



Test carried out in January and April 2012
By Gilles Ruffet.

Weather conditions: two outings; 8 kn of wind and rain first of all, then sunshine and 20 kn.

On the Neel, the hulls and floats are no longer dedicated to the liveable volume, but following the example of more performance-oriented boats, the whole boat is organised around hulls whose essential role is to support the boat's displacement. Here there is a living platform, as flat as a pancake, on the structure of a trimaran. The result is convincing, the object is beautiful (subjective view), successful and very modern.

AN INNOVATIVE SAIL PLAN

The sail plan deserves closer attention... The foretriangle is organised around a sail which can be described as a hybrid, on a roller, flown from the bow; a sail which is between a genoa and a gennaker (already the word 'gennaker is a cross between genoa and spinnaker, so what should we call it? A Geeker?), even though it is finally closer to the genoa, through its cloth, its shape and its cut. Just aft of it, there is the self-tacking staysail on a roller, attached to the mast at the same level as the lower shrouds, which guarantees proper support. This splitting of the sail

area also allows the mast to be positioned further aft. The mainsail is square headed and has two reefs. Although the first one is situated at around the lower quarter of the sail, the second is almost in the middle, so your reefing habits will have to be revised: on a 'classic' fractional catamaran rig, you start by taking in one reef, then one or two turns in the genoa, before taking in the second reef, etc. Here on the Neel, when the wind freshens, the genoa is rolled up, leaving just the staysail. There is therefore a lot of latitude before you have to take in a first reef, then a second. This innovative division of the sail plan allows you to sail always with a nice foresail...

THE JOYS OF CRUISING IN A SAILING BOAT

About ten days passed between the boat's launch and its departure on the delivery trip to the West Indies. Between a winter storm and work to perfect the boat, the only free day was a rainy one. Not the best for sailing, even less so for the photos... Not to mention the wind, which did as it pleased, and during the afternoon finished at 8 knots. Not enough to get excited about, yet the boat responded rather well. The helm transmits good 'feel' via its (textile) lines. With such precision, keeping the genoa pennants parallel is child's play. And then extraordinary things happened. With 8 knots of wind, close hauled under the big genoa and full main, of course, the boat approached the wind speed; it sailed easily at over 6 knots, often exceeded 7, and even approached 8 knots.

Of course, the Neel 45 has neither the capacities nor the pretension to compete with racing boats, but it sails well; it copes well with light weather, and promises fast passages downwind, in the

The revolution on three hulls

Two years after having presented a resolutely innovative 50-foot trimaran at La Rochelle's Grand Pavois, the builder Neel is launching a brand new 45-footer, built on the same basic principle as its big sister.

trade winds, at average speeds which could reach 8 – 9 knots, giving daily distances of over 200 miles!

Four months after the test aboard the n°1 of the series, we were lucky enough to sail on the n°2, in stronger winds, between 15 and 20 knots. In strong winds, the helm is particularly light, and the rudder is reactive and precise. Close-hauled (under staysail and full main), it reached ten knots or so, pointing high enough to make a potbellied cruising monohull envious. And when we bore away onto a reach, the Neel slipped along comfortably at 12 – 13 knots, still in 18 knots of wind. Not bad!

- ◆ An interesting sail plan.
- ◆ The joys of a trimaran, under sail.
- ◆ A nice view of the sea from the cabins.

- ◆ The cockpit could offer a bit more comfort.
- ◆ The anchor chain can't be seen from the deck.
- ◆ Access to the coachroof and the mastfoot.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Builder : | Neel Trimarans |
| Overall length: | 13.50 m |
| Overall beam: | 8.50 m |
| Draft: | 1.20 m |
| Air draft: | 19.15 m |
| Unladen displacement: | 6,500 kg |
| Fully laden displacement: | 9,000 kg |
| Self-tacking jib: | 20 m ² |
| Roller genoa: | 46 m ² |
| Fully-battened, square-headed mainsail: | 60 m ² |
| Engines: | 55 hp Volvo inboards, saildrives |
| Fresh water: | 600 litres |
| Diesel: | 300 litres |
| Price: | 440,000 euros exc. VAT. |

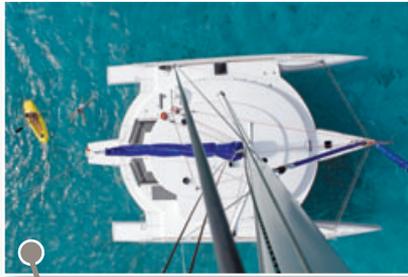


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The **COCKPIT** is very nice, with its central passage and the two little tables.



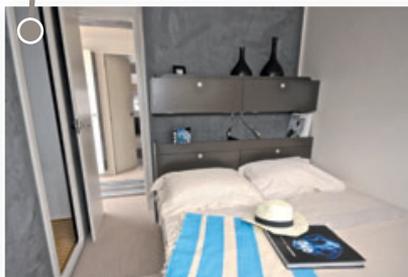
A trimaran for **BLUE-WATER CRUISING**, this is the Neel 45's wager.



THREE INVERTED BOWS... Just like the big racing trimarans yet it really is a cruising multihull!



Welcome aboard the Neel 45, a real apartment on the water... Up forward, we find the chart table and a **NICE SALOON**.



One of the two **ATHWARTSHIPS CABINS**: a real must in a 45-footer.



The **SAIL PLAN** is innovative, with a foresail which is always suited to the weather conditions.

THE COMPETITORS

| ► MODEL | FASTCAT 445 | NAUTITECH 441 | OUTREMER 45 | CATANA 47 |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Builder: | FastCat | Nautitech | Outremer | Catana |
| Length (m): | 13.60 | 13.47 | 13.70 | 14.03 |
| Sail area (m2): | 139 | 95 | 106 | 119 |
| Displacement (t): | 6.4 | 13 | 7.25 | 10.9 |
| Price exc. VAT (€): | 469 500 | 407 800 | 410 480 | 578 867 |