



SIG45

A bracing mix of luxury and all-out speed by **Kimball Livingston**

The SIG45 is the wildest, fastest thing I've ever sailed that came with upholstery. I'd sum up its character in three words you don't often hear together: austere-luxury-yacht.

The austerity is evident in the lack of frills, while the luxury is in the quality. With twin steering stations and direct-linked tillers, the boat is a delight to drive—it would not be wrong to say, a thrill to drive—while the seating forward of each helm becomes a rallying spot for the crew. It's the natural social setting underway.

If you've done a bit of racing, you'll feel right at home. If you're used to a charter cat with a wheel on the backside of the house, this is not that.

When veteran builder Hugo Le Breton set out to create a cruiser-racer that would bridge the gap between the 10-knot cruiser and the 30-knot racing cat, he wanted prime DNA. That quest led him to

the design offices of VPLP, responsible for many of the world's most exotic multihulls. He also rounded up French sailing legend Bruno Peyron to fine-tune a concept that traded a cabin on deck—the centerpiece that most catamaran cruisers take for granted—for low windage and a wealth of cockpit space. Le Breton was not out to create Everyman's boat.

Le Breton employs a number of builders worldwide, among them U.S. builder Westerly Marine, which constructs the SIG45 of pre-preg carbon fiber and epoxy resin for lightest weight, maximum strength, and lowest emissions in the build process.

The hull shape, with concave bow pro-

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files, was developed by VPLP with experience gained from *Groupama 2* and ORMA 60s to provide the advantages of the “destroyer bow” plus extra buoyancy. Chines present a slender profile to the water while affording a bit of extra interior space.

The daggerboards have a maximum depth of 8ft 6in and a minimum depth where they remain as guards for the propulsion units. The boards are designed to break before their housings.

If your kid wants a floating skateboard park, this is a good place to start. Losing the center house opens up 484ft² of play space. The cork composite nonskid is good looking and effective underfoot, and it needs to be. That's a heap of territory for moving around. Weight-saving netting forms the footing aft, where a liferaft could live on-passage.

When I sailed, the cockpit table was absent. There is an assumption, however, that in warm cruising climes the cockpit will become an al fresco salon. Shading and windbreaks for the cockpit are part of the package, and the setting is elegant in a Mediterranean-modern fashion. With huge “gullwing windows”

opening the interiors to the cockpit, service from the galley is just an arm's length away.

Lines for reefing, furling and mast rotation are gathered at the base of the rotating carbon mast. No lines run across the deck to trip the unwary, and the netting forward of the mast provides the inviting watch-the-waves-go-by opportunity that can make it so seductive to cover miles on a cat. Storage space is tucked in at every opportunity: under the seats, at the bow, and in the transoms, where the fold-down swim platforms provide access.

The rotating carbon mast, braced with Kevlar rigging and PBO diamond stays, sets a fully battened square-top main. The working jib is self-tacking, but there are plenty of toys for the eager, with a staysail, a reacher, a Code 0 and a masthead asymmetric spinnaker.

>> ACCOMMODATIONS

Bjorn Johannsson, known for his interior work on superyachts, brings a restrained fashion-forward note to accommodations that are flooded with light and trimmed in fine leather. The newest warm, low-draw LED lighting is used throughout.

A head, sleeping cabins fore and aft, and a central navigation and off-watch cabin occupy the starboard hull. The port hull has an owner's state-room aft, a central salon and galley, and a spacious head forward. If you're used to cruising cats that maximize volume, you might take issue with that word, spacious, but every boat represents a set of compromises. The SIG45 design does not make concessions that would compromise performance. For a boat that will go the way this one goes, it's spacious. Again, the basic premise is that life goes on above deck. We go below to cook, navigate, or sleep.

>> UNDER SAIL

We spent most of our day just reaching around in a San Francisco Bay seabreeze because, as the skipper said, “That's what this boat is meant to do.” It was easy to exceed wind speed. With 18 knots of true wind we were looking at 24-plus knots through the water. Upwind, 17 knots true produced a boatspeed of 13 knots at about

45 degrees off true wind direction. The boat “spoke” with a clear and consistent voice throughout, with moderate weather helm and no fear, although there was always a hand on the sheet. To quote the skipper again: “It is possible to flip this boat.”

Knowing that our test platform spends many months a year down Mexico way, in

Banderas Bay, I could enviously imagine the daily diet of 12 knots, smooth water and a lively but completely relaxed ride.

We spent the day sailing with the daggerboards about halfway down, no adjustments. That is cruise mode, I was advised, unless there's really a lot of wind.

And yes, it was a San Francisco Bay sailor assessing “really a lot of wind.” In full-cruise mode, there is an automatic sheet release system from Advanced Ocean Technologies that can be adjusted to activate at your choice of angle of heel or pitch. With nearly 5 feet of clearance between that crossbeams and the waterline, slapping should be a rare occurrence.

Electric Harken winches ride conveniently within reach of the helm, with toe-touch buttons. The autopilot too is just a toe-touch away.

>> UNDER POWER

With their twin-screw controls, catamarans have built-in advantages under power. The SIG45 is no exception, and minus the usual house, it has less of that complicating thing called windage than affects many cats its size. Power options

Our Take

Pros

- Lightweight construction
- Blistering speed
- A joy to steer

Cons

- Less spacious than a typical cruising cat
- It is possible to flip

THE DETAILS: Leather upholstery and low-draw LED lighting create a stylish and sleek look belowdecks



Specifications



HEADROOM 6ft 2in

BERTHS 6ft 5in x 5ft 1in (aft); 6ft 5in x 4ft 6in (fwd)

LOA 45ft // **LWL** 45ft // **BEAM** 27ft 6in

DRAFT 4ft (boards up); 9ft (boards down)

DISPLACEMENT 10,500lb (race); 12,000lb (cruise)

SAIL AREA 1,440ft² (100% foretriangle)

FUEL/WATER/WASTE (GAL) 55/75/10

ENGINE Two 29hp Yanmar diesels or two 20hp diesel-electric hybrid

ELECTRICAL 240Ah (house) 80Ah (engine)

DESIGNER Van Peteghem Lauriot-Prévoist (VPLP)

BUILDER Le Breton Yachts/Westerly Marine, Santa Ana, CA, lebreton-yachts.com

U.S. DISTRIBUTOR Tait Associates, Sag Harbor

PRICE \$POA

SAIL AREA-DISPLACEMENT RATIO 48 (race)

DISPLACEMENT-LENGTH RATIO 51 (race)

are a pair of 29hp Yanmar diesels or two 20hp electric motors plus a 14 kilowatt generator.

>> CONCLUSION

The SIG45 has go-anywhere capabilities, but it is not aimed at the long-haul cruiser. It will reward the sailor who values performance and elegant entertaining in warm climes, and in its niche, it stands alone. ■