



THE AFRICAN ADMIRAL

I thought it was high time that I wrote something on Admiral Yachts when they invited me to contribute towards their new web site www.admiralyachts.co.za. I've come across them before at various shows, and have always been impressed by the overall look and fine finish of the catamarans, but the web site highlights just how they stand out from the crowd of South African catamaran manufacturers.

The new web site offers potential customers the opportunity to get in touch with current Admiral owners – an unusual move and a reassuring one from the perspective of a potential buyer. Considering how much time and money you are going to spend on – and invest in your boat – speaking to current owners really is one of the surest ways of avoiding potential pitfalls.



By Nicola Savage



Admiral Yachts are based in Cape Town, South Africa – well known as the center of excellence for catamaran manufacturers. The ‘Cape of Storms,’ with its outward-looking environment and outgoing crowd has spawned a breed of seafaring entrepreneurs, rightfully challenging for recognition on the global market. The meeting of the Atlantic and Indian oceans is also renowned for providing particularly grueling conditions for sea trials.

Admiral manufactures 38’, 40’ and 50’ cruising catamarans, daysailers and power cats from an impressive factory near Cape Town. At the helm is David Bird, lifelong sailor and former naval and commercial diver. He founded Admiral Yachts in 1999, having started building boats for the diving industry.

The catamarans are designed by Angelo Lavranos, and are certainly beauties to look at, with low, smooth, and sleek flowing lines. However, Bird is keen to point out that no two Admiral Catamarans are identical, and that there are many features above and beyond the aesthetics which make Admiral stand out from the crowd.

“The basic design is the same, but each yacht varies in style and finish. We work very closely with our clients in the design of all our yachts, and encourage customers

to spend time with us in the final build stages, when possible.”

Admiral offers to pay for flights and accommodation for clients wishing to spend the final weeks of their boat’s build enjoying the ‘Admiral Experience’ in Cape Town. Customers can then choose to undertake their maiden voyage on a skippered transatlantic crossing... a challenge which seals the purchase decision for some and certainly gives you the opportunity to get to know your boat.

As well as this personal customer service, Admiral’s web site quotes: technology, comfort, performance and

craftsmanship as the qualities which make the ‘Admiral Difference,’ and the glowing reports from their customers certainly seem to back this up. According to Jack Ford of the *Famous Potatoes*, the Admiral has significantly more room and living space than many equivalent cruising cats.

“Shhh, don’t tell *Famous Potatoes* (38 ft) she’s being included in an article about starter cats. She thinks she’s at least 42 feet long, and she’s just about convinced me of it, too.” One reason for this extra room is that the sugar scoops, the back ends of each hull with steps down to water level, are just long enough to do the job. Many other cats have sugar scoops up to several feet longer than the Admiral’s. The boats also have lots of storage space with innovative ideas incorporated in the least expected places.

Serious sailors are impressed by the speed and stability of the Admiral catamarans: “Underway, the 775 square feet of sail area is more than adequate to push the boat to double digit speed... the top speed (to date) of 16.9 knots is impressive... and when the wind won’t cooperate, the twin 29 hp Yanmars with folding props have us making our way with minimum noise and vibrations. With both engines open *Makana* tops out at 8.7 knots” – Rick Caroselli, *Makana*, Admiral 38.





and our craftsmen apply the same care and attention to a finish on a luxury yacht as they would to an exquisite piece of furniture.”

The finishes are really quite a change from the vast expanses of fiberglass on many catamarans, and vary quite significantly from one craft to the next, but there’s definitely a very liveable feel to the finishes in the galley and the saloon. Excellent attention to detail is also in areas such as the wiring and plumbing, and seldom seen areas, like the back of the cupboards.

Over half of Admiral’s customers are from the United States, although in the recent recession, Bird says, that local customers and those from newer markets such as South America and Eastern Europe have made up for the decline in US sales. There are fewer customers, but there’s less competition as well. Admiral catamarans are very reasonably priced, and hold their value better than most other cruising cats which helps with finance. Visit their site, www.admiralyachts.co.za, get in touch with current owners of Admiral catamarans and put them to the test, but from everything I’ve seen, if you’re looking for a cat which is comfortable enough to live aboard for long periods of time, and fast enough to get you to where you’re going in a hurry, the Admiral certainly comes highly recommended by those who should know best. **MM**

There are also many enthusiastic comments from novices commenting on how easy the Admiral yachts are to sail single-handedly or as a husband-and-wife pair.

“Sailing *Siyasinana* around Biscayne Bay (Miami, Florida) in a fair breeze allowed us to get a feel for how easy she is to handle. Lisa was proud to show us all how easy it was for her to raise the considerable-sized mainsail.” If you ask David Bird why he thinks his vessels stand out from the crowd... His answer:

“If I had to pick one feature, it would be craftsmanship. I am constantly surprised by, and extremely proud of, the superiority of our finishes. We build boats to be lived on,

