nightmare. Your broker and you should coordinate and plan a trip. Ask him to reimburse you if you decide to buy the boat. At worst you took a great trip, at best -you purchased a catamaran and the trip was free !