

Despite its 100% cruising orientation, the Leopard 39 displays respectable performance on all points of sail.

30<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary

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JC, Coco, don't change a thing!  
We love you just the way you are!

Gwen Bernard/Leopard Catamarans



# Leopard 39

## 100% cruiser and compact

The marked longitudinal steps in the hulls maintain a moderate beam at the waterline.

Fitting everything – saloon, galley, cabins – into less than 12 meters, this is the challenge Leopard set itself. A kind of rather successful reply to the incredible success of the Lagoon 380...

Text and photos: Emmanuel van Deth

Complying with the inevitably very demanding specifications of the world's biggest charter company (Moorings/Sunsail), has got to be good! Both builder and architects are obliged to reconcile aspects which are naturally contradictory, such as comfort, volume and...sailing pleasure and speed. We have to admit that with the Leopard 39, the South African builder presented, in 2010, a rather attractive catamaran. Our regular tester, Philippe Echelle, let himself be tempted by an outing in a good breeze: a 31-knot gust and a good wave propelled the catamaran at 17.6 knots. And with full sail! We couldn't advise you to give the

boat this kind of treatment, of course...but this anecdote shows that five years ago, for its launch, the Leopard made an excellent impression. Ditto in the United States, where the specialized press at the time wrote lots of good things about this boat, which in reality has several names: Leopard 38, Sunsail 384, Leopard 39, Moorings 3900... Four names for an almost identical catamaran: the last two – 126 examples – are equipped with a polyester bimini as an extension of the coach-roof, and a rigid 'cap' which covers the steering position. On the 38 and the 384 (69 examples of which were produced in 2009 and 2010), the bimini was slightly raised and the helmsman had to be satisfied with a canvas protection. Another distinctive feature: the Leopards, with their three cabins, are dedicated to private owners, whilst the other two models, charter oriented, are equipped with four cabins.

### A NACELLE OUT OF REACH OF THE WAVES

Although English and South African production boats have often inherited platforms which are too low, the



Small floor area in the nacelle, but vertical portlights which are welcome, to limit the greenhouse effect.



The Leopard exists in a 4-cabin version, as well as three cabins with a very nice owner's hull.



Two people can sit at the helm, whilst remaining close to the other members of the crew. A boat for living!

Leopard 39's bridgedeck is much higher. The boat is rather narrower than its direct competitors – 6.03m as against 6.53 for a Lagoon 380 and 6.73 for the Lipari 41 Evolution, just like the hulls, which remain quite slim at the waterline, thanks to the marked longitudinal 'step' which run along each side. A comfort/performance compromise which has already been tried and tested...and still works. In performance terms, the 39 is certainly handicapped by the significant windage of the coach-roof and its relatively high displacement, but as for the rest, it holds some good cards in its hand, starting with a low wetted surface area. And its very slim rig – over 20 meters above the waterline - provides it with some extra horsepower. "The Leopard 39 is fast, even in light weather," Clément Daël, the manager of Sunsail Brokerage noted. And this is what we reported, both in the Mediterranean for the first tests – just before the famous gale – and during a week's charter in the Bahamas. With the fixed appendages, you can't hope to sail closer than 50° to the true wind. But you will be surprised by the boat's speed, which reaches 6 knots close hauled in a force 3 – 4. On the open sea, the 39 will surprise you with its sea-keeping qualities and the way it passes through the waves. Don't expect to taste the excitement of a Multi 50...however the helm remains light and precise, thanks to the high quality transmission – chains and wires, and the self-aligning bearings. "The deck plan is efficient; all the maneuvers are carried out from the cockpit," Clément notes. Only the reef pendants remain at the mast foot – which avoids having long lines. The mainsheet track is high up, fixed on the bimini. The side decks are uncluttered and equipped with a non-slip surface which is effective even when the spray reaches the deck. The cockpit table, well sheltered under the rigid bimini, allows 8 people to share a meal. At the stern, when anchored, you will appreciate (perhaps...as it was an option) the electric dinghy davit

system. "The 39 is the first Leopard to benefit from this system," Clément points out.

#### A COMPACT NACELLE

There is a minor inconvenience when you discover the accommodation: this model doesn't offer a cockpit and saloon on the same level. You will therefore have to adapt to a threshold which fortunately is not very high: 19cm on the cockpit side, 29 inside. The first impression the nacelle gives is that everything is there – saloon, galley, chart table – but that it wasn't easy to fit everything in! Although the table is of a good size, 1.58m by 0.72m, enough for six people comfortably, or eight with two stools, the floor area is very small, which could hinder movement. The U-shaped galley is quite frankly compact, and the chart table – a simple shelf – becomes symbolic. The Leopard 39's hulls prove to be more convincing. They offer three or four cabins, according to the version chosen. The 'Leopard' version offers the owner the whole of the starboard hull, with an XXL-sized bathroom in the bow, plenty of stowage space and a genuine desk. The hull can be isolated from the saloon, thanks to a clever sliding door. The berths are all more or less two meters long, and over 1.4m wide. A measurement which is however reduced to 95cm at the foot of the forward berths. The builder offered one or two pipecot berths in the forepeaks as an option. Finally, for cruising, the boat offers a real 'plus' with rather generous fuel and water capacities.

Well-placed on the price scale, taking into account its still recent vintage, the Leopard 39 is an attractive option for a sabbatical year as a family. Strong and optimized for intensive use, it holds few surprises. "It's the only real heir to the Lagoon 380," Clément ventures.

- ◆ Convincing performance in strong winds
- ◆ Very sound boat, even in rough seas
- ◆ Finishing well suited to intensive use

- ◆ Small area of the nacelle floor
- ◆ Size of the chart table
- ◆ Not very elegant when seen head-on

#### THE POINTS TO CHECK

Designed to stand up to the hard use of a charter boat – 150 to 200 days' cruising per year! -, the Leopard 39 benefitted from the design stage from an 'industrial process', concerning the plumbing, the electricity and the engines... The peripherals are therefore strong, as are the structure and the rig, which are very well-dimensioned. "It's a well-designed boat which is structurally strong," Clément Daël guarantees. The resin used is isophthalic, to prevent osmosis. The fact remains that a suit of sails which has suffered four or five seasons in the tropics has had it. As for the engines – you can consider them ready for replacement at around 10,000 hours – boats with a high number of engine hours are very rare: the first examples have been sailing since 2009. Boats which haven't been chartered will undoubtedly be 'fresher', but they are also rare on the second-hand market.

Technical specifications	
Architect:	Morelli & Melvin
Builder:	Robertson & Caine
Hull length:	11.43 m
Waterline length:	11 m
Beam:	6.04m
Draft:	1.05m
Weight:	9,105kg
Windward sail area:	92m <sup>2</sup>
Mainsail:	57m <sup>2</sup>
Genoa:	35m <sup>2</sup>
Gennaker:	94m <sup>2</sup>
Cabins:	3 or 4
Fresh water:	780 l
Fuel:	350 l
Engines:	Inboard, 2 x 21 or 29hp
Material:	balsa/glass sandwich
Production:	195 examples from 2009 to 2014
Second-hand price:	170,000 euros exc. VAT

