

Mahé 36: A Sleeper of a Speedster

On a midwinter trip to Miami, an enjoyable sail on a comfy cat surprises a jaded editor

"GO TO MIAMI AND SAIL THIS 36-foot cat," the boss said, pointing to a brochure. I liked the Miami part, but too many cruising cats only live up to the catamaran's promise of comfort and speed to make me enthusiastic about the sailing. By the time I was done with Fountaine Pajot's Mahé 36, I liked the cat part of the assignment, too.

The famous raceboat-design team of Joubert/Nivelt designed the part of the Mahé 36 that goes through the water while O. Flahault Design was responsible for the "look" and interior. This combination has led to a slick little cruiser. Each hull's waterline beam is narrow—a key speed factor—

but above the water, the hulls flare out for increased living space and buoyancy.

Each hull is equipped with watertight bulkheads fore and aft, and construction is resin-infused fiberglass over a foam core, which makes for a strong, unsinkable structure. The 20-horsepower Volvo diesels with saildrives are located aft of the keels and rudders in their own compartments—keeping noise and fumes out of the living area. They drive the boat along at an easy 6 knots without having to goose the throttle.

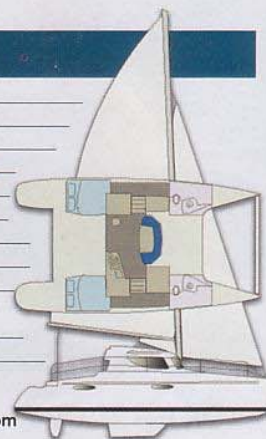
There are steps in the back of each hull, plus one swim ladder. The cockpit is large, with a table and L-shaped seats for four to port and a step up to a two-person helm seat to starboard. Directly in front of the helmsman is a pair of sheet winches.

The house is fairly high to give headroom within, and there are no attempts to streamline it; the forward windows are almost vertical for interior space and to minimize

MAHÉ 36

LOA	36' 2" (11.02 m.)
LWL	36' 0" (11.0 m.)
Beam	19' 5" (5.92 m.)
Draft	3' 7" (1.09 m.)
Sail Area	631 sq. ft. (58.6 sq. m.)
Displacement	11,023 lb. (5,000 kg.)
Water	71 gal. (269 l.)
Fuel	53 gal. (201 l.)
Engine	20-hp. Volvo
Designers	Joubert/Nivelt and O. Flahault Design
Price	\$230,000

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solar overheating. On deck by the mast, lockers house the anchor windlass and halyard tails. A big, comfortable trampoline covers the area between the hulls up forward.

A pair of large sliding doors opens the saloon and galley to the cockpit. Inside, surrounded by light-colored, satin-finished wood, a table for six has a great all-around view and converts to a double for extra guests. Aft to port is a (fiddleless) nav table. When I unscrewed the electric panel there, I found the wiring behind to be messy, but I assume

Thanks to a large sail plan and narrow waterline beams, the Mahé 36 really scoots.

that was because the boat was somewhat rushed to make the show on time. In each hull, there's a cabin with a queen-sized berth aft and a head and shower with modern design elements (e.g., the sink is shaped like a bowl and sits atop the counter) forward. The alternative layout has three cabins, with an extra berth in place of the head in the port hull.

Off Key Biscayne, with 12 to 15 knots of wind, I got sold on this boat. Once the roachy main was hoisted on the 55-foot aluminum mast and the fractional overlapping jib was unfurled, the boat took off. I'd expected unexceptional performance, but the Mahé went to weather well and topped 9 knots on a close reach—this on a 36-footer, remember. It handled the chop in the Gulf Stream like a much bigger boat, too. I found myself enjoying the sail in spite of my prejudices, and I was reluctant to head in at the end of the day.

With the Mahé 36, Fountaine Pajot and its designers have created a fun, comfortable, entry-level cruising cat that's certain to lure more than a few monohull sailors into the grasp of its claws.

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