A modern profile equipped with a sailplan which is easy to use and an XXL flybridge.

Leopard 58'

The space SHIP

Within the family of luxury catamarans there is fierce competition between the world's leading manufacturers.
The possible layouts of these 16-18 meter boats makes them extremely adaptable, so capable of seducing wealthy owners as well as charter operators and even a few defectors from the motorboat world. The 58, exhibited at the Annapolis Boat Show, is still not widely seen in Europe. So we went to Florida to try it out.

Text: Philippe Echelle
Photos by the author and DR

The advent of reliable electric winches and furlers, combined with incredible advances in equipment (clutches, blocks, deck organizers) and high resistance materials, have helped further the development of XXL sized cruising catamarans. Certain yards play the high speed card, and employ sophisticated building techniques to combine a good level of comfort and equipment, with high performance. The Outremer 5X, the Gunboats, the Sig 60, the Alibi all occupy this niche, Catana sits between the two, with its fast limousines (59' and 70'), but it's the multi yachts where there's been the most progress. Sunreef has championed the personalized interior, Lagoon that of conviviality and reinvented spaces, brilliantly Fountaine Pajot is up there, but in this sector with the Sanya and the Victoria, Privilege is renewing its series 6 and 7 known for the quality of their finish; numerous other prototypes and creative projects are trying to establish themselves in this coveted demanding niche.

A FLAG SHIP IN KEEPING WITH THE TIMES

The Leopard 62 is the largest multihull built by the Cape Town yard, its stretched design was seductive, but its concept, like its size is oriented towards crewed charter. The 58 has a more multi-purpose aim, offering a range of features which lend themselves either

to high end charter or to family use, with or without crew.

A MASSIVE PROFILE WELL RECEIVED

Leopard and their naval architects, Alexander Simonis and Marteen Voogt, have perfectly integrated contemporary catamaran development even to the point of becoming promoters of daring innovations. An example being that the forward cockpit is accessible from the deck salon. The exterior design of the 58 skillfully marries current aesthetics. The vertical topsides blend elegantly with the step just above the waterline, the cleverly worked plexiglass portlights are implanted into the recesses (or more correctly flush-fitted), and the style of the coachroof is contemporary. The eyes are drawn to the dynamic shape of the large tinted side panels, this effect increases the perception of a fairly large flybridge and bimini. The sunshade in the forward cockpit integrates well into the lines and reduces (except from head-on) the abrupt appearance of the front view. The lines of the bows and the steps are skillfully drawn.

A FAIRLY ADAPTABLE LAYOUT

The section taken from the specifications looks like a challenge! The 58 can be commissioned in a "private yacht" version with two immense suites accommodated in the hulls for a short-handed crew of self sufficient pleasure-seekers totally masters of their own boat, or, at the other end of the scale, the 6 cabin charter version, a real challenge! The show-stopper in the latter version: the two cabins situated in the deck salon enjoy an exceptional position overlooking the forward cockpit, giving an exclusive view from a sailor's point of view! I'll wager that this assault on traditional catamaran living spaces will set a precedent and be copied (and not just in the big boats!). It would be daring to conceive a structure such as this. The variable internal layout of the 58 is not limited to these two versions, as practically everything in between or a combination is possible. This ability to be adapted to diverse requirements of infinite programs, private, crewed charter or bareboat, must be the 58's trademark, and demonstrates opportunities which Leopard had missed out on with the lovely but overdone 62.

A DÉCOR REVOLUTION ON BOARD THE 58

Feelings run high in Cape Town. Beyond an open approach to layout, Leopard is totally restyling its signature by offering as standard a European-style interior characterized by light colored or white laminates. The mastering of cherry versions has become a company specialty and has been adorning Leopards since the 46, but the new concessions to interior design are just as seductive and offer the opportunity to stick to the design styles adopted by other builders.

A PANORAMIC DECK SALON IN EVERY VERSION

Next, a look inside our test boat (a 4 cabin version finished in cherry). The 58 made available to us really demonstrates the formidable space of the salon, and the seductive feature of access forward. Another strong point in this formula is that the traditional multi-purpose table has been replaced by a proper dining room with a raised position right opposite the superb galley (a total success as much from an ergonomic point of view as an equipment one!) This setup, just inside the sliding door, is very effective, as it cleanly separates the eating area from the relaxation area. The forward salon, oriented facing ahead, encourages contemplation, reading, idleness, or watching the home cinema, since the 46 inch flat-screen TV is situated in the center of this seductive "club" space. The chart table desk is opposite to port (with optional steering joystick and engine control repeaters). On the six cabin version this arrangement is quite different, since the two "balcony suites" are

THE COMPETITORS

Model:	Sunreef 58	Catana 59	Privilège 615	Sanya 57	Lagoon 560
Builder:	SUNREEF	CATANA	PRIVILEGE MARINE	FOUNTAINE PAJOT	LAGOON
Upwind sail area in m2:	198	198	214	175	207
Weight in T:	26	18.9	26.5	18.8	28
Basic price (ex tax) €:	850 000	1 579 000	1 435 000	927 000	849 700

1 - The Miami skyline, a glimpse of the amazing viewpoint from the 58's forward cabins.

2 - A 123 m² mainsail for power, a self-tacking solent for ease of maneuvering, the 58 is a sensible catamaran.

3 - The design of the portlights (coachroof panels, vertical and horizontal plexiglass) has been given special attention on the 58.

4 - The key strength of the 58, the forward cockpit opens up the perspective of the boat.

situated here. I did visit one of these versions just to appreciate the creative bravery.

3 OPEN SPACES OUTSIDE!

Cruising catamarans are getting bigger on the inside, competing with the imagination to creative interactive living spaces which transform even multihull usage, offering seclusion even with numerous people on board. On board the 58, the traditional aft cockpit has become an open space balcony which can be used as desired. There are no integrated structures (benches, sun loungers or seats). So the space is left to the owner to create a personalized ambiance with contemporary furniture (bamboo, rattan or otherwise for chairs and folding tables). The flybridge (which is also the helm station) is covered by a hardtop bimini, and appears like a sailors' lounge bar for a dozen or so guests, enhanced with an outdoor galley, with hob, sink and fridge. On the lower level, forward of the deck salon, the little forward "terrace" offers the possibility of reverting to traditional use, or as a private patio for the charter version or 3 cabin owner's version. Already seen and widely tested at sea on the 44 and 48, the initial concerns over this concept have been alleviated, and this idea will likely set a precedent.

CABINS: CLASSIC LAYOUT, PRIVATE SUITES OR A ROOM WITH A VIEW?

Our test boat was a nice 4 cabin version, but without doubt it's the owner's version (2 suites + a double/single crew berth or children's cabin) and even more so the combination with one or two forward cabins where the 58 will be the most daring. The finish in cherry is done to order, but it's the new light white oak laminate which is the standard option. There are of course options on the finish for the two forward crew cabins.

TECHNOLOGY ON BOARD

IT's impossible to cover everything in this chapter, so let's take a brief look at the principal systems. The hydraulic steering and its ancillaries are nicely accessible, located in a light and tidy compartment. The rudder bearings are by JP3 (a French specialist in this type of equipment); there is no intermediate support, but the diameter of the special stainless rudder stock (also by JP3) at 59mm is calculated to limit any flexing. The Lecomble and Schmidt drive units are directly connected to the rudder stocks by a treated machine-welded spacer (which allows this essential piece of equipment to be removed and replaced easily). Mechanical access is good, you go down a solid and stable stainless ladder

THE VIEW OF ALEX SIMONIS FOR THE SIMONIS-VOOGT DESIGN OFFICE

The Leopard 58 posed a unique set of challenges. The design had to be able to accommodate a large number of interior options varying from a 6 to 3 cabin layouts. In the latter option (owners version) we were left with very little in place in terms of bulkheads in the bridgedeck area to accommodate the structural requirements.

To enable the interior designers to have their complete "Open Plan" salon and galley area, with near 360 degrees panoramic views, the necessary structural strength had to be fully built below the cabin sole and above the ceiling in the bridgedeck area. This was achieved through making use of a "spaceframe" to take all the rigging loads.

This frame transfers all forces from the center directly to the sides where there is sufficient strength in the glass structure of the hull/deck and bulkheads. The frame has been engineered carefully using advanced FEA (Finite Element Analyses) modelling to optimize loads versus weight, resulting in a tapered frame made out of a high tensile steel called 3CR12 giving us the desired result of a stiff and safe structure combined with a beautiful open plan interior.

Alexander Simonis (April 2014)

5- The helm station is positioned forward on the flybridge, freeing up space for an amazing lounge bar, with fitted galley capable of hosting 12 people.

6 - The navigation station is opposite the salon in this version, well done on the choice of club chairs.

7 - The salon opposite the step on the 4 cabin version or 3 cabin owner's version is a success, it totally seperates the relaxation area from the eating area.

8 - On the charter version, forward of the table, the front cabins enjoy an exceptional marine viewpoint.

into the engine rooms and there is space around the drivetrain. This convenient provision owes much to the compact V-drive transmission (the output shaft from the motor comes out of the front of the engine, and a mechanical gearbox turning this through almost 180° transmits the power to the propshaft). This type of transmission is less common than the eternal saildrive, even though it is much more reliable (the delicate mechanical parts are on the inside!), but a little more noisy and more expensive. The two raw-water and fuel prefilters are perfectly visible from on deck (with the hatch open), as well as the coolant expansion tank, on the same panel. Two large extinguishers take charge in the event of fire. The aircon power unit is to starboard, with the port hull housing the generator. There is no insulation inside the hulls, nor in the aft compartment, yet this is a source of noise which would be easy to deal with (like the stern anchor, another noisy locker!) The aluminum fuel tanks are entirely visible, and are well installed below the floors in the hulls. The joints and valves are clearly marked - well done! The two banks of three batteries at 180A (4 in series) are firmly seated in their housings, and chocked by stainless bars secured by a threaded rod. Their chosen location (below the floor at the entrance to the salon is prudent, and offers quick access to the terminals without having to dismantle anything). The electric distribution board to port as you come in is clear (despite the multiplicity of functions) and groups together on one understandable panel the regulators for the solar panels and the generator, the 110/220V supply as well as the domestic breakers.

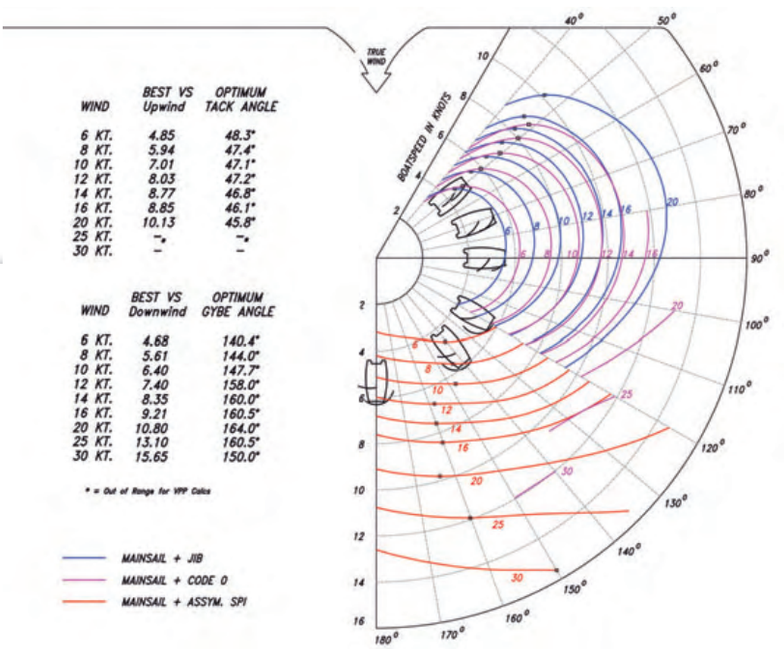
SEA TRIAL

The small marina dug out of the mangroves at the entrance to Fort Lauderdale is charming, if a little cramped; so having a thruster makes maneuvering this large catamaran safer, and this option is recommended if such usage is likely. Departing through the waterway takes half an hour before going through the channel out into the open sea, and this allows us time to master the deck layout. On this owner's version, the three Lewmar 65s are electric, easy to understand, making things simple when shorthanded. The sheet for the self-tacking solent and that for the main are led back to lateral clutches on the flybridge. The halyards and reefing lines are brought together at the center. Handling is easy, and the adjustment power is adequate. With the foot of the mast not being at the same level as the flybridge, 2 powerful organizers handle the angles required to get the lines back to the helm position. It would maybe be an idea to have a sacrificial stainless strip on the edging to avoid the gelcoat being chafed by the halyards coming through the blocks at the mast foot when they are loaded up. The 58m² self-tacking solent is rigged on an optional electric

9 - In the 4 cabin cherry version tested, the fusion between the dining area and the galley is perfect, the relaxing salon forward enhances this effect.

10 - The galley on the 58: one of the most imaginative on the market, but also one of the nicest.

11 - The new white laminate style is very effective in this owner's cabin.



WIND	BEST VS Upwind	OPTIMUM TACK ANGLE
6 KT.	4.85	48.3°
8 KT.	5.94	47.4°
10 KT.	7.01	47.1°
12 KT.	8.03	47.2°
14 KT.	8.77	46.8°
16 KT.	8.85	46.1°
20 KT.	10.13	45.8°
25 KT.	-*	-*
30 KT.	-	-

WIND	BEST VS Downwind	OPTIMUM GYBE ANGLE
6 KT.	4.68	140.4°
8 KT.	5.61	144.0°
10 KT.	6.40	147.7°
12 KT.	7.40	158.0°
14 KT.	8.35	160.0°
16 KT.	9.21	160.5°
20 KT.	10.80	164.0°
25 KT.	13.10	160.5°
30 KT.	15.65	150.0°

* = Out of Range for VPP Calcs

Looking at the polar diagram supplied by the designers shows that the boat comes alive in 6 knots of true wind, but that it's only from 12 knots with the Code 0 flying that 8 knots of boat speed in achieved. In 14 knots of true wind, the log shows 8.7kts and the 58 can bear away in a dynamic fashion, keeping a good speed of 8.3 knots. It's in the mid-range (16 knots) under the asymmetric that 9 knots is reached; the 10 knot mark is passed in 20 knots true, and even 12.5 kts with the wind on the beam (11 knots with the asymmetric at 150° off the wind). The polar diagram is consistent with what we felt out on the water, and it would be justified to assume an ocean crossing with average daily runs of 180nm in a good breeze, which corresponds perfectly with the "great family comfort" definition given to the boat.

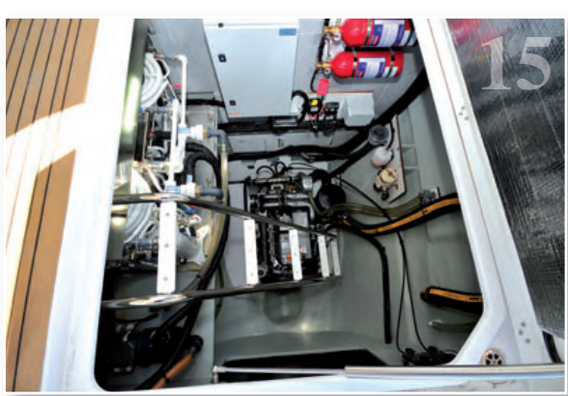
furler, very versatile when shorthanded. Unfortunately the traveler is not adjustable under load. There was a slight sea on the Caribbean, with a WSW wind of 12-15 knots; the stability of the 58 bravely disregards this chop. We missed having a gennaker as conditions would have been ideal for one, but at 7-8 knots close-hauled our Leopard wasn't doing badly, and this would likely be improved by a flat-top mainsail. The polar diagram supplied by the naval architects is realistic (thanks to readings taken from our Garmin Quatis) even if overall we remained 10% below the values through inexperience of handling this boat. Inside, the comfort is perfect and the panorama crosses the deck salon without dazzling. The all-round view of the surface from the flybridge allows maneuvers for coming alongside, as well as under sail.

CONCLUSION

Well canvassed (180m² upwind), the 58 produces an honest performance, about average for this size, but then it's not a racing boat. Even so, there should be no hesitating in deploying the code zero, the gennaker or the furling asymmetric spi to maintain full speed in light to moderate conditions. 100hp motors would be preferred, along with the indispensable addition of three-bladed folding propellers (this was not provided on ours); these options deliver power, torque….and reduced drag. I liked the amazing view from the flybridge, but was aware that it diminished the thrill a little. Concerning the interior benefits, the designers' imaginations have taken control and it is possible to define your own layout within the classic options or the available innovations. The ability of this catamaran to adapt to the tastes of the buyer will probably be the key to its success. It will have been the first production boat (and a 58' at that) to popularize the deck cabin, until now the preserve of multi-yachts of over 80'.

TECHNICAL DATA

Naval Architects: Simonis-Voogd
Builder : Robertson and Caine, Cape Town, South Africa
Construction : Balsa sandwich/glass/polyester
Overall length: 17.56m
Waterline length : 16.50m
Beam: 8.45m
Light displacement: 24t
Displacement at half load: 28.5t
Bridgedeck clearance at half load: 0.98m
Mainsail area: 129m2
Self-tacking solent: 58m2
Gennaker : 220m2
Motors : 2x75hp saildrive (standard), 2x100hp (optional) with V-drive transmission
Fuel capacity: 900 liters
Freshwater capacity: 1500 liters
Mast height above the gooseneck: 20.80m (27m above the waterline)
Aluminium Sparcraft (South Africa) Mast section (1 set of spreaders): 340x205mm
Basic price (ex tax): 919 000 euros
Main options in € (excl. VAT)
- Yanmar motors 2x100hp + V-drive transmissions: 20 048
- Bruntons three bladed folding propellers: 6 910
- Bow thruster: 9 632
- Raymarine electronics pack with autopilot: 8 600
- Generator and ancillaries: 31 000
- Air conditioning: 39 000
- Electric sheet winch in addition to the standard: 5 800
- 46" flat screen TV with Bose home video system: 6 500
- 8x70w solar panels on the bimini: 9 600
- Supplement for 6 electric WCs: 3 880
- Watermaker 140l/h : 16 700
- Code 0, bowsprit, fittings and running rigging: 9 200
- Delivery to Cape Town: 18 570
- Delivery to Florida: 27 150
- Liferafts(2x8 man) : 5 800
- Total of options and equipment on the boat tested: 364 200
- Price of our test boat: 1 424 891



12 - The conventional passageway of our test boat.
13 - The new interior design of the 58.
14 - High quality faucets and plumbing in the bathrooms intended for intensive charter use or for owners.
15 - Mechanical access is good, via a solid and stable stainless ladder, here with the 100hp option with V-drive transmission.

The control system for the mainsail by block and tackle is simple, but the lengths needed to be hauled in for gybing could be awkward.

The flybridge houses a real little lounge bar with fitted galley.

The large section aluminum mast(340x205mm) is equipped with a single set of spreaders. Access to the gooseneck would be easier with a bimini ladder.

On the 58, the famous forward cockpit has become an open terrace for the forward cabin or cabins: unique!

The 58m² solent is rigged on a boom, it is self tacking, but being able to adjust the stops under load would be a plus.

The underwater hulls are modern, the waterline almost at maximum, and the bridgedeck clearance generous at 98cm.

The helm station regroups the helm, the instruments et maneuvering station.

The horizontal and vertical portlights are elegant, they bring good light into the bathrooms. Flush-mounted and integrated into the recesses of the hull and with opening hatches, they contribute to the style of the boat.

The topsides are vertical in line with current trends, and blend with the sheerstrake, lengthening the boat's profile.

On our test boat the solent was rigged on an electric furler, giving smoothness and finesse to the furling.

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- Innovative layout (with forward cabins)
- Remarkable dining/galley space
- Good build quality

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- No mainsheet traveler - detrimental with 125m²
- No access to the top of the bimini
- No feedback from the helm