

The Leopard 48 features an extremely sporty space-age profile that incorporates several interesting design concepts, including a forward cockpit with an overhead hatch and a raised helm station with a solid hardtop dodger for sun protection. A four-cabin charter version is available as the Moorings 4800.



Earning the Spots

With straightforward systems and fine execution, the Leopard 48 has the pedigree to join a distinguished family.

SOLID. WHEN IT COMES TO Leopard cats, that's the collective judgment of our Boat of the Year panel. Two years ago, they named the Leopard 44 the Import Boat of the Year. And for 2013, they awarded the prize as the year's Best Full-Size Multihull to South African builder Robertson and Caine's follow-up effort, the Leopard 48. After my own inspection, I had to agree: In

form and function, the 48 is a robust cruiser.

Let's begin right in the middle of the action. Ascending four steps to starboard, the raised steering station, with its clever hardtop dodger (adorned with a series of four solar panels), comfortable chair, and ample handholds, is terrific. There's more than enough room for a seated couple to man the station. The single-spreader Sparcraft fractional rig is simple and effective.

The boat is extremely well laid out for solo operation. All of the twin Yanmar engine controls, Raymarine instruments, and sailhandling hardware are close at hand, and the sheets, halyards, and reefing lines are intelligently organized thanks to two banks of Spinlock clutches and a pair of Lewmar self-tailing winches. There's no traveler, but boom control is facilitated by the double-ended mainsheet that's also ingeniously led to the helm. In 8 to 12 knots of Chesapeake Bay wind, the 48 topped off at well over 7 knots upwind. Nice.

The forward cockpit/lounge has become a

distinguishing characteristic on the Leopards, and the one on the 48 has been exquisitely rendered. On this newest Leopard, the forward cockpit table has been halved, and a clever overhead hatch opening allows unimpeded egress to the foredeck and trampoline. The second, aft cockpit has a large dining table with a wraparound, U-shaped settee to port. A smart touch is the roomy seat locker beneath the aft portion of the settee for storing life rafts and power cords. Creating lavish spaces for kicking back and relaxing was clearly a major priority, and one that's been fully addressed.

A substantial sliding door is the entryway from the rear cockpit to the large main saloon; it's directly adjacent to an aft-facing, L-shaped galley to port. Cooks will enjoy the Force 10 three-burner stove and oven, the double stainless-

steel sinks, and the vast freezer. To starboard is a resounding U-shaped settee and dining table. Large windows allow plenty of natural light, especially the forward "picture window" near the door to the forward cockpit, next to which is the nav station/office space. An airy atmosphere permeates the floor plan; nothing feels cramped or close.

To starboard, down four steps, is the large owners suite that runs the length of the hull, with an ample double bed aft, a large central couch, a desk, plenty of lockers, and a massive head with big shower stall forward. On the port side on our test boat was a pair of double staterooms with their own en suite heads.

It's impossible to think of anything that Leopard forgot; as with the other cats in the growing Leopard line, this one has earned its spots.

H.M.

Coming Attractions!

Check out the August issue of Cruising World for in-depth reports and pictures of two of the grandest cats ever created for long-range adventures and perfect charter getaways: the Moorings 5800 from Robertson and Caine and the Sanya 57 from Fountaine Pajot.

M.P.