

This interior shot of *Windora* shows the beauty of wooden boat construction.

**ON:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of this type of offshore boat?

**P&LC:** *Windora* is a composite wooden boat, strip-planked with a heavy layer of epoxy glass fiber. This creates a high-strength, totally dry hull. It provides the most comfortable environment to live in, both in tropical and high-latitude climates. Repairs and maintenance can be done in the most remote places with easily available materials. There are large areas of the planet where you are treated differently because you sail a wooden boat. You are not just another white plastic boat; you stand out in the crowd. A traditionally planked wooden boat cannot be left on the hardstand for extended periods.

**ON:** For voyagers considering a wooden-hulled sailboat, what advice would you give?

**P&LC:** First choice would be



Phil and Lynda Christieson

wood-composite construction, which lets you use two-part urethane paint systems, allows for minimum maintenance, and gives you the advantage of being able to store the boat ashore in the most extreme climates. You need to ensure the surveyor has a good understanding of wooden boats, as they are the most complex in construction of all the materials. A poorly built wooden boat can be hugely expensive to put right. Never touch any wooden vessel with iron fastenings in it.

### Dave and Sherry McCampbell

St. Francis 44 catamaran *Soggy Paws*

Dave and Sherry McCampbell left Florida in May 2007 and headed west across the Pacific via the Panama Canal. They spent eight years getting across in their 1980 CSY 44 monohull. By 2015, they were ready for a faster boat and switched to a 2005 St. Francis 44 MK II catamaran. After four years exploring much of eastern South-east Asia and a number of significant modifications, they now have the perfect cruising home.

**Ocean Navigator:** Why did you decide to voyage in a multihull?

**Dave and Sherry McCampbell:** We are full-time international cruisers. There were many reasons we switched from our 1980 CSY 44 monohull to our 2005 St. Francis 44 catamaran. But the bottom line is that it was better suited to our increasing age and desire for more safety, more comfort and

*Windora* has two layers of fiberglass protecting its wooden hull from damage like this ice in Chile can cause.





Dave and Sherry McCampbell

Dave and Sherry McCampbell's St. Francis 44 catamaran *Soggy Paws* at anchor at Tetepare in the Solomon Islands.

less maintenance. Below are the most important reasons to us that we switched. These mirror some of the most important advantages and disadvantages of a catamaran versus a monohull.

**ON:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of this type of offshore boat?

**D&SM:** Here are what we see as the main advantages.

**Level sailing:** Cats sail relatively flat, so there is far less fatigue on a passage. Because of this, we can finally read and do computer work most of the time underway. That was rarely possible on the CSY monohull while rolling along at a 10- to 15-degree heel. This is really important for full-time cruisers and not well understood by the monohull cruising community. See the Navy study from a few years ago on page 24 of my

presentation link below.

**Layout:** There is typically about 40 percent more room on a modern cat than on a monohull of similar length. A cat layout is much more cruising-friendly, with daily living, navigation and watchstanding areas up, and bunks, storage, heads and mechanical spaces down. The main saloon and cockpit are on the same level, so

there's no need for a ladder transit between them. It is also easier to access multiple storage lockers along the sides of two hulls instead of one, or searching for things under bunks and in the bilges.

**Two engines:** Modern cats generally have better speed and fuel economy while motoring. Motoring at 5 knots with one small engine properly loads up the

**Soggy Paws** hauled out in the Solomons. The multihull is equipped with stub keels.

Dave and Sherry McCampbell



engine and uses roughly half the diesel we used to use with the CSY. That means we can carry roughly half the fuel we used to carry for a 1,200-nm range. Two engines also means a full spare parts inventory is always on board, and there is no drama if one should develop a problem needing repair at sea.

**Maintenance:** The newer boat and more room mean generally easier maintenance for electrical and mechanical equipment. No teak on deck means no varnish work ever! A more modern rig makes rigging work and sail handling easier.

**Unsinkability:** Many modern cats won't sink regardless of damage, due to a thick foam-cored hull, waterproof crash compartments and lack of lead keel. Our cat has a 1.25-inch foam-cored hull and deck, and is advertised as non-sinking unless really overloaded. That is a really comforting feeling while underway in deep water hundreds of miles from land. We think staying aboard is a better option than having to abandon ship into a life raft.

**Stability:** Cats have better stability at anchor, in a seaway or riding to a sea anchor. Little rolling means better sleep at night. It also means most things left on counters and tables will stay put underway in reasonable conditions. Availability of strong, wide bridle attachment points at the ends of the forward crossbeam reduce yawing and therefore ground tackle loads.

**Speed:** Most comparisons I have read indicate about a 20 percent speed increase on long passages. We rarely want to go more than

about 8 knots, and we start reefing at about 7 knots. This compares to reefing at 6 knots on the CSY. We are comfortable at 7 to 8 knots on the cat. In the open sea, we consider anything more than about 9 knots uncomfortable due to increased boat motion and rig loads.

**Sail handling:** Wide, flat decks with little roll mean safer sail handling and reefing at sea. The jib is relatively small compared to the main, so it is easier to handle than on most monohulls. Also, no pole is required for downwind sails or a spinnaker.

**Dinghy storage:** Cats offer much safer and more convenient dinghy storage if lifted on high davits aft between the hulls. Typically, modern cats allow the dinghy (with motor on) to be taken out of the water easily and launched quickly. There is no need to remove the outboard and store the dinghy on the foredeck before making a passage.

**Draft:** The cat's shallow draft gives many more anchoring options. This is especially important if looking for that mangrove-lined, unoccupied tropical cyclone hole. The ability to do a free haulout for repairs or a bottom paint touch-up on a beach is a huge advantage. It is easy to do on many beaches with just a few feet of tide.

Most of the monohull vs. catamaran comparisons, as well as catamaran features, are well covered in our PowerPoint presentation, "Evaluating Modern Catamarans," available on our website: [\[tions/SoggyPaws-Evaluating%20Modern%20Catamarans.pdf\]\(#\).](http://www.svsoggypaws.com/files/presenta-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

**ON:** For voyagers considering a multihull, what advice would you give?

**D&SM:** There is no perfect catamaran with all the features you may want, so be prepared to compromise somewhat. However, knowing what works and what does not for the cruising you plan to do is important. Be sure to research this carefully before starting to look for a cat.

With the number of catamarans being produced on the rise, there are many designs to choose from. However, not all are created equal. Although most cruisers spend 90 percent of the time in port, due consideration should also be given to features that enhance safety and comfort at sea. Most catamarans are optimized for tropics cruising and are probably not the best choices for high-latitude voyaging.

There is plenty here to consider before purchasing a cruising catamaran. Much more is on the Internet. Many modern cats are built for the lucrative charter trade and may have features that don't work well for full-time bluewater cruising. Some of these can be corrected or improved, some cannot. Be suspicious of exaggerated dealer claims, ask for proof of anything that doesn't seem right, and ask specific questions. Consider making a list of what to look for before going shopping.

As with almost all cat owners I've talked to now that we have made the switch to the "enlightened side," we would never go back.