

BOAT TEST

PUTTING HER THROUGH HER PACES

EXCESS 15

A SERIOUS CRUISING GT

To hell with it, then. Let's consume this XCS 15 without moderation. The helm of this big boat, 120m² (1,300 sq ft) on deck, is a touch heavy and it takes a bit of conviction to get her up to 85° off an apparent wind of 20-22 knots under full main and code 0. This gives us nearly 220 m² (2,370 sq ft) of beautiful canvas, cut by Incidence Sails. Which propels our 19 tonnes at a steady 12 knots in the heavy chop of a rather rippled Mediterranean, to the south-west of Majorca. There's no doubt about the helm - the helms, I should say, as this Excess 15 has two steering positions, located where real sailing enthusiasts prefer: at the after end of the hulls - so helming the 15 is pretty physical on this point of sail.

It must be said that the 110 m² (1,185 sq ft) square-topped mainsail, in this Pulse Line version, hoisted on a mast almost 30 meters (100') high, this mainsail "speaks". Very slender, very narrow, very aft-set, this superb flexible wing is also very efficient, at the risk of acting like a rudder in the air. Fortunately, taming its power with the electric winch on the mainsheet traveler is child's play.

Upwind, in these conditions - the bottom end of a force 5 - wisdom dictates we put in a reef, a formality with the double electric winches to starboard to which the halyard, sheet and automatic reefing line return. With the code 0 furled up, the self-tacking, single-sheet solent was unfurled and trimmed using the same winch. The 15 then swallowed up the miles with long strides into chop kicked up by the counter-current wind: 8 knots at 50 degrees to the true wind. Now we're sailing, really sailing. Not one of those sad battles lost when you have to motor your way upwind, which would be typical of most heavy cruising twin-hulled boats.

STEPPING UP A GEAR

The voluminous bows sometimes punch, but progress is powerful, without the horrible waddle so common in this category. This is the advantage of the compact nacelle and having the rig stepped at the center of gravity. The Excess intends to appeal to three new types of clientele: young adults looking for sunny spots for every kind of watersport; regulars of cruising catamarans or maybe retirees, eager to put a little more salt in their sailing; and recent converts coming from the world of monohulls. To these three tribes, the Bénéteau Group wanted to offer more sensations, more performance and more simplicity. So here, there are no heavy flybridges to isolate the helmsman, and somewhat less-sophisticated fittings. Well ... just a little less.

To tell the truth, we're a bit surprised to learn that the 15 shares its entire lower section with the Lagoons. Only the topsides, deck and nacelle are different. As a result, this 15 is certainly lighter by almost a thousand kilos (2,200 pounds) than the Lagoon 50 ... but one could expect better, for a vessel getting close to twenty tons in long cruising configuration.

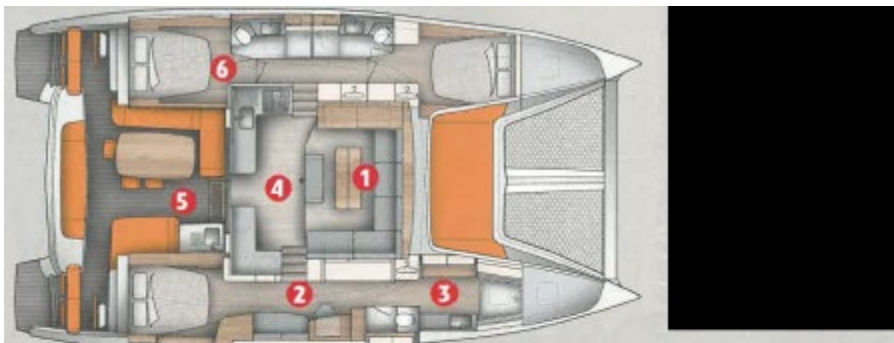
As a result, we are far from a true performance multihull. Here, we're looking for something else. As you helm, close to the water, with the whole boat in front of you, you have the pleasure of feeling the sea speeding along the topsides and the beast reacting at the helm. But let's be clear, the 15 is in no way a sports catamaran.

She is still a blue water cruising boat capable of accommodating up to six cabins - the idea being that today's forty-somethings aren't reluctant, on the contrary, to put their boat in management with a

charter company. With a vast cockpit equipped with a soft, opening roof - giving an unobstructed view of the mainsail - and the inevitable (optional) refrigerator, a huge saloon/dining area with a 360° view of the sea through non-smoked bay windows. Hedonists will furnish this saloon with a wine cellar, a microwave, a large screen TV, and so on. They will enjoy well thought-out cabins with large bathrooms and ample stowage space, all in a remarkably uncluttered, Japanese-inspired atmosphere.

The idea makes sense: it's a question of escaping the uniformity of charter-configured units. At night, every cat is gray. By day, they are certainly all white. The Excess breaks away from this. Their exterior design by Patrick Le Quément is angular: hulls with an inverted sheer in a light slate color, with a not-quite-aggressive feel, a short, "floating" superstructure, slender rig and clear decks, a dynamic design that will flatter future owners... The Nauta-branded interior plays on serenity, and we can see that, contrary to what the name indicates, the Excess is by no means an invitation to go too far. Just a bet on emotion.

Texte : Olivier Péretié.



The Excess 15 in 6 points

1. In the saloon, the bench seat measures 2.30 x 2.95 m (7'6" x 9'8"). The table is 1.40 x 1.20 m (4'7" x 3'11") when unfolded.
2. The owner's suite has headroom of 1.98 m (6'6"). The desk measures 1 x 0.60 m (39 x 24"), and the bed measures 2 x 1.60 m (6'7" x 5'3")
3. Bathroom headroom: 1.95 m (6'5"). Shower: 1.06 x 1.18 m (42 x 47").
4. Headroom in the nacelle: 2.08 m (6'10"). And in the raised part of the saloon 1.95 m (6'5").
5. In the cockpit, the heights under bimini are 2.18 m / 7'2" (rigid part) and 2.34 m / 7'8" (flexible part).
6. In the aft cabins, the headroom is 1.98 m (6'6"), the double bunk measures 2 x 1.60 m (6'7" x 5'3").



In figures

LENGTH OVERALL 14.76 m / 48'5"

BEAM 8.03 m / 26'4"

DRAFT 1.40 m / 4'7"

AIR DRAFT 27.90 m / 91'7"

DISPLACEMENT 18,400 kg / 40,600 lbs

UPWIND SAIL AREA 159.50 m² / 1,615 sq ft

SELF-TACKING JIB 55 m² / 590 sq ft

MAINSAIL 104.50 m² / 1,125 sq ft

CODE 0 117 m² / 1,260 sq ft

CONSTRUCTION glass/balsa sandwich

MOTORS 2 x 57 hp Yanmar (80 hp option)

FUEL 2 x 250 l / 2 x 66 US gal

BLACK/GREY WATER 2 x 120 l / 2 x 32 US gal

WATER TANKS 2 X 240 l / 2 x 63 US gal

ARCHITECT VPLP

BUILDER Excess Catamarans

CE CATEGORY A/12 persons

BASIC PRICE € 750,000

PRICE OF THE BOAT WE TESTED € 1,100,876

Main options: 80 hp engine, fresh water tanks (2 x 175 l / 2 x 46 US gal), Pulse Line rig (171.6m² / 1,847 sq ft upwind sail area), additional holding tanks, electric winches ...



Practical: At the port helm station, a halyard bag holds the long code 0 and spinnaker halyards.



Practical: The very long portlights are both aesthetic and sufficient to provide light and a view of the sea.



Practical: In the galley, to port, there is a second fridge-freezer (optional) and even a wine cellar.



Not practical: The fixed ladder for accessing the coachroof leads to a large curved space with no handrails



Practical: All double bunks are 2 x 1.60m (6'7" x 5'3"), with side access. Great comfort!



Practical: The compartments beneath cockpit sole, aft, house the engines, batteries and autopilot ram.