



Fountaine Pajot 45

An all-new multihull design that occupies a real sweet spot in terms of different sailing styles

By Sam Fortescue

With new catamaran brands springing up like mushrooms, France's Fountaine-Pajot is something of an oak tree in the market, with a story that goes back to its founding in 1976. It is also one of the largest cat builders out there, sending some 600 boats down the ways in 2018. The new 45, yet to be named at press time, replaces the 7-year-old Helia 44 and is intended to be the yard's new bestseller. For that reason, it is no mold-breaking tearaway, but rather a safe, dependable, well-thought-out mainstay model. Not for nothing have more than 100 of the boats been sold before the first hull even hit the water.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Although it replaces the old Helia 44, the Fountaine-Pajot 45 has been designed by Olivier Racoupeau from scratch, following over 150 meetings and thousands of hours of work. The brand-new hull offers 10 percent less drag than the Helia, thanks to a small chine in the aft section and a remodeled transom. "It may not sound like much, but for us, that's a big deal," Racoupeau told me. The result is better performance at medium to high speeds and more efficient motoring: all that in a hull that is just 6in longer than its predecessor and 6in beamier.

Beyond that, Fountaine-Pajot has stuck with its successful formula of slightly aft-raked bows and fixed stub keels below the waterline for better windward performance. Company "flagship director" Yves de Kerangat

adds that the keels are simply glued into a specially designed recess in the hulls, with no keel bolts that could rip out and compromise the boat in the event of a collision or a grounding. Layup is done via vacuum infusion and employs a mixture of polyester and vinylester over glass, with a final coat of epoxy primer for blister resistance.

ON DECK

Fountaine-Pajot has resisted the urge to offer this boat with a true flybridge, instead providing a bulkhead helm position with some low-profile lounging space on the coach roof. Why "resisted?" Well, although the extra space and cachet of a flybridge would appeal to some, it puts a lot of weight high up and forces the designer to raise the height of the boom. This in turn places the center of effort higher up, increasing heeling moment and requiring a taller mast.

As it is, the 45's helm offers a kind of halfway house in which the person at the wheel can stay involved in life on the aft deck below, via sightlines through the ladder up to the coach roof. There is also a good 109ft² of cushion space up top, where crew can either keep the helmsperson company or just admire a sunset.

In terms of aesthetics, this is a modern-looking cruising catamaran with high topsides and bows, although a pronounced reverse sheer serves to minimize the bulk of the saloon windows at the same time it creates additional useful volume below. Aft, there's a thoughtful skirt to the transoms to make it easier to climb aboard from the tender or when

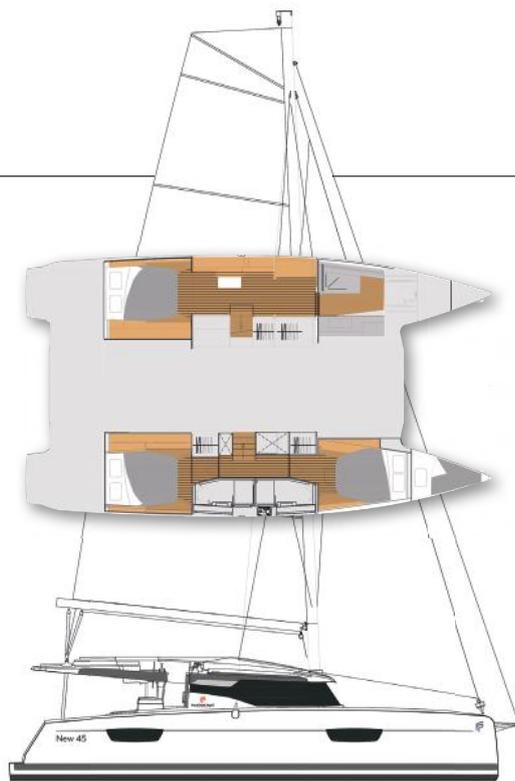
alongside. Another nice touch is an optional electrically operated bathing platform, which spans the entire width between the hulls and offers a handy way to launch and retrieve a 10ft 10in tender, thereby doing away with the need for unsightly davits.

The rig is ICW friendly and represents a pretty standard catamaran setup, with the 59ft 5in mast stepped on the leading end of the coach roof. The mainsheet runs to a traveler mounted aft of the helm and lounging area, and the genoa sheets to a pair of tracks located close to the centerline and within reach of the cockpit for easy control and tight trim angles. All lines are led back to a rope-handling pit just ahead of the wheel, where three Lewmar 50 winches allow you to handle sheets, halyards and reefing lines at the same time.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Compared to the first-generation Helia 44, the team at Racoupeau and Fountaine Pajot have made some significant changes inside, particularly with respect to the large 180ft² saloon. For example, where the Helia had a horseshoe-shaped galley aft and a deep, dedicated chart table forward to port, the new boat leaves this space largely uncluttered, with the galley now running along the port side of the saloon, where it is punctuated by the stairs leading down into the cabins in the hull. The chart table has also been done away with, and the navigation instruments shifted to a cabinet by the sliding door leading to the cockpit. In explaining the decision, Racoupeau says, "From our personal experience, we saw that we use the chart table less and less. We go there for information, but not to sit down and work like we did in the past."

Two interior configurations are on offer: a "maestro," or owner's, version that dedicates the entire port hull to a double cabin with fold-out TV, dressing table, copious clothes storage and a large shower room and heads; and a charter-friendly four-cabin, four heads "Quatuor" setup. Both include a crew berth in the starboard bow and crew head to port. The three-cabin layout includes room for a sail locker as well. The stan-



Fountaine Pajot 45

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 44ft 1in
LWL 44ft
BEAM 24ft 9in
DRAFT 3ft 11in
DISPLACEMENT 31,360lb
SAIL AREA 807ft²
FUEL/WATER (GAL) 125/185
ENGINE 40hp Volvo diesel x 2
SA/D RATIO 13
D/L RATIO 164

What do these ratios mean? Visit sailmagazine.com/ratios

DESIGNER Berret-Racoupeau Yacht Design
BUILDER Fountaine Pajot, Aigrefeuille, France,
fountaine-pajot.com
PRICE \$782,000 (sailaway)

ard finish is in a light grey oak for the furniture, dark oak flooring and a choice of neutral upholstery.

UNDER SAIL

You don't waste any time getting the sails up in this boat, with the task of raising the main eased by an ingenious hook mounted on the head car that provides a 2:1 purchase as it pulls the sail up the mast track. With the fully battened main and the standard 120 percent genoa, we found the FP 45 managed an easy 7 to 8 knots beating into around 12 knots of true wind at an apparent wind angle of 45 degrees.

Off the wind she rolled along nicely. Unfortunately, we weren't able to test a reaching or a running sail, which would have really lit things up. Fountaine-Pajot maintains that the larger genoa means there is less need for, say, a dedicated Code 0. However, a central longeron also protrudes beyond the bow providing a tack point for such sails.

UNDER POWER

With a pair of 40hp Volvo D2 saildrives tucked into its two transom compartments, the Fountaine Pajot 45 is both quiet and efficient under power. You can also upgrade to a pair 60hp units, which would make a worthwhile option if you're expecting to spend a lot of time motoring. The standard prop is a 17in three-blade fixed unit. However, you can also upgrade to an 18in Volvo folding prop.

Control is via a standard Volvo twin throttle, making it easy to maneuver at low speeds close to the dock. We managed an easy 7-plus knots at 2,000 rpm and better than 9 knots at 3,000 rpm.

CONCLUSION

Again, Fountaine-Pajot's newest design replaces its popular Helia 44, thereby occupying a true sweet spot in terms of a size that caters not only to families that like pottering around the bay, but those with ambitious cruising plans. The changes compared to the Helia are well-thought-out and make her a more efficient boat that performs better all around. If you are looking for a fun, safe cruising boat that will take care of your family in comfort, this may very well be it—complete with Fountaine Pajot's renowned build quality. **S**

