



Boat Test

By ROBERT LAWRENCE

Pacific Cruiser 44

The PC44 shows off its lines for the camera. Note the smallish gap between the two forestays.

The very nice thing about writing for a boating magazine is being able to live out your fantasies with each boat that you test. This time I am in the cruising mode, and doing a one day cruise into paradise on the Pacific Cruiser 44. The PC44 is the largest model in Beach Marine's never ending range of catamarans and is aimed specifically at the cruising end of the market.

A large boat by anyone's standards, the PC44 has been designed specifically for long distance, short handed cruising. All aspects of the rig and deck layout reflect the cruising mode, with most controls leading back to the helming station. This large elevated platform has a very comfortable pedestal chair for the skipper and all major motor and sail controls are located within arms reach. I imagine that this is akin to the bridge of the Manly Ferry, with a nice comfortable Captain's chair, plenty of dials and levers to entertain you, looking out over a vast expanse of deck and cockpit area from a considerable height ... all the time knowing that you have a vessel of

appreciable bulk and velocity to deter some of the kamikazi sailors who inhabit the port of Sydney.

A quick guided tour by Bob Hotchkiss revealed a petrol generator under the helming pedestal and a twin battery installation beneath the forward end of both seat lockers on either side of the cockpit. The balance of the locker space is available for sheets, lines and other items. The rear deck area is quite enormous, with a very attractive laid teak deck and almost full width upholstered seat which is cantilevered out over the back of the cockpit.

The cockpit is very 'user friendly', with masses of comfortable seating and protection from the elements, due to the elevated bridgedeck and a unique targa top and windscreen, which have been fitted by the boat's owner. The only sail control which does not lead back to the helming station is the mainsheet traveller. The traveller track runs the full width of the rear of the cockpit and is controlled by a pulley system and a single speed winch mounted on the cockpit sole.

Moving forward out of the cockpit there is a vast amount of deck space, liberally coated with an excellent glue on non skid tiling. There is a substantial fabricated aluminium walkway which leads forward from the front of the bridgedeck to the forebeam. Either side of the walkway is a large trampoline area, just perfect for soaking up those ultra violet rays. The forebeam is the standard round tubular section with a reverse dolphin striker to absorb the forestay loadings.

Since the PC44 is a cutter rigged boat, the inner forestay is taken off the forebeam, while the outer forestay (for the no. 1 genoa) is mounted on a bridle attached to the tips of the bows. A heavy duty electric chain winch is mounted amidships at the front of the bridgedeck area, where it deposits the anchor chain directly into a large chain locker. Directly behind the chain locker is a spacious general purpose storage locker, ideal for housing inflatable dinghies, outboard motors, fenders, etc.

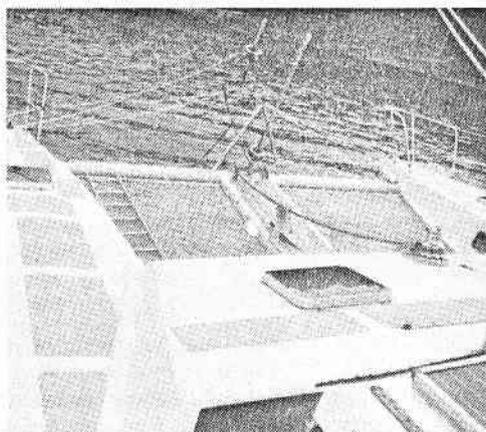
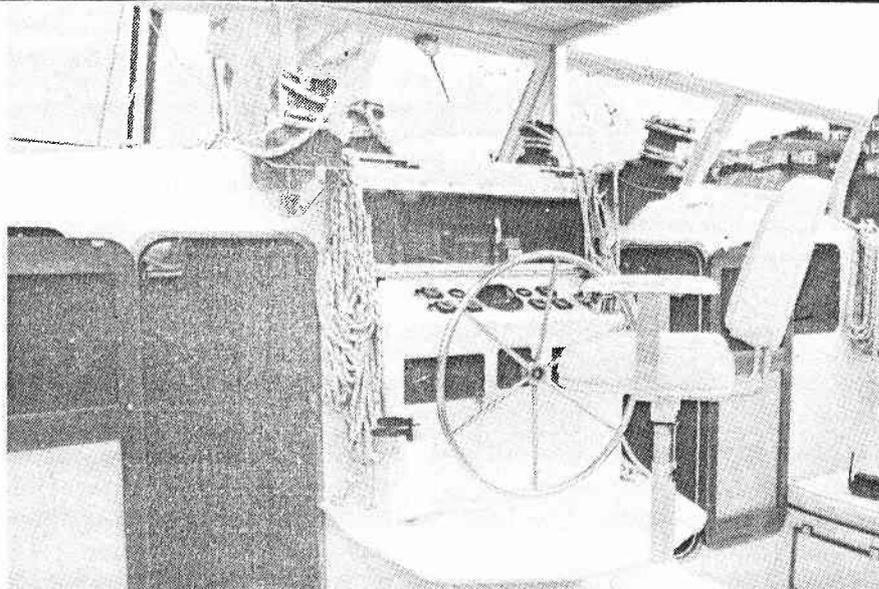
The non rotating mast is mounted

Elevated helming position is the hot seat, with all sail and motor controls at hand.

on a small pedestal on the coach house just forward of the raised bridgedeck, which in turn carries the tracks for both the no.1 and inner headsail, plus two large solar cells. At 52 feet, the mast is fairly conservative and is amply supported by a set of lower, intermediate and main shrouds, plus a set of swept back diamond stays. In true cruising tradition there is a full set of fold up steps fitted to the mast for those who like heights. All halyards, outhaul and reefing lines lead through turning blocks at the base of the mast and feed through rope jammers to the skippers station, where a multiplicity of winches take care of them, in addition to the mainsheet, jibsheets and furling lines for the two furling headsails.

As one would imagine, there is an abundance of usable space below decks. Stepping into the saloon area from either of the two doors leading from the cockpit, one is immediately aware of a large, airy and comfortable cabin tastefully finished with a large L-shaped

Rear cockpit that shows space, comfortable seating and unusual Targa top.



Foredeck area is vast!!!

settee and dinette with two drop leaves. Further space is available to starboard for a bar or bookcase. On the aft bulkhead of the saloon (amidships) is a navigation station, which uses a drop down map table and a hinged instrument panel which can be read from either the navigation station or the helming station in the cockpit. There is full standing headroom in most areas of the saloon and, with an abundance of oiled teak and carpet, it is most restful.

Entering the port hull from the saloon down the companionway stairs immediately aft of the galley is a large double berth of generous proportions. This berth is also equipped with two hanging lockers and can be closed off from the galley for privacy. There is a large opening hatch overhead and an opening port on the inside of the hull underneath the bridgedeck to provide plenty of light and ventilation. Above and behind the tubular aft beam (which is fully glassed in) is the hydraulic steering, with a port opening up onto the deck for emergency tiller steering. A large flotation tank is located beneath the berth.

Also located under the berth is one of the two 34hp. Yanmar diesel motors. The twin motors drive feathering twin bladed propellers of 19in. diameter. The propellers have



Looking forward through the spacious galley and main cabin to the head.

been tuned to the motors and will give approximately eleven knots under full power.

The galley would be a good size if it was in a home, never mind in a cruising catamaran. Measuring ten feet long and six feet six inches wide, it is fitted with a long bench down the outboard side of the hull with a double bowl sink and two burner stove. Above the bench is a long rack, while below there is an abundance of shelves, drawers and cupboards. On the inboard side there is an eleven cubic foot eutectic fridge with four inches of foam insulation all round. Above the fridge is another long cupboard with a microwave oven at the forward end. Headroom in the hulls is six feet five inches and there are large glassed areas to provide natural light.

Forward of the galley is the main double cabin, which is located virtually amidships for greatest comfort. The double berth is very big, with an abundance of space in and around the berth. Entry to the berth is simplified by steps built into the hull and a storage locker is built in next to the steps. On the

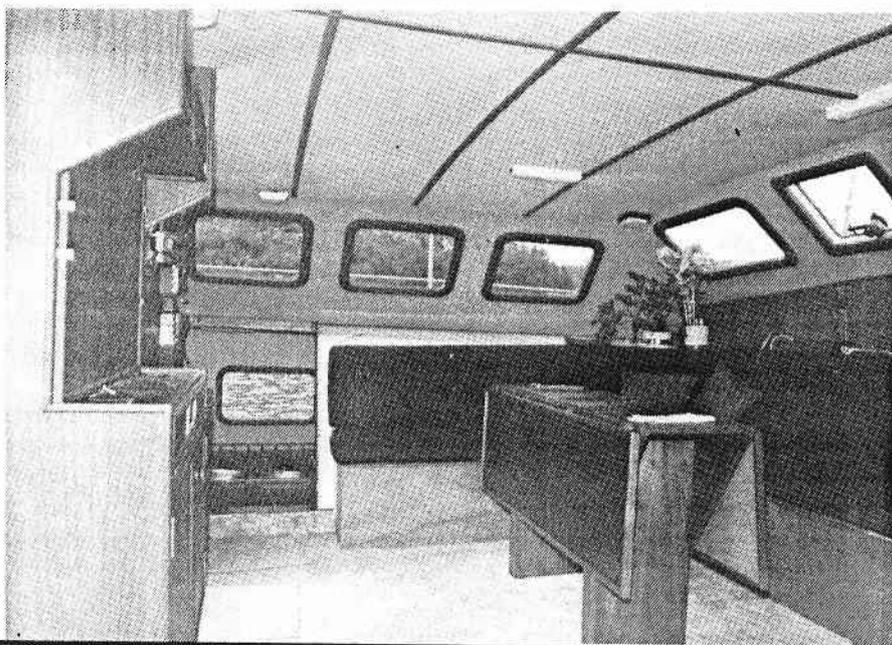
outboard side of the hull is a bench, which can be converted into another berth, although it would be more suited to a child. There is more storage beneath the bench and under the cabin sole. At the forward end of the cabin are two full length hanging lockers.

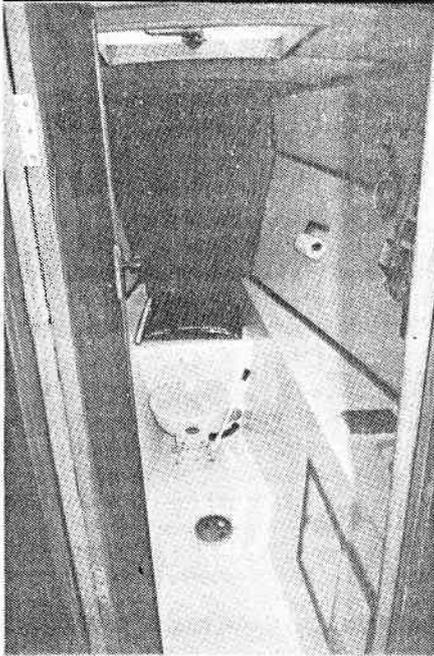
Forward of the hanging lockers is the heads area, which is approximately eight feet in length. There is a full internal liner here, which includes a shower sump,

hand basin, lockers, a separate locker which houses the sea cocks and a toilet pedestal which is above water level. Light and ventilation are taken care of by means of a large opening hatch overhead, a small opening port on the inboard side and a fixed window on the outboard side. An electric pump recirculates shower water out of the sump. Headroom in the shower area of the heads is about six feet two inches. Extensive use has been made of front runners on internal surfaces and an attractive vinyl panelling has been used overhead. Final detailing has been with extensive teak trimming.

The starboard hull is almost a mirror reverse of the port hull. It has the same layout in both the aft, main and forward areas, but where the galley is situated in the port hull, the starboard area is used as a manual work area. The outboard side of the hull has a long bench with two lids, each about five feet long. By opening these two lids and supporting them on the open cupboard doors the bench area is doubled and access is allowed to the tools enclosed within. The inboard

Saloon area is large, warm and comfortable.





Heads area is large, clean and uncluttered, with good headroom for showering.

side has a study area with a full size chart table and store.

The nett effect of this configuration is to give two large separate well appointed cabins with individual facilities. There is permanent accommodation for ten with space for that many again if necessary.

Given that the PC44 has been designed as a cruising boat and tips the scales at around ten tonnes, its performance is quite reasonable. Under power, with two powerful diesels swinging good sized propellers, it is both fast and manoeuvrable.

Under sail, well, it is no Riverside Oaks ... but nor is it designed to be. The PC44 does not have centreboards, instead relying on long shoal draft skegs to prevent leeway. Actually, these make a lot of sense for a cruising craft. They allow the boat to go where a deep keel vessel cannot; they provide protection for the drive shafts and propellers; they allow the boat to take to the land on a falling tide for antifouling or other work without

damage to the craft; the inside of the skeg provides a perfect storage area for fuel or water, and most importantly, they work ... up to a point, anyway.

Shoal draft skegs are not as efficient as centreboards, but they are better than I thought they would be. For our test sail we decided to give the boat a run outside Sydney heads to put it in its proper environment. Fortunately, a large yacht also had the same idea and was in front and to windward of us as we left the heads. With an outgoing tide and a good fifteen knot south easterly breeze the joggle outside the heads was working overtime. The buoyant hull design kept pitching to an absolute minimum, the boat smoothing out immediately we hit some flattish water. Looking back as we punched our way to windward, the boat appeared to be making some leeway. But after a couple of miles we had eaten up to windward towards the yacht, improving on both his height and speed. I was quite impressed with this performance, and as the yacht tacked to return to the harbour, so did we.

If the PC44 has a failing, it is in tacking. To be totally honest, most of the problem is not the boat's fault. With a cutter rig the inner forestay is only a metre or so aft of the outer forestay. That means that when the boat is tacked the genoa must be pulled through that one metre gap. The gap is too small for the sail to blow itself through when backwinded, so that leaves the helmsman to drag it through from the helming position. Without assistance, the skipper is working like the proverbial one armed paper hanger to coax several hundred square feet of reluctant sailcloth off the inner forestay.

When we did complete the tack and took off on a broad reach back to the harbour, it was strictly no contest between us and the yacht. We left the yacht rocking and rolling in our wake as we surfed at up to fourteen knots back into the heads.

We did a leisurely beat back up the harbour towards Rose Bay and I was happy to see that we did not have the same degree of trouble tacking in flat water as we did outside. The boat maintained its momentum through the tack and fell away onto the new tack without hesitation. Since this is a cruising vessel, instantaneous tacks are not very high on the list of priorities anyway. The problem could be solved by the removal of the inner forestay, but would defeat the purpose of the cutter rig.

The PC44 left me with the impression of a very dry, comfortable and capable craft willing and able to take its fortunate owners anywhere in this world that they desired. After all, isn't that what good cruising boats are all about? ■



Aft double berth is a good size. 34hp. Yanmar diesel is located under bunk.

