

FORWARD  
LOUNGE AREA

RESIN-INFUSED DECK

REVERSE SHEER

BY ZUZANA PROCHAZKA

# FOUNTAINÉ PAJOT ASTREA 42

Forty-two feet never felt so good

When I asked Fountaine Pajot's Laurent Fabre if the new Astrea 42 was replacing Fountaine Pajot's earlier Helia 44, his response was a firm "Non!" The reason, he said, is the Astrea isn't just a shortened or tweaked design, but rather a new concept that borrows a number of features from the French builder's award-winning Saona 47.

## DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Although only working with a foot and a half more than her little sister, the Lucia 40, the Astrea's design team at Berret-Racoupeau made a point of including more usable seating options, a voluminous interior with multiple head configurations and larger windows all around to make the boat brighter and more inviting. They even added slightly inverted hulls like you see on serious racing machines, which if nothing else certainly makes the boat look speedier.

Construction includes a PVC foam core sandwich with vacuum-laminated outer skins. The deck and cabinhouse are made using the company's proprietary Resin Transfer Molding (RTM) technique, and both sides are sprayed with gelcoat for a finished look from every angle. Spars are aluminum, supported by stainless wire shrouds and stays.

## ON DECK

The deck layout has been optimized for maximum functionality and comfort. The hydraulic swim platform alone is worth the price of admission. It's optional, so you

can go with traditional dinghy davits, but why would you? Not only does the platform carry the tender, it also allows you to cross from one transom to the other without setting foot in the cockpit. Best of all, it's a great teak "beach" that the whole family will love.

Two steps up is a cockpit that has been configured with a lovely transom, which terminates on the starboard side in an optional plancha grill. To port is a dinette that will seat six comfortably or eight in a pinch. A Vitrifrigo fridge and lounge for two complete this very comfortable layout.

Moving forward, I noticed a lack of handholds on the cabintop, but liked the nice beefy cleats. The foredeck does double duty, with both a U-shaped lounge that includes a footwell and room for four, and also a section of trampoline for those purists who like to lie there, watching the hulls part the water below. You can access the lockers beneath the seats without having to remove the cushions, a feature that will be very handy underway when things tend to go flying.

The helm pod to starboard is elevated and molded into the bimini with access from the deck as well as via a set of steps from the cockpit. The wheel sits aft, mounted on a console that is angled so that the driver can more easily see the Garmin multifunction display and instruments even when standing. Three Lewmar winches and two arrays of sheet stoppers are on the cabintop forward in a separate workspace. This allows the driver to focus on the wheel while the crew manages the sails without crowding one another. In case of singlehanded, it's easy to turn on the autopilot while managing the lines, as both are well within reach from this forward position.

Steps lead up from helm to the coachroof, where there is a double sun pad on centerline and space for solar panels behind the long traveler. The boom is low, so it's easy to reach over and tuck in the main. Fountaine Pajot has developed a unique hook system for the mainsail halyard. It automati-

**LOA** 41ft 4in **BEAM** 23ft 8in **AIR DRAFT** 67ft 8in **DRAFT** 4ft 2in **DISPLACEMENT** 23,000lb (lightship) **SAIL AREA** 1,141ft<sup>2</sup> **FUEL/WATER (GAL)** 124/184 **ENGINE** 2 x 30hp Volvo w/saildrive **DESIGNER** Berret-Racoupeau Yacht Design **BUILDER** Fountaine Pajot, Aigrefeuille, France, fountaine-pajot.com **PRICE** \$429,000 (Base)

cally clips into the head of the sail as it's raised and disconnects when the sail drops in the bag.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

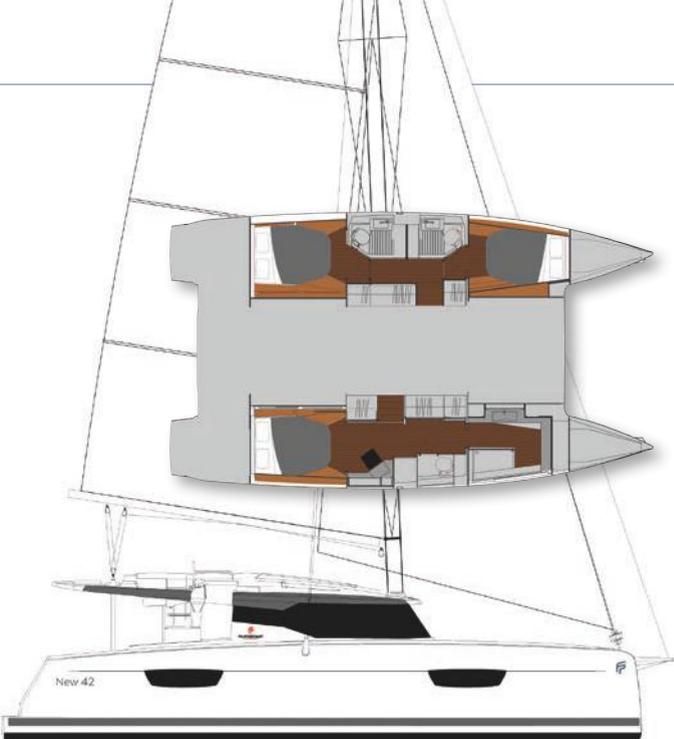
The Astrea 42 is available in two versions: Maestro (owner's three-cabin) and Quatuor (four cabin). Our test boat came equipped with the owner's version, with the entire starboard hull dedicated to a posh master suite. The walk-around island bed is low and easy to get into, and windows aft and outboard augment the overhead hatch so there's no feeling of being buried in the hull. Amidships is an angled desk to keep personal business off the nav desk above. The forward head has an enormous vanity and sink, plenty of stowage options and a nice walk-in shower that needs no door or curtain. The toilet is in a separate compartment.

Our test boat was hull #4 and included two cabins and two heads in the port hull. Fountaine Pajot offers a few options here. Specifically, you can have two separate wet heads, two heads with a shared shower compartment or the aft head can have its own full shower stall while the forward bath remains a wet head. For charter, four cabins with four heads and two shower stalls would make the most sense.

The saloon above is beautifully laid out, and the glass doors connect to the cockpit on the same level. Because the dinette is outside, the interior seating is designed more as a lounge with a low coffee table and an angled nav desk that shares the L-shaped seat.

Vitrifrigo fridge drawers are next to the door to starboard with the L-shaped galley to port. The sink is by the window and embedded into a solid-surface counter with drain grooves cut in. There's a three-burner Eno stove and an enormous Italian Airlux oven. It's nice that the oven is at counter height. However, it's by no means subtle and dominates the space.

Another consideration is interior ventilation. Fountaine Pajot added an opening hatch over the stove to vent cooking



odors. However, the skylight in the middle is non-opening, which will tend to heat up the interior. To compensate, there are two opening windows forward that are also large enough for passing drinks to the forward lounge.

## UNDER SAIL

Test day on the Chesapeake was an unfortunate, windless outing, but we did catch a small break at midday with a hint of breeze. With just over 1,100ft<sup>2</sup> of sail area between the genoa and the mainsail, I expect this model to reel off the miles in good tradewinds. In light air, our Incidence sails delivered 3.6 knots of boatspeed in 7.1 knots of apparent wind at a 60 degree apparent wind angle. As we hardened up to 45 degrees off the wind, we still kept up 2.8 knots in 6.3 knots of breeze—not bad for a cruising boat in these kinds of conditions. The jib tracks are on the cabintop and, like on many catamarans, they're placed too far inboard which makes the sail hook inward and act as a brake. I usually rig a cheater line to pull the clew out and open the slot.

## UNDER POWER

Twin 30hp Volvo Penta diesels are standard and access to the machinery is decent. A Cummins 7.5 kW genset is available as is a watermaker in the forward port hull. Our test run under power maxed out at just under 2,900 rpm and 7.5 knots. A more economical speed would be at 2,400 rpm and 6.5 knots. The non-hydraulic steering provides good direct feedback, and the boat is agile with small fixed keels and a pair of rudders drawing just over 4ft.

## CONCLUSION

Although the breeze on test day didn't exactly make our hair fly back, it was good to see a production cat that can point high and move in just a puff. It took no time to get used to the boat, making me wish for an extended test somewhere exotic to give the boat a chance to really stretch its legs. \*

