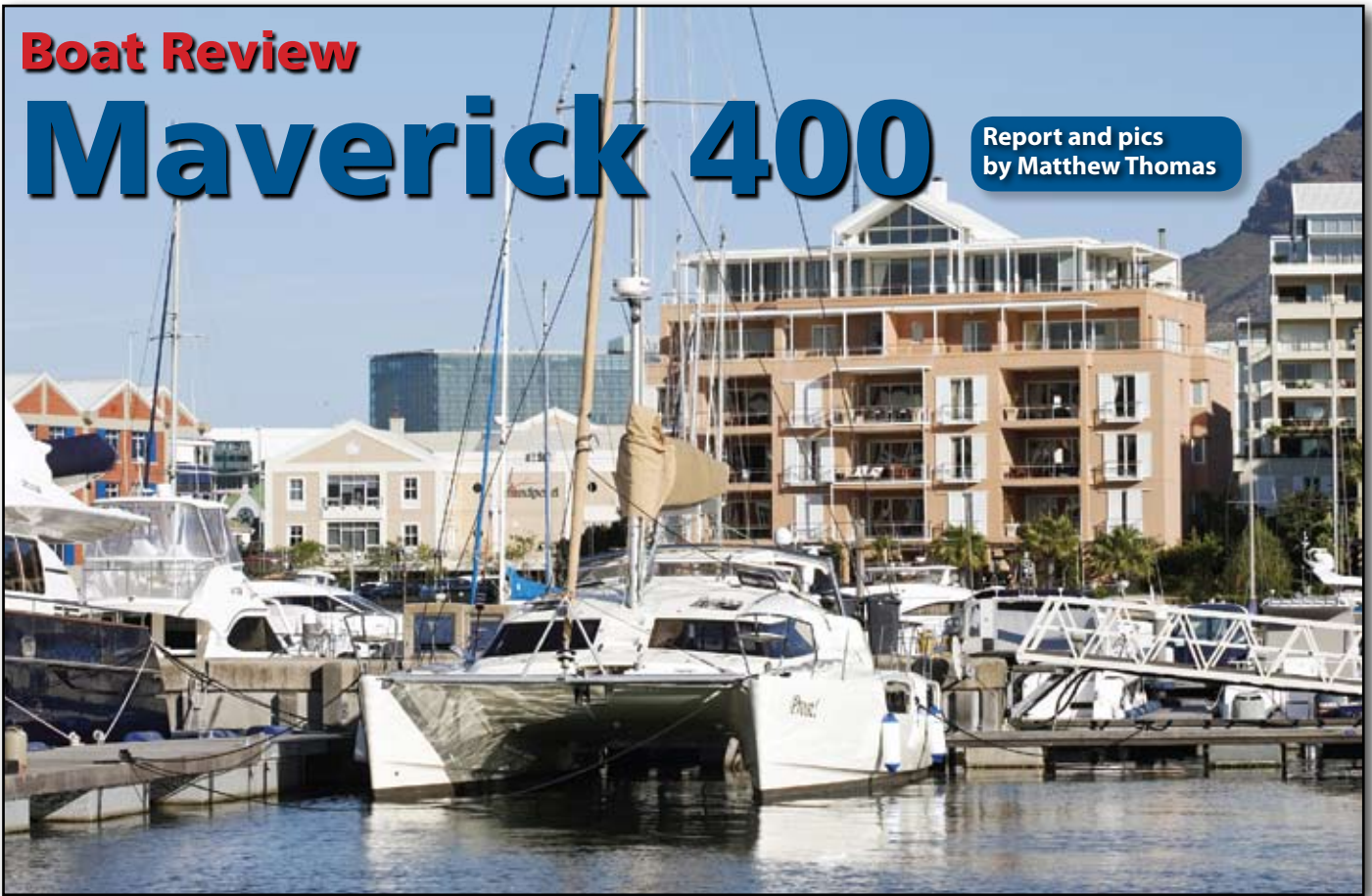


Boat Review

Maverick 400

Report and pics
by Matthew Thomas



The Maverick 400 moored in Cape Town.

South African built catamarans account for about a third of all catamarans produced internationally, and it's not often that one sees a new manufacturer launch a benchmark catamaran in what is often perceived as a closed and highly competitive market. Rudi Pretorius' Maverick 400 is just such a cat. It's new, it's different, it's designed and built in Cape Town and it clearly fills a gap in the market, as evidenced by the number of orders taken.

I was lucky enough to spend some time with Rudi, sailing one of these fine vessels, and seeing his spotless factory. I was very impressed with the commitment behind this yacht. Clearly Rudi is a man who loves sailing and is proud of the yachts he produces, but more importantly he's a man with a vision and a commitment to both

his employees and the owners of his boats, with whom he maintains ongoing contact.

He's a new player in the yacht building industry, but also an experienced yachtsman, having owned and cruised a number of his own catamarans prior to starting Maverick Yachts. Having succeeded in the logistics industry, Rudi and his wife Deslynn had a catamaran built by Knysna Catamarans, with the idea of cruising around the world with their family. After a year watching their catamaran being built they took delivery; but it was the experience of building that had them hooked.

He looked at the yacht building market to see if there was an opportunity to produce a catamaran that encompassed everything they'd learned while cruising. After much thought and research, Phil

Southwell was approached to draw the lines of the Maverick 400 and a factory was acquired in Montague Gardens. Then the really hard work was started as the final quality of any product is dependent on having accurate, high quality moulds. Many parts were sent away for five axis CNC machining which has resulted in a distinctive boat that is produced to a very high standard.

Rudi's commitment to excellence was clearly demonstrated when the South African Boat Building Council awarded the Maverick 400 the South African Boat of the Year award. The first Maverick 400 was on show at the recent Cape Town International Boat Show and received rave reviews.

The Maverick 400 is clearly different to look at and once you've spent time onboard, you simply forget that she is only



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The guest bathroom, and right, the guest cabin which is large, well appointed, well lit with natural light and airy.

40 feet long. Catamarans are generally quite similar in layout as the basic design is nearly identical, and it's normally the level of finish and hardware that set them apart from each other. Mostly, they are designed for cruising and the emphasis is placed on creature comforts while passage making. Simply put, they are wonderful, moveable apartments that allow you to have the comforts of home while anchored in some of the best places on the planet. This is not the case with the Maverick

400, which is designed to offer owners the best of both worlds. What really sets it apart is the visibility in the hulls, which is stunning and makes the cabins feel airy and comfortable.

I believe that when looking at boats, it's important to look at who the boat is aimed at. The Maverick 400 is primarily aimed at a couple with or without kids, who have decided that the time has come to go cruising in a boat that is not too big yet allows them to cruise in style and in

comfort. While there are a number of layout options, the most common layout is the 'Owners Sailaway' option, which features a large master cabin on the starboard side, together with a functional drawing area and a large en-suite bathroom, all with complete privacy.

On the port side, the standard layout is twin double cabins with a shared bathroom, but it is possible to order your Maverick 400 with double Owners Cabins. There is also a planned charter layout



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The saloon dining area with good all-round views and plenty of light from the side windows and hatches above.

option with four double cabins and shared heads on either side.

Between the hulls is a spacious main saloon and galley area forward. Aft, there is a bar area to port and a navigation/entertainment area to starboard. A lot of thought has gone into this layout and the back of the main saloon settee can fold down, making a double day bed for use while on passage or for additional guests if needed. While this is a production boat, there are many options for customisation.

Another feature was a large clear ceiling panel in the back of the main saloon that allowed us to keep an eye on the sails while underway. This is so important when cruising, as the majority of the time the boat will be on autopilot and you're simply a watchkeeper.

Moving into the cockpit, there is a separate helm station with top quality electronics installed as standard. This area has great locker space as well as a fish locker. Aft, there is a comfortable seat and hammock arrangement as well as a moveable table that is installed on a polished pole. What makes this special is you can store the table up against the hard dodger while sailing, and the pole becomes an additional handhold - or lower it to use as a cocktail table, or lower it further and use it for dinner.

Clearly a lot of thought has gone into the design. There is a panel forward at the mast that lifts up and you have a storage area for your fenders. Sailing lines have their own storage bins and even the mooring cleats have been custom designed to minimize the angles and chafe. The midships cleat is cleverly designed as part of the chainplate. All the tubing used for the pushpit has been increased to 32 mm, rather than the standard 25 mm found on most yachts, which adds an additional level of safety.

The Maverick 400 can be ordered with either Volvo or Yanmar engines and comes with 115 amp alternators. AC power is

supplied via a 2500 watt inverter and the boat comes complete with a full instrument package including a chart plotter. Fridge/freezer is standard and this really is a sailaway boat. Simply ask to have the tanks filled, bring your groceries and push off on your next adventure.

Sailing the Maverick 400 was easy. Everything is led to the helm position so it's easy to short hand and we spent the day sailing around Table Bay in 12 to 15 knots. So it is a cruising boat with all the amenities, but not at the cost of sailing performance. On the wind, we were happily sailing at seven knots and off the wind she was a delight surfing down the swells at nine or 10 knots. Docking in a very tight mooring was a breeze with ample power to have full control, and good visibility from the helm position.

What impressed me most about Maverick Yachts was when I visited after spending time on the boat. It's the passion behind the product that shines through. I arrived and immediately was shown the basic financial structure of the company. This information is freely available to all the employees and they are treated as integral parts of the whole project. There is constant, ongoing personal improvement programmes done each month as well as a literacy programme for anyone who cannot read. All new employees start at the bottom and work their way up the ladder and their pride in their company and its product is evident in how clean the work environment is. Customers are seen as a strategic part of the Maverick family. Rudi is clearly doing what he loves and it shows.

I asked him if his plan was to one day build another boat for himself and he said no. He sees his customers as a part of his extended family and because of this, he has access to all the boats he builds and has open invitations to use them wherever they are.

Information from: www.maverickyachts.co.za ↴

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