

Catalina 375

As an heir to a classic, this new cruiser doesn't disappoint

The new Catalina 375 has a tough act to follow. It is replacing one of America's most popular boats, the Catalina 36. More than 2,200 Catalina 36 MkIs and MkIIs were launched during a 25-year production run that ended last year. To put that into perspective, that's nearly 100 boats built and commissioned year after year after year.

Those are numbers that make other manufacturers envious. And just what was it that made the Catalina 36 so desirable as a new boat? A combination of features including recognizable styling that never seemed out of date, dependable construction and terrific customer service, a spacious interior and good all-around sailing performance. Package that with an

affordable price and a commitment to keep up production and not undermine new boat owners by introducing new models every year, it becomes obvious why the new 375 has big shoes to fill.

I was anxious to sail the new 375 and fortunately the conditions were ideal for our recent *SAILING* Magazine boat test in Biscayne Bay. The 375 relished the steady 15-knot easterly breeze and hardly noticed the light chop as we crisscrossed the bay on various points of sail. While one sail, on one near perfect day, does not an expert make, I confess I was quite impressed with this handsome new model. The legions of Catalina sailors need not worry, the 375 is poised to become a worthy successor to their much-loved 36. That's exactly what some of the Great Lakes Catalina dealers, including Jon Kukuk of Nest Egg Marine, had in mind when they conjured up the idea of the 375 and proposed it to Gerry Douglas, Catalina's vice president and chief engineer, at the 2007 Strictly Sail

Chicago show. Obviously the concept took hold and just a year later the new 375 debuted at the same show.

"We really took the time to listen to our customers and our dealers," Douglas said as we clipped along on a sweet reach. "Their input was a vital part of the design program. We tried to look at every system and make them more efficient in terms of sailing and maintenance."

Perched behind the helm, Douglas was clearly enjoying himself as we trimmed up and brought the boat hard on the wind to avoid a sandbar. Having just finished up Strictly Sail Miami, Douglas was encouraged by the enthusiastic response the Catalina 375 generated. "Catalinas always do well in competitive markets, we feel good about the value we build into our boats."

The design does a fine job of blending the well-known Catalina 36 profile into a completely new boat. The transition seems natural. The 375's freeboard is moderate while the deck and cabintrunk have a relatively low profile, at least by today's standards. The boat is unmistakably a Catalina and yet it looks fresh and modern. The new 375 is the largest model in what Catalina terms its "cruiser" range and will be built exclusively in Largo, as Catalina continues to shift manufacturing to Florida.

The details

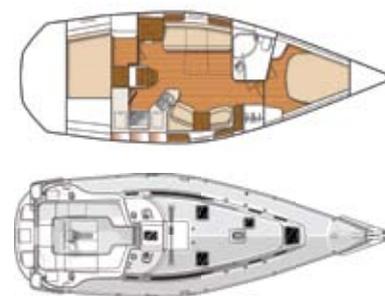
The 375 hull is solid fiberglass joined to a balsa-cored deck, the same successful combination used on most of the 60,000 Catalinas launched since the company was founded in 1969. Molded fiberglass interior liners stiffen the hull and provide athwartship support. My readers know that I don't love liners. However, this bias is focused more on larger boats, and Catalina certainly has a proven track record for building strong boats. Several of its boats, from 27 to 47 feet, have completed circumnavigations.



Catalina 375

LOA 38'6"; LWL 34'5"; Beam 13'
Draft fin keel 6'10", wing keel 4'8"
Displ. fin keel 15,500 lbs.,
wing keel 16,500 lbs.
Ballast fin keel 5,200 lbs.,
wing keel 6,200 lbs.
Sail Area 666 sq. ft.

Approx. sailaway price \$200,000
Catalina Yachts
21200 Victory Blvd., Largo, FL 33777,
(727) 544-6681,
www.catalinayachts.com



The Catalina 375's saloon is spacious and airy, and nicely finished in teak.

In fact, just this past weekend while conducting a boat-buying seminar in Fort Lauderdale, we came across a newer model Catalina 42 propped up in the boatyard. Sadly it had gone on the rocks off Bimini in the Bahamas. According to Roger Jones of JGI Marine Group, who is overseeing the repair, a lesser boat would have sunk.

"The hull is just scratched up, superficial damage really, and that's after hours of pounding on rock and coral. That's one strong hull."

The Catalina 375 features lead ballast with two keel options. The standard fin keel has a deep 6-foot,

Blustery Miami winds provide a good test for the 375, and the boat reaches at speeds over 6 knots.



10-inch draft while the shoal-draft wing keel draws just 4 feet, 8 inches. The hull shape reflects the balanced nature of the design. The high-lift keel and spade rudder offer performance, while the sweet entry, moderate forefoot and molded skeg provide a soft ride and secure housing for the propeller.

On deck

Catalina has coined the phrase, "California-size cockpit." I suspect this means that the 375 cockpit is large, comfortable and secure, because it certainly is. It has a big-boat feel. I like to sit down in the cockpit, surrounded by stout coamings and knowing that every errant wave won't slosh aboard and soak the crew. Sometimes you sacrifice visibility for security but that isn't the case with the 375. The view from the helm is more than adequate.

I like that there's enough room to spread your legs a bit when standing at the helm. All sail controls are led aft. I particularly like the single-side control for the mainsheet traveler. The primary winches can be easily reached from the helm. Twin backstays open up access to the swim steps that are molded seamlessly into the stern. While stern pulpit seats crowd

many aft cockpit boats under 40 feet, they work nicely on the 375. Douglas' eye for detail has never been sharper. From little touches like a cleverly mounted outboard motor bracket to cockpit lockers big enough to actually stow fenders or provide space for compressors or a generator, but also have a drop-in liner to make them more manageable for small stuff, the 375 is a well-thought-out boat. And that is not always the case with brand new models. Usually it takes a few years to get the details right.

The side decks are wide, the 28-inch stanchions and lifelines are well supported. The small molded bulwark/toerail lends a feeling of security as you make your way forward while underway, but the grabrails could be a bit beefier. The chain locker is split in half and is large enough for two rodes and a spare anchor. Most deck fittings are by Garhauer.

I appreciate the way Catalina has rigged the boat. It's rigged for ocean sailing. The mast is a deck-stepped, 7/8ths masthead rig with backstays, two of them in fact, and fore and aft lower shrouds. One of my pet peeves is the trend toward extreme fractional rigs and swept-back spreaders. This arrangement, convenient as it maybe for upwind





daysailing, makes it almost impossible for deep reaching. The idea that you are going to fly a cruising spinnaker whenever you are reaching while offshore, or even when coastal sailing, just doesn't mesh with the way we really sail. Spinnakers can be a chore to handle, even cruising chutes, especially if you are shorthanded. You need enough of a headsail to offer horsepower, and you need to be able to pay out the main without laying it against the rig, to sail efficiently downwind. As you can tell, I have strong feelings about this matter and am delighted that the 375 rig offers so many sail options. The 375 is easy to handle with in-mast mainsail furling standard.

Down below

True to form, the 375 interior is spacious and comfortable. It is also very well appointed. It's funny how fashions turn but it is refreshing and rare to drop below into a real teak interior these days. The arrangement is fairly straightforward. The bent U-shaped galley is immediately to starboard. It includes double stainless sinks and a two-burner stove and oven. The counters are wide, with fiddles, and there are drawers and storage lockers below. The stainless steel refrigerator is self-contained and there's also a stainless lined box that can be converted to a freezer. The chart table is opposite to port with a pull-out stool.

The saloon is open and airy. The starboard side features two seats, with a game table between.



The Catalina 375's saloon features a drop-down table, left, and the navigation station, far left, has a fold-out stool. The bent U-shaped galley features a double sink, two-burner stove and deep fiddles, above left. The "California-size" cockpit opens up at the dock with a folding wheel, below, and underway the full complement of navigation gear is at the helmsman's fingertips. The anchoring system has twin rollers, and the chain locker is divided in two, with room for an extra anchor and rode. The 375 comes standard with in-mast reefing, and all sail controls are led aft to the cockpit, below left.

The settee table folds up on the port forward bulkhead. There are lockers below the settees and teak shelves above and outboard. The head is just forward of the saloon to port and includes a separate round shower—that's pretty impressive for a boat of this size. The forepeak is the owner's stateroom and includes an island-style double berth with a large hanging locker to port. The aft cabin is tucked under the cockpit and accessed from behind the chart table. It also includes a hanging locker.

Teak doesn't mean dark, and the 375 interior is cheery. Overhead hatches and side opening portlights provide excellent ventilation. I like the Lonseal nonskid cabin sole. It looks good and should be maintenance-free for years. Again, Catalina is paying attention to the details that matter. The mattresses on both berths have inner springs for comfort, there's enough tankage to take showers without reservation and to motor home when the wind vanishes. A three-cylinder, 40-horsepower Yanmar diesel is standard and during our sea trials it pushed us along at 6-plus knots at 2,000 rpm.

Underway

Back on the bay I had to fight for the wheel. It was worth it. The 375 is a pleasure to steer. Easing the sheets we cracked off onto a broad reach. The ride was silky smooth, the speed hovered at just over 6 knots and the helm was very light. We were flying a full main and 125-percent genoa. Coming back on the wind we executed a series of short tacks as we worked north. It's not a stretch to say that the 375 tacks easily through 90 degrees and can be pinched considerably higher. I was not able to get a feel for leeway but I suspect the 375 will make less of it than some of her lighter, flatter competitors. With the wind gusting a bit, there was at times a bit of helm, and the sailing became exhilarating as the 375 heeled and then dug her teeth in to speed up to 7 knots.

Catalina has hit a home run with the new 375. I have a hunch that 20 years from now we'll be talking about the difficult prospect of replacing another classic.

