

Text: Philippe Echelle, with Christian Braun and Jean-Marc Le Goueff - Photos: SunreefYachts and the author

SUNREEF 50

All the comfort of a multiyacht in only 50 feet of hull space: the Sunreef 50's gamble has paid off.



A COMPACT AND SEMI-CUSTOM MULTIYACHT

In 2019, Sunreef Yachts totally renewed their range of sailing catamarans with four models of 50, 60, 70 and 80 feet. With the “smallest” among those, the yard, based at Gdańsk in Poland is making a remarkable foray onto the playground of the traditional market leaders.

Our trip took place out of Cannes, in the South of France, in zero wind - it could be summed up as a simple presentation of the boat afloat... but we had the chance to hear the precious testimonies of Christian Braun and Jean-Marc Le Goueff. The former is the owner of Paz, the Sunreef 50 seen here. At the time of writing, he'd logged nearly 4,300 miles on board.

The latter is a professional delivery skipper: last winter he delivered a 50 from Gdańsk to Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

Sunreef has immense expertise in every trade. It incorporates a high-level design team - the yard draws and designs all its models, as well as most of its equipment. From polyester or carbon composites, to metalwork, rigging, carbon masts, décor and

upholstery, Sunreef knows how to do it all, and can meet the most demanding requests for customization. However, building a Sunreef of only 50 feet with the company's demanding criteria (superlative space, cozy comfort, custom interior design) is not so easy. The manufacturer's worldwide customer base is used to the highest of standards, whether on the water or ashore. A 50-foot unit would never mean “comfort at a discount” in the vocabulary of Gdańsk. The overall lines are rather successful, considering that this mastodon can't hide its imposing stature, spread over three floors. The Sunreef 50 displaces more than 40 tons when laden, which is a lot for a 50-foot (15m) catamaran. However, the sail plan is slender, culminating at nearly 80 feet (24 m). The slight inversion of the bows, the

skillfully styled chine and the bulwarks give these voluminous hulls the look of an ocean-going limousine. All these elements seduced Christian Braun, owner of Paz. He wanted to have a catamaran with every possible comfort in a contained size. His program: a round-the-world trip with the family, with a professional crew of two.

Unique features for a 50-footer

The deck organization, with all maneuvers led back to the flybridge and the forward and aft cockpits can be bewildering. But the advantage is that life in port or at anchor, ideally in the sun, is never hindered by helm seats to be bypassed, lines to be stepped over or winches ready to leave their mark on your shins... none of that. At sea, passengers prefer to be at deck level. The gallery-cockpit communicates on the same level with the deck saloon

and by itself offers almost unknown features for this size of boat. A superb table for eight guests opens out in the center of this marine terrace, bordered to starboard by a comfortable double lounger, and on the port side by a wet galley, an essential tool to have at hand outside. Forward, accessible from the aft cockpit via a wide side-deck bordered by an elegant bulwark, there is a second cockpit. Large, safe and welcoming, it can be protected by a shade sail. Across the whole deck there are numerous storage lockers. The sugarscoops and a hydraulic platform for the tender allow you to fully enjoy the pleasures available at anchor.

A flight of steps in blond teak mounted on a splendid mechanically welded mirror polished stainless-steel staircase gives access to the flybridge. The surface area here is, again, unexpected for the size of the vessel. The sofa is large and comfortable - and the upholstery is magnificent.

Maneuvers requiring a professional crew

On the flybridge, our catamaran has a comfortable starboard helm station with all controls on the console, including electric controls for jib furler, gennaker and mainsheet traveler. The Harken winches, all electric as well, are

well-dimensioned. However, in order to operate the control buttons, you have to kneel or even sit down. The clutches are all positioned on the impressive in-house built carbon mast, this being stepped on the coachroof. A support strut in the saloon takes up the compressive forces. With such a setup, when reefing for example, this requires one to be standing several feet above the forward cockpit, so a harness is compulsory. The various antennas (GPS, AIS, VHF, TV, etc.) and even the flagstaff, are all easily accessible. However, their position close to the mainsheet track makes them a great trap for any slack sheets... so, reefing maneuvers, hoisting or lowering the main, and so on are therefore carried out with the greatest care. A crew of two sailors is highly recommended. The same goes for docking maneuvers: the helm station offers a good view of 3 of the 4 corners of the boat (the port stern is viewed by a judiciously placed camera) but doesn't allow the same person to quickly switch from the engine controls to the mooring warps. Similarly, with freeboard in excess of six feet (2 meters), the boat requires a gangway ladder. This stainless-steel item of equipment is heavy and aggressive. All of which might sound scary to the average family crew on a 40-foot multihull... but this Sunreef 50, in spite of the



The wide side-decks are safe thanks to a high and chunky bulwark.

20 feet she's lacking to be "officially" qualify, has definitely got everything to be a multihull superyacht!

Downwind is the way to go!

A quick look at the outline, and at the windage, shows that this Sunreef 50 has little in common with even the most comfortable catamarans of similar length: one and a half times heavier than a Lagoon 50, she carries no more canvas. As for the standard engines - 2 x 80 hp - on the Sunreef, this corresponds to the ones offered as an option on the Lagoon. Meaning there are no surprises when you find yourself heading into a sea: sail and/or motor, your speed is inevitably reduced. There's no roll to be feared, though, with almost 30 feet (9 m) of

The small rib running below the bulwark breaks the verticality of the topsides and softens the lines of this imposing hull.





“Inside, the quality seen on deck is even more intensely apparent.”

beam, but pitching can be uncomfortable as Jean-Marc has witnessed in the North Sea. On the other hand, the Sunreef 50 proved to be surprisingly lively from 60° off the true wind: “We reached 7 knots in 15 knots true”, the skipper said, sounding surprised. Great performance considering the trip, but the Sunreef is at her best off the wind: “Our average speed was

6.5 knots during our transit between the Cape Verde islands and Saint Lucia, with a peak at 16.5 knots,” says Christian, “Unfortunately, in the middle of the crossing, the spinnaker halyard parted. We managed to save the Parasailor, but some minor damage made it unusable for the second half of the crossing. It took us 14 days to complete the passage, but without this incident, we’d have taken three or four days off that.”

offers panoramic visibility and immediate forward access. Let’s remember that the interiors of Sunreef catamarans can be fitted out according to the client’s wishes. In theory, no two Sunreef 50s should be alike... On the other hand, the position of the imposing mast support strut is a constraint which determines a particular organization of the saloon. Luckily, it is quite close and in line with the access door to the forward cockpit. According to our skipper, Jean-Marc: “At sea, you can appreciate the quality of the assemblies and the bonding. Even in a messy sea, there’s no noise, no creaking; everything is perfectly fixed. The solid stainless-steel door to the forward cockpit may squeak a little, but, really, hardly at all. The majority of the paneling can be easily removed, allowing access to all the technical areas, electrical cables or various items of equipment, very simply. A very good point. While it takes a



An 1,800 square foot palace

Inside, the quality seen on deck is even more intensely apparent. The sumptuous materials, the deep headlinings and the grained light-oak flooring contrast deliciously with the white of the cabinets. The natural light is generous and yet doesn’t dazzle. The superb galley has all the features you could wish for, but it’s all elegantly unobtrusive. A navigation station opens out on a large console and

- ✦ Interior design on-request
- ✦ Quality of construction and finish
- ✦ The comfort of a 65-foot catamaran on 50-foot hulls

- ✦ The silhouette is somewhat heavy
- ✦ Large displacement for size
- ✦ Uncomfortable in strong headwinds and seas





1/ Sunreef produces their own carbon masts in-house. Here, a very beautiful profile whose high inertia guarantees the necessary reliability.

2/ There's a generous sofa on the flybridge, transforming this luxurious space into an exceptional marine terrace.

3/ The helm station on the flybridge is fully equipped. It includes all sail maneuvering functions.

4 & 5/ The saloon opens up wide on the same level as the aft cockpit.

6/ A second watchkeeping station is located forward, to starboard in the saloon.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Builder: Sunreef Yachts

Architect and interior design: Sunreef Yachts

Length: 49'11" (15.2 m)

Beam: 29'10" (9.1 m)

Light displacement: 70,500 lbs (32 tonnes)

Draft: 4'11" (1.5 m)

Air draught: 77'5" (23.6 m)

Upwind sail area: 1,710 sq ft (159 m²)

Mainsail: 860 sq ft (80 m²)

Genoa: 850 sq ft (79 m²)

Gennaker: 1,505 sq ft (140 m²)

Spinnaker: 2,150 sq ft (200 m²)

Fuel capacity: 265 US gal (1,000 l)

Water capacity: 210 US gal (800 l)

Engines: 2 x 80 hp

Price: from € 1.3 M ex-tax





Sunreef produces interior layouts to suit: that's what semi-custom is all about!



little time to get yourself familiar with all the controls you access via a smartphone or tablet, the automation of interior management is decidedly modern. One curiosity: the opening of the floor lockers is done with the help of a powerful magnet, which lifts the lids of all the lockers, so mustn't be misplaced. Finally, the installation of alarms on just about everything caused us a few moments of annoyance... not a day went by without hearing at least one making a noise! If they would stop when we ask them to, but no, a smoke alarm in the saloon kept us busy for a few hours! Apart from these points of detail, the comfort is very real. The installation of the autopilot and

engine controls inside the boat allowed us to escape long hours on the flybridge, which is much less comfortable when sailing in winter."

Conclusion

This solidly built and very well-finished catamaran manages to respect a set of specifications which was at first sight impossible: a 50-footer offering what you'd normally only find on a boat at least 15 feet longer... This mastery of the subject should ensure great commercial success for the Sunreef 50. Everything aboard is just great, and having sailed one, you're going to be hard pushed to justify wanting anything bigger!

