



[HOME](#) > [SAILBOAT NEWS](#) > [BOAT REVIEWS](#)

Nautitech 542

Like many monohull sailors, what first drew me to today's cruising multihulls was all that lounging space. Performance concerns were secondary, at best. What was the point? Over the years, though, my standards have changed. No longer am I content sailing on a mere party platform.

ADAM CORT • UPDATED: AUG 2, 2017 • ORIGINAL: JAN 9, 2014

Like many monohull sailors, what first drew me to today's cruising multihulls was all that lounging space. Performance concerns were secondary, at best. What was the point? Over the years, though, my standards have changed. No longer am I content sailing on a mere party platform. Instead, I want a comfortable boat that handles well and is capable of a good turn of speed—in short, I want a boat like the Nautitech 542.

Construction

Good performance is no accident. It comes as a result of good build quality and design, both of which are evident here. The boat's twin resin-infused hulls are solid laminate below the waterline and foam-cored above, as is the deck. Bulkheads are also infused to ensure a good resin-to-fabric ratio, and the furniture and flooring, like the hull and deck, are foam-cored.

The result is an impressive light-ship displacement of 29,800lb—not bad for a boat with accommodations for eight and room to spare, depending on the layout. This is a boat where it pays to resist packing too many toys and other goodies, so you can take full advantage of that light weight to do some real sailing.

Each of the slim hulls sports a fin for performance, and the cabintrunk is refreshingly low-slung in this day of towering multihull bridgedecks. The result is not only less windage, but room for a much larger main, as the gooseneck need not be mounted so high.

The standard mast and boom are aluminum, and the standard rigging is stainless steel wire. A carbon spar and composite standing rigging are optional, as are “performance draft” keels drawing an extra half foot for a total draft of 5ft 7in.

Overall build quality and hardware quality are outstanding. Nautitech treats each boat as a semi-custom build, and it shows.

On Deck

The emphasis on performance is most evident in the 542's twin helms, which are set well aft and outboard to provide an unobstructed view of the bows and rig when driving. Halyards are led to the starboard side, the headsail furler runs to port, and the sheets are double-ended, leading to both sides.

Moving forward, the transition from the helm stations to the side decks is easy to negotiate, and the side decks are wide and clear, with a nice molded-in antiskid. Toerails outboard provide an extra sense of security. Flush hatches mean there is little, if anything, on which to stub your toe.

The boat's self-tacking jib sheets to an athwartships track just forward of the cabintrunk, and there is a substantial bowsprit for flying a reaching sail on a continuous-line furler. The sailplan, built around a full-batten, square-top main, should be a potent one in a wide range of conditions.

My one beef with what is otherwise a great layout concerns the lack of substantial handholds on the cabintrunk. Instead, there are a pair of those "grooves" so beloved of multihull designers running along the edge of the house, which in this case also double as conduits for a water-catchment system. I much prefer the added safety of raised, easy to grab handrails when going forward in any kind of seaway.

Abaft the cockpit is a separate athwartships passageway, which serves as an excellent platform from which to tend the boat's dinghy davits. It also allows those actively sailing the boat to cross from one side to the other without disturbing those lounging in the main cockpit area aft of the saloon.

Overhead, a sturdy hardtop provides protection from the sun and a safe work surface for snugging down the main in its sailbag. There's also a retractable moonroof controlled with a small electric motor. Very cool!

Accommodations

So far I've focused on the "practical" side of the boat, but don't let that give you the impression the Nautitech 542 isn't comfortable as well—it is, and gorgeous, to boot.

I especially like the combination of the large sliding doors and large windows separating the cockpit from the saloon. This is one of those boats where the transition between the two is seamless. I also liked the forward-facing nav station on our test boat. I could see spending hours here on passage, watching the world go by, impervious to the weather outside.

Belowdecks, there are a variety of arrangements offering anywhere from three to six cabins, with the fifth and sixth cabins shoehorned into what is otherwise storage space up in the bows.

While our test boat featured the four-cabin layout, the three-cabin arrangement looks to be out of this world. The combination of large hull windows and plenty of hatches ensure that all cabins are well lit and well ventilated.

Under Sail

The day after last February's Miami Boat Show was a great one for boat testing, with northeast winds in the high teens and plenty of chop. Motoring out of Government Cut, we hoisted the main with the help of the electric halyard winch, unfurled the jib, and the Nautitech 542 took off.

As impressive as our speed was—we easily hit 12-plus knots sailing at a 45 degree apparent wind angle—I was even more impressed by the boat's motion in a seaway. The combination of the boat's narrow hulls and low profile allowed it to slice through the chop without rolling the way a more top-heavy boat would.

Although coming about in heavy seas is difficult for many larger, heavier multihulls, the 542 never once missed stays, and I was able to keep the boat moving well tacking through about 120 degrees despite the chop—not bad for a multihull.

If you've never driven a performance catamaran with twin outboard helm stations in a stiff breeze, you owe it to yourself to give it a try. Sitting to windward, playing the shifts and the waves, is about as good as big-cat sailing gets.

According to the boat's captain, who'd recently delivered the boat across the Atlantic, they regularly hit 19 knots one day in following seas sailing on a reach under just jib and main—and I believe him. It's always good to see a cat that is not just comfortable, but also sails well.

Under Power

With its twin 75hp Volvo Pentas turning at 2,000 rpm, the 542 managed an impressive 7.3 knots. This jumped to 9 knots when we increased the rpms to 2,500 and 9.8 knots at 3,000 rpm. No surprise: the boat easily turned on a dime when we played the engines against each other in forward and reverse, echoing the boat's equally impressive performance under sail.

Our Take

Pros

- Top-end materials and construction
- Excellent feel to helms
- Powerful rig

Cons

- Could use better handholds topside

Photos courtesy of **Nautitech Catamarans**; illustrations by **Pip Hurn**

Product Recommendations

Here are some supplies and products we find essential. We may receive a commission from sales referred by our links; however, we have carefully selected these products for their usefulness and quality.



Spyderco Atlantic Salt Knife



The Long Way



Blue Lizard Mineral Sunscreen

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)

