

HOW TO SET OFF FASTER (AND CHEAPER)

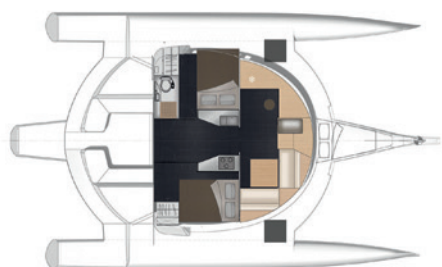


Sure, the market for new multihulls has never been in better shape: despite the threat of the health crisis, the demand from individuals has done nothing but increase. And despite periods of shipyard closures and parts shortages, manufacturers have managed to produce over 1,500 multihulls. That said, the second-hand market remains very active: depending on the country, 65 to 80% of transactions involve units that have already had one or more owners.

Opting for a second-hand boat has many advantages: you can benefit from a fully equipped boat that's ready to sail, and for less money. No more two-year waiting period when ordering a new multihull, no teething trouble with new equipment... Another option could be to buy a multihull at a very low price... provided your DIY skills are up to it - see our "Multihull basics", a refit before you set off, page 84. This opportunity allows you to sail a bigger boat, and therefore more cabins, more volume. In short, you can sail further and longer. Enticing, isn't it? Not to mention that at the end of a one- to three-year cruising program, when you resell your boat, you will almost be back on your feet, since the main years of depreciation are the first ten. However, there is no question of jumping on the first multihull you come across, or you may reveal some disappointments. The purchase of a cat or a tri - unless it is a very small unit - deserves some precautions such as a professional examination or, better still, a proper survey. We've selected for you the 12 must-have models from 38 to 47 feet.

NEEL 45

A trimaran for sailing far and for a long time



The NEEL 45 is one of the rare blue water cruising trimarans to be found on the second-hand market. Less extreme and more accessible than her bigger sister, the 50, this is the one that launched the concept... and the brand!

But what is the NEEL concept? Graft a large nacelle onto a gull-wing platform, which itself rests on three hulls that are very narrow at the waterline. Add in careful construction that manages to limit the displacement to 7 tons lightship and a generous sail plan - a combination of mainsail with self-tacking jib and genoa - and you get a very convincing sail/weight ratio of 163 sq ft/t (15.14 m²/t) where most of the competitors with two hulls struggle to reach more than 100 (10 m²/t). When sailing downwind, the NEEL 45 brings out the big guns, and easily exceeds 10 knots. This trimaran has also proved herself on the ARC: ocean crossings suit her perfectly! In spite of the single small fin - attached under the central hull, and reminiscent of that of a Dart - the trimaran manages not to suffer with leeway, and to sail upwind at 45° to the true, like a good monohull. Speed?

More than 8 knots from 10 knots of wind. The deck layout is deliberately simple: a wheel against the back of the coachroof, a large semi-rigid foam backrest and that's it. The maneuvers are split between halyards at the mast, and sheets on the coachroof. The cockpit, compared to that of catamarans of the same size, is more open. You have to make do with a modest aft platform fitted on the central hull. Note: the Evolution version launched in 2018 offers sugarscoops on the floats and a proper rigid bimini. The nacelle's layout is a bit confusing with the two cabins that integrate the central volume. A galley at the back, dining area forward, and a corridor in the middle... A smaller cabin is nestled in the bow and two extra berths occupy the center of each float. This means a maximum capacity of 10 people, or even 12 with the saloon. An original choice, a strong personality... a probable favorite for setting off!

Builder: Neel Trimarans

Architects: Joubert/Nivelt

Overall length: 44'3" (13.5 m)

Waterline length: 44'3" (13.5 m)

Beam: 27'10" (8.50 m)

Draft: 3'11" (1.20 m)

Displacement: 15,430 lbs (7 t)

Upwind sail area: 1,140 sq ft (106 m²)

Mainsail: 645 sq ft (60 m²)

Genoa: 495 sq ft (46 m²)

Genoa: 1,615 q ft (150 m²)

Engine: 55 hp

Fresh water: 264 US gal (1,000 l)

Diesel: 79 US gal (300 l)

Production: 26 units from 2011 to 2020

Price: from \$ 330,000 ex-tax



Excellent performance
Good upwind course
Enjoyable to helm



Nacelle bulkheads
Less privacy than you'd find on a catamaran
Finish could sometimes be better