



# FOUNTAIN PAJOT SAONA 47

A French-built waterborne “space machine” By Tom Dove

**H**ere’s a riddle: What is less than 50ft long, has two big hulls, three big cabins and four decks? Answer: The Fountaine Pajot Saona 47. Well, perhaps it’s even five levels if you count the large engine rooms. This boat is a space machine in every sense of the word.

## DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

The Fountaine Pajot Saona 47 maximizes living and entertaining space while retaining good speed by combining multi-decking, a minimum wetted surface and lots of flare at the chines. It’s tricky to put all that together, but the design staff at Berret Racoupeau have succeeded here, partly by extending the waterline to include integral stern platforms. The limitation will probably be loading—if the boat is carrying a lot of weight, the broader portions of the hulls will be submerged and performance is likely to suffer.

Construction is typical of this builder, with a vinylester resin-infused, balsa-cored hull and deck. The interior is not fancy, but it’s functional, urban contemporary in design and quite attractive. The systems are neatly installed, and

there’s good access to the bilges.

The engine compartments in the stern of either hull are large enough to keep any diesel mechanic happy. A bit of sound insulation here and a few other places in the hulls would improve the ride comfort, since the interior is primarily hard, sound-reflective surfaces.

## ON DECK

The rig is typical of Fountaine Pajot, with a huge square-topped mainsail and an overlapping jib. This is efficient and simple, and the boom is reachable by an average size person, although the mast steps are essential for attaching the main halyard.

The jib is easy to manage, but the mainsail is a beast to raise, as the long battens in the top and extreme roach on the leech all add weight. Even with a 2:1 purchase on the halyard, the electric winch worked hard to raise the sail to the peak. Under way, the forces on this huge sail are formidable. However, the

winches are sized to handle them.

The deck is easy to negotiate, although better grab points forward would be welcome. There are sunbathing lounges abound all over the main and upper decks, while the traffic patterns in and out of the aft deck are excellent.

The big aft area is far too large to call a cockpit. In fact, this will be the social center of the boat, with seating, standing and reclining space for a multitude. A wide sliding door connects it to the saloon to produce an open, urban apartment-like space.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

The standout interior feature of the Saona 47 is a master suite bigger than I’ve seen on any other cat under 55ft. This “owner’s version” dedicates the entire port hull to a big double bed aft, a vanity, extensive stowage space amidships and a forward compartment with a surprisingly long shower, big sink and an enclosed toilet. The starboard hull houses two nice-sized

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For video of the Fountaine Pajot Saona 47, visit [sailmagazine.com/videos](http://sailmagazine.com/videos)

sleeping cabins, each with large double berths and en suite head.

There is also a charter version with crew's quarters and en suite accommodations for three couples.

The saloon is expansive, modern and bright, with large windows that provide good visibility if you are fairly tall and standing, but not if you are short or seated. The overhead clearance will delight sailors over 6ft, but piloting from the inside nav station is inhibited by lack of visibility when the sails are up.

This big space could also use some better grab points. While it's true that cats do not heel, they do have a quick motion underway, and you can feel awfully exposed in a bouncing living room with modern furniture all around. Simply rounding the countertop edges downward into a large lip underneath to make a handhold would go a long way toward safety. The overhead is too high to mount grabrails there.

## UNDER SAIL

I sailed the Saona 47 in a shifty 6- to 10-knot breeze at Annapolis. The test boat had not been fully debugged and presented some rigging issues that made it difficult to set proper tensions on the mainsail. Even so, it tacked, reached and ran easily while delivering speeds in the 5- to 6-knot range.

The elevated helm station is spacious

**The Details:** Space, space, and more space: the saloon offers room for all...

and comfortable, but I was surprised to discover large blind spots. The port stern, for example, is blocked by the upper deck even under power, and the entire port hull and the masthead wind vane are invisible under sail.

There was a fair amount of wave noise inside while underway, and the motion was more active than I expected. This may settle down after some weight comes aboard from the usual cruising gear and supplies.

## UNDER POWER

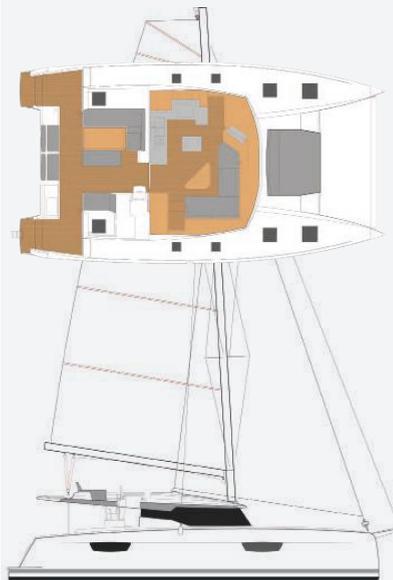
The Saona 47 handles well under power, with the usual catamaran agility in close spaces and good speed in open water. At a comfortable cruise setting of 2,400 rpm in calm water, the boat produced 8.5 knots, while wide open throttle at 2,800 rpm yielded 9.2 knots.

The turning circle was about two boatlengths at idle speed, but the boat executed a pirouette maneuver neatly, twisting in its own length with props turning in opposite directions. Getting in and out of a very tight slip space was quite manageable with only three of us aboard.

## CONCLUSION

Fountaine Pajot boats never make radical jumps rather, they evolve from one design to the next. While not what I'd consider a "Mom and Pop" boat for an older couple, the Saona 47 is a spacious, fast cat that should be perfect for an active cruising family with teenagers or charter groups who wish to entertain in style. ♦

## Specifications



<b>LOA</b>	45ft 8in
<b>LWL</b>	45ft
<b>BEAM</b>	25ft 3in
<b>DRAFT</b>	4ft 4in
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b>	30,424lb
<b>SAIL AREA</b>	1,367ft <sup>2</sup> (main and jib)
<b>FUEL/WATER (GAL)</b>	248/148
<b>ENGINE</b>	2x 55hp Yanmar
<b>SA/D RATIO</b>	22
<b>D/L RATIO</b>	173
<b>DESIGNER</b>	Berret Racoupeau
<b>BUILDER</b>	Fountaine Pajot, Aigrefeuille, France, <a href="http://fountaine-pajot.com">fountaine-pajot.com</a>
<b>PRICE</b>	\$680,000 (sailaway)

