I saw the headline in an email sent to me from Europe. ‘The largest sailing catamaran in the world’. Clicking on the attachment I saw the first photo. Wow! I thought. Imagine cruising around in that beauty!

BY ROSEMARY JILDERTS

how the other half lives
The vessel that I was looking at was Hemisphere and I was totally and hopelessly in love. But it was an unrequited love, of course. If nothing else, I was at least a realist!

I knew right away that I wanted to find out more about her so I contacted her UK builder, Pendennis, who responded immediately sending heaps of photos and lots of information regarding how she was designed and built and the owners’ cruising plans.

The way the scene unfolded was like this … Hemisphere’s American owner had a longstanding passion for the underwater world which is why he chartered various types of boats for many years. He wanted to be in close
contact with the sea and the ‘fabulous
dive sites cradled beneath its waves’. Eventually, chartering wasn’t enough. He and his wife wanted their own vessel where they could entertain their family and friends. But despite exhaustive searches they couldn’t find any production boats that satisfied their needs.

Eventually, with a clear idea of what they wanted Naval Architects, Van Peteghem Lauriot Prévest (VPLP), were engaged to design a 30m (120ft) boat. Wanting to be able to accommodate large dive parties they knew they would need a tender about 29ft long. All catamaran owners and skippers are familiar with the annoying slamming of waves under the bridge deck. This is caused by up-draft wave motion that can occur in some conditions. VPLP had already solved that problem by creating their trademark ailes de mouette or seagull wings under the bridge deck. With Hemisphere the secondary problem of where to house the tender was solved by creating a completely watertight ‘garage’ between the two hulls within the seagull wings.

The owner also wanted clean lines and uncluttered deck space. Inside, by splitting the hulls into multiple levels, two VIP cabins were able to be positioned amidships, taking advantage of the 16m beam of the vessel, which gave a great view and private access to the forward deck and the sea. These two VIP cabins can be opened up to create one palatial suite with two separate bathrooms, a private lounge and bureau next door to the bedroom. However, the owner says that as he only sleeps there at night spending the rest of the time outside, an overly large suite was simply wasted space.

The owner is eco-sensitive so leaving a clean wake was very important. These issues were all considered in the planning stage. The low drag of the cat allows for small engines so they achieved minimum energy consumption and emissions as well as silence while underway.

The owner is justifiably proud of his new boat. He says, “the inspiration behind Hemisphere came from 15 years of charter experience in both the Med and the Caribbean. My wife and I had the opportunity over that time to charter cats from 60-135ft, power boats up to 155ft and monohulls up to 180ft. All were great but we loved sailing, and we were very impressed with the versatility and comfort of a catamaran.

When we started our quest, we viewed a variety of cats up to 120ft. None met our requirements. We wanted four to five staterooms because we invariably travel with family and friends. All of us are water bugs, either on the surface or below. One of our wishes was a dive instructor or two, even though the family members are all certified. We also love to fish, therefore, fishing gear and tenders were necessities. One of our visions was to take the boat around the world. This led to increasing the size and ultimately the choice of aluminium hulls rather than carbon fibre.

My wife and I desired a modest cabin with double sinks in the bathroom which led to twin VIP master suites on the main deck rather than one large master suite. Reading time and/or down-time is spent with our three grandsons in the aft open cockpit or the fly bridge.

The design process started in 2004 with the expert assistance of Gavin Bladen, my captain. Having Gavin early on with the project was absolutely critical to its success. This was particularly true given the bumps along the way with the construction. We started at 120ft. The design concept with VPLP took us to 145ft with a 55ft beam. Hemisphere has a nine foot draft. The mast and boom are carbon fibre.

On launch, Hemisphere met our expectations. It was designed as a stable platform for warm weather cruising. The emphasis is on open space and lots of it. The colours are neutral and materials are virtually all natural. Contrasts are made by choice of materials and accents are accomplished by colours of cushions. The foresight of Mick Leach and Mark Smith (Michael Leach Design) is second-to-none.
**Hemisphere** is designed for people who love to be near and in the water. We are hopeful to begin an around-the-world sojourn in the summer of 2013. In the meantime, we will cruise the Med, Adriatic and Aegean in the summer of 2012, and back to the Caribbean in winter of 2012-13. The Panama Canal passage will occur during the summer of 2013 and into the Pacific with an intermediate stop in the Galapagos."

Considering the planning and the engineering that has gone into this vessel, they certainly have the boat to do it … and in absolute comfort.

**IN THE PLANNING**

Building commenced in America but the build yard had problems and the semi-built catamaran was moved across the Atlantic to Pendennis Shipyard in Falmouth, UK, for completion. As well as a new builder, a new designer also had to be engaged. Michael Leach Design (MDL) joined the project in 2006 before the boat was moved to the UK, "because they agreed with my wife!" laughed the owner.

**THE BUILDERS**

Once the boat was in the UK, Pendennis Shipyard had a technically challenging build ahead of them, and although there were some concerns about completing her in time, they rose to every challenge and completed Hemisphere in
time for her to be showcased at the 2011 Monaco Yacht Show where she was one of the most talked about vessels in the show.

As the largest privately owned vessel of her type in the world Hemisphere certainly turns heads with her impressive exterior appearance. But take a look inside and the level of luxurious detail will delight you.

One amazing feature is her open plan main dining area which is usually open to the elements. However, when necessary the area can be enclosed with the installation of an ‘Eissen glass’ screen and cooled with air conditioning units which are located under the flybridge sun pad. The boat carries a multitude of water sports toys, such as windsurfers, wakeboards, Seabobs, waterskis, enough SCUBA gear for 12...
divers, compressors (both air and NITROX) and the crew tender. No-one will ever complain about being bored on this vessel.

The crew should be happy with the accommodation in the starboard pontoon where the captain has a very spacious cabin with private bathroom; there’s a crew mess with technology and navigation monitoring systems; a state of the art galley and a dedicated staircase for deck access. A fully equipped and air conditioned engineer’s workshop has been installed in the port bow for easy on board maintenance.

When Hemisphere was delivered in July 2011, the owner joked, “My first thought when I saw the finished yacht was ‘My god, what have I done?’”

After I read the information (the specifications and description of the fit-
out) that had been sent to me, I felt breathless. Boy, oh boy! What a machine. What wouldn’t I give to spend a day on board this vessel! It sounded great, but hang on ... I hadn’t checked out all the photos that Pendennis had sent me yet.

Each successive photo took my breath away. I was amazed at the quality ... the sheer luxury. This is a very classy boat. A home built to this standard would be stupendous enough, but a boat? It is simply incredible.

Oh, what a life!

Seating in the 100m² split level saloon is raised to take advantage of the panoramic view. A large range of materials has been used including 18 types of leather and 15 types of stone. The cat is bathed in light and its appearance is flowing and relaxed giving it a social and informal feel. Designer Michael Leach says “The brief was for a six-star luxury Polynesian hotel and spar feel. We have aimed to maximise the light and space in a soft and malleable way.” I would say that they have more than succeeded on that point.

The owners were very practical, after chartering so many boats they realised that interiors can get damaged especially when there are children on board. The owner’s wife was very involved in the planning. She wanted her family and grandchildren to enjoy themselves without having to worry about carpets and fabrics getting dirty and for her guests to be able to put drinks down on a surface without worrying about damage.

left from top:
This aerial shot puts the boat’s size into perspective when compared with the guests.
The ‘garage’ for the tender inside the gull’s wings.
A sunpad and spa pool are key features on the sundeck.
The three teams from Pendennis, VPLP and MLD combined their impressive experience to create a magnificent vessel.

I could go on and on trying to describe this beautiful craft to you. But I'll let you just take a look at the photos and dream (or drool). Dream ... that's the best most of us will be able to do ... because who amongst us could afford something like this? I look at the photos again and I am green with envy. Not envious of the running costs or berthing charges or the haul-out fees, mind you ... but I wouldn't mind even just stepping on board for a look over her. I reckon I'd feel like a million dollars.

At the conclusion of the Monaco Yacht Show, the owners spent some time enjoying their catamaran in the Mediterranean then she was available for charter through Burgess Yachts with winter in the Caribbean (charter rates began at EUR175,000 per week which converts to around AUD208,595) and after that she is to transit the Panama Canal and into the South Pacific.

Owners, guests and crew can fish on the shadow tender for that evening's dinner.

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for summer 2013. (Maybe we could all get together and pool our money to get half an hour on her!)

Owning such a spectacular vessel does have its downsides though. The owner said after launch, “Virtually every place we dropped anchor, we became the local spectacle. I had to be very observant around my grandchildren when they were in the water so they weren’t hit by the people circling and recircling the yacht.”

So, here is the other option for you … if you can do more than dream about being on Hemisphere she is available for charter. While I don’t have confirmation of the boat coming to Australia, I can’t imagine Australia not being on her itinerary so keep your eyes open. Her owners’ plans are to cruise around the world, venturing beyond the cruising grounds of the Med and the Caribbean in early 2013. She will then transit the Panama Canal and head out into the Pacific. So, if you have the desire and the means you can join her and her crew, as they island hop across the Pacific Ocean. Do it in style!

Her charter cruising grounds are:

- Mediterranean
- Winter 2012/13 Season: Caribbean/Pacific

I do have, of course, my tongue planted firmly in cheek as I make these suggestions but there always will be some people who can afford to charter a vessel like this. To them, I say, contact Burgess Yachts (Email: london@burgessyachts.com), to book. For the rest of us, we can simply look on … and day dream.