

Bali Catamarans latest offering is a 40 footer with more volume than many 60' monohulls. But is it any good? *Sam Jefferson* takes a spin to find out



Boxing clever

I was first made aware of Bali Catamarans after taking spin in the Bali 4.0 some years back. I was wowed by the innovative approach and tilt/slide 'garage door' arrangement which opened up the cockpit and saloon area beautifully. I was also rather dumbfounded by the design approach which it must be said made no effort to disguise the boxy nature of the boat. I thought that in many ways this was admirable. As Barack Obama once rather obscurely said; 'you can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig'. Not that I'm saying that the Bali 4.0 was a pig. Indeed, I recall being favourably impressed by the boat's performance. Nevertheless, the looks are best described as individual

but the payback was simply acres of volume. The result was a yacht that was a huge hit and sold like hot cakes – particularly on the charter market. The Catspace is the natural successor to the Bali 4.0 and MK2 version the 4.1. Yet this is an all new boat from the twin keels up.

The new model has been designed, like its predecessors by Olivier Poncin and there is no question that his key aim was to ensure that volume is maximised while performance remains sprightly. In order to achieve this, the Catspace has been built with a vacuum infused foam cored sandwich which provides excellent levels of stiffness. This is further complemented by the fact that the Bali rather unusually

ABOVE
With a length of 40'4" and a beam of 21'6", the Bali Catspace something of a spaceship

eschews the forward trampoline in favour of a solid foredeck which provides further rigidity - not to mention extra space. Initial fears about this creating a pounding problem have now been dispatched as the high freeboard mitigates against this. Although there is a big emphasis on space aboard the Bali, the waterlines are actually very fine forward with, as mentioned, considerable freeboard. Below the waterline she features two keel stubs to provide grip to windward and these are augmented by a pair of skegs moulded on which not only further improve her ability to point, but also have a sacrificial use in the event of a grounding.



'back door' if you like flips up garage door style, presenting you with a massive open space. Six years on from the launch of the 4.0 and it still looks like a stroke of genius.

Head upwards a couple of steps and you're on the flybridge, which is offset to starboard and provides excellent all round vision, with only a small section of the port quarter not in full view. All the main control lines are led to this helming area and everything is easily within reach making this a highly manageable yacht for a couple. Many early cruising catamarans suffered from the problem of leaving the helmsman up on the bridge in splendid isolation, but since then efforts have been made to remedy this and the Bali features a very comfortable lounging area adjacent to the helming station, while the offset helm means that there is much closer contact with the main seating area below.

The side decks are wide and the handrail moulded into the cabin top

ABOVE

A stern view which shows the 'garage door' arrangement to good advantage

BELOW

The bridge deck area is a very sociable spot with acres of lounging space

is a nice touch. Ahead of this is the foredeck which on most multihulls is dominated by the trampoline and is essentially dead space. Not so on the Bali, where the solid foredeck provides space for a simply huge second dining area. You might think this would be impractical due to access issues but a clever drop down front window means the chef can pass food out with ease.

Down below

It's rather a nonsense to use the term 'down below' on modern catamarans - particularly this one - as the outdoor space blends seamlessly with the interior. that said, with the 'garage door' lowered, you feel secure and totally enclosed while also benefiting from an incredible near panoramic view thanks to the acres of windows. The interior itself is uncomplicated, with a large dining table and bench seats in the indoor/ outdoor section of the yacht. Head forward and you have the galley area →

On deck

Step aboard and Initially you think the cockpit is broad but rather narrow, but then, of course, you discover that the entire aft bulkhead





with steps down on each side which lead to the berths. There is a small nav area just to port of the galley and this affords an excellent 360 degree view if you were planning on navigating from the comfort of the interior using the autopilot.

The yacht I tested featured an owners cabin with en suite that took up the entirety of the starboard hull. the port hull was split into two separate berths both with ensuite heads compartments. The forward berth differs from the old Bali 4.0 and 4.1 models

as it runs longitudinally which has freed up more space for separate ensembles but might be interesting in a seaway. Inevitably, there is an option for an extra cabin if you opt to do away with the owner's suite. This arrangement will doubtless be favoured by yachts on the charter market. On the flip side, you can opt for a version with just two double cabins both with ensembles. Overall, the quality of the finish was very good and the feeling of light and space even in the sleeping areas was really impressive.

SAM'S VERDICT

Bali knows what it is about and this does everything it is meant to with a certain ruthless efficiency. Volume is impressive and the 'garage door' concept remains superlative. If I had a criticism it would be that somehow the interior lacked a bit of soul. The looks are never

going to be to my taste but, ultimately, this is a boat that does everything it is meant to do exceptionally well.

- PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
- BLUE WATER ABILITY: ★★★★★
- COMFORT: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

- Length: 12.33m (40'4")
- Beam: 6.59m (21'6")
- Draft: 1.10m (3'6")
- Cabins: 4
- Berths: 8
- Displacement: 9200 kg

Engine: 2x20hp (2x30hp optional)

Price: €304,000

Contact: inspirationmarine.co.uk



ABOVE LEFT
Stunning all round views in the main saloon

ABOVE RIGHT
The forward berth is set longitudinally and features its own ensuite

BELOW
A well proportioned rig and moderate displacement made for lively performance

Under sail

So far, so good, but now came the real test as we headed out into the Mediterranean in a modest breeze of around 12kn. There is one electric winch for getting the mainsail up, which is always a blessing and from then on, sail handling was a doddle. Sails up and it was time to see what the Bali was made of. The Bali sets 100 sq/m of sail and her displacement is a relatively modest 9,200kg which means that performance was bound to be sprightly and I was not disappointed. We were soon reaching along at 8kn plus which was not half bad in the moderate conditions and made me wonder how she would go in a good stiff breeze. On the wind, she was still able to maintain 6kn and tacked through 80 degrees which is not bad. The steering was light but responsive and the boat was lively and well balanced with the decent sized headsail. ✦

