



# HOUBARA

SUNREEF'S HANDSOME 24 METRE CATAMARAN PROVIDES ALL THE VOLUME AND STABILITY TO FULFILL HER OWNER'S PACIFIC CRUISING AMBITIONS

words: Roger Lean-Vercoe photography: Sunreef Yachts



It can be a nightmare to find a specific yacht among those crammed into Cannes Old Port for the annual Yacht Show, but the beige hulled Sunreef catamaran *Houbara*, with her mast reaching 34 metres upwards from her 24 metre hull, really stands out from the crowd. This voluminous yacht is the first example of the 82DD, the largest of Sunreef's Semi-Custom range of sailing catamarans, and she proves a big attraction at the Show.

Approaching her at the dock, one is dwarfed by her topsides which, rising to a maximum of three metres, make you acutely aware that the 'DD' suffix stands for 'double deck'. But ungenerous comparisons with public transport are swept away as you ascend the six steps that rise to the aft deck from her two transoms. Here, shaded from the sun by the bridge deck overhang, and partially protected from beam winds by extensions of the superstructure to port and starboard, there is a distinct

feeling of being on the aft deck of a much larger yacht – with all of its facilities – as you take in the eight-seater dining table, acres of sun mattresses and even a trough for flowers or other decoration. At the head of a spiral stairway, the sundeck is equally spacious and similarly floored with immaculately laid teak. Aft of the helm station, a bar, barbecue and dining table reinforce the impression you are aboard a 50 metre monohull – until you look forward to the twin bows and netting.

With the build-up to the next America's Cup in full swing – an event sailed in cats only a few feet shorter than *Houbara* – sailing catamarans are in the news right now. But, other than for their twin hulls, no comparison can be made between those capsize-prone 30-plus-knot speedsters built from featherweight carbon, and the solid cruising dependability of the Sunreef 82's composite hull, well-matched rig and practical sail wardrobe. The only other comparison is, perhaps, *Houbara's* cutter-rigged mast and



trough boom, both built in-house from carbon by Sunreef, which carry a 235 square metre, fully battened, fat-head mainsail. This allows improved sail trimming and a lower centre of effort than a conventional sail – factors that aid cruising yachtsmen just as much as racers. Forward, her 260 square metre gennaker is rolled onto the forestay, while a 135 square metre genoa and 20 square metre storm jib are also furled onto discrete stays, making them instantly ready for use.

During our sail off the Côte d'Azur, the winds never rise above a disappointing 10 knots true, but *Houbara* happily achieves 7.6 knots boat-speed in 8.3 knots of apparent wind and a wind-angle of 110 degrees. This clearly confirms the captain's view that he has had no problem in getting 10 to 11 knots out of her in most sailing conditions, while 13 knots is as far as he will push

her. This is slightly more than one might expect from a cruising monohull of this size but, on the other hand, *Houbara* will almost certainly be slower upwind than a monohull. Under power from her two 355hp diesels, located in twin engine rooms in the aft of each hull, she will make a maximum of 12 knots, when she squeezes a range of 1,300 nautical miles from the 8,000 litres of fuel she carries. At a more economical 7.5 knots, Sunreef quotes an approximate range of 6,400 nautical miles.

Although there is an interior helm station, when under sail she is conned from the flying bridge, from where there is an excellent all-round view. Shaded by a stylish bimini the helm station is clearly laid out and adequately instrumented, and is also within easy reach of the halyard and sheets, all of which can be led to well-positioned, powered winches of an appropriate size.

**Conveniently located near the cockpit (opposite below), the saloon (above) is a large, social space, where cream leather contrasts pleasantly with bubinga and maple veneers**

A wall of four glazed sliding doors, each rising from floor to deckhead fully retract to create a huge indoor-outdoor space



Access from the cockpit to the saloon is through a wall of four glazed sliding doors, each rising from floor to deckhead; at the touch of a button they fully retract to create a truly huge indoor-outdoor space. The saloon itself is decorated in a blend of rich bubinga and bird's eye maple veneers, which create a rich contrast with the white carpets and bulkheads, while the cream-toned leather used for the furniture upholstery provides a sophisticated edge to this comfortable room.

Until familiar with the yacht's full layout, it's possible to question the saloon's unusual arrangement, which features a raised mezzanine floor in the port forward corner and a huge bar filling the starboard side, aft of the raised pilot area. In fact, in a catamaran of this size the mezzanine area is a necessary consequence of ensuring the cabin beneath is both well-sized, and with

sufficient headroom. As this mezzanine provides a second distinct seating area, you soon get used to the idea, unless overly safety conscious about the unguarded drop down to the level of the saloon's floor. In the standard layout of this 25 metre model, the area occupied by the bar is the galley, but *Houbara's* owner, who did not anticipate the need for three guest cabins, moved the galley into the lower deck space normally occupied by the third cabin. The result is a seriously sized bar, and a fabulous galley conveniently situated adjacent to the crew's twin-bunked, en suite cabin.

*Houbara's* two very comfortable guest cabins lie in her port hull. One of these is the large en suite double below the mezzanine, and the second is a twin that makes use of the adjacent dayhead. The remaining cabin, the master, is very special. It fills the forward element of the main deck,

## Houbara's owners talk about their dream sailing yacht

'When I met my wife,' the owner of *Houbara* tells me as we sit on the aft deck during the Cannes Boat Show, 'we wanted to go round the world with a caravan. We never thought about doing it in a boat.' For this couple, *Houbara* represents the chance to realise a dream – even if it is not quite the dream they had first envisaged.

'Five years ago, we chose a motorboat,' they continue. 'Everyone told us that in the Mediterranean a motor boat was the only choice. But while cruising in 2010 on our boat, in Barcelona we saw a catamaran with a flybridge. We weren't entirely happy with the motorboat, but hadn't realised before then that there was something in between. We went to the Cannes show to find the boat we had seen, but although we saw a lot of cats none were the same. We talked with Privilege and Fountaine Pajot (both production catamaran builders) who put together proposals for us, and we went to see them in La Rochelle. The boats there had not been designed for us, just adjusted, and we were disappointed; but on the way to view another boat we saw a Sunreef and realised it was the same one we had seen in Barcelona.'

For 18 months we discussed aspects of customisation, changing things step by step until we reached the ideal; it took six months to nail the layout, and after six to eight months, when the drawings were done, we went to the yard to choose the fabrics.'

For the owners, the chance to customise was of paramount importance, and with the husband's experience in the building industry, this was no hands-off project. 'My wife decided this boat would be

designed for us, not for charter, so we chose the décor as if it was our house – a house on the water was the idea,' he enthuses. 'With my background in construction everything had to be perfect. It was nice that everything was made from scratch in the Sunreef yard. Everything that is on this yacht I can say I know how it was calculated, and how it was built. Building houses is easy, however – building a boat is not!'

The owners spent a lot of time at the Sunreef yard in Gdansk during the build, visiting at least once a month and installing their captain in Poland for the last month of construction. Moreover, they chose to run *Houbara* with just two crew. 'We don't want so many people on board,' they explain. 'She feels safe and easy. My wife finally agreed to crew, mainly because of the need for cleaning, although ideally we wouldn't have any. As I said, I am a perfectionist – some people, when they order a boat, don't care about the build. But we dreamt a boat, worked on it and then drove Sunreef crazy.'

Now that the first part of the dream has been realised, it is time for the second part. *Houbara* was due to head out into the blue yonder in November. 'We told our captain to find every island between Cannes and New Zealand,' they laugh. 'We have a spirit of freedom and adventure with a capital 'A'. There is a sense of freedom being on a cat – silence, space, openness. There's a connection to nature you don't get on a motorboat. There's always something to see and do, and the fantastic spirit of sail and sea and waves and silence – it's beautiful. We have given our odyssey five to six years, and don't ever want to go in a straight line.'



**The impressively sized master suite (top) even includes its own spa pool. Two further guest cabins comprise an en suite double (above right) and a twin. The en suite crew cabin is conveniently next to the large galley (above left)**

where a huge bedroom incorporates a spa pool and a king-sized bed. Two sets of stairs descend from here into the hulls, where the port side contains a bathroom with shower, and the starboard side a dressing room.

Interestingly, to match the yacht's long-range cruising mission, the owner has chosen to back up the yacht's gensets with both wind and solar power, so as to allow sustained silent and eco-friendly running. To this end a pair of 400W wind generators and eight 100W solar panels are mounted at the aft end of the sundeck. In

sunny and windy conditions these deliver up to 1.6kW per hour to the yacht's 1,200Ah per hour lead acid battery bank, permitting silent ship conditions for between 20 and 22 hours – an ideal solution for quiet anchorages or peaceful night-time sailing.

Well designed and constructed, with heaps of room on deck and in the interior, and with well thought out sailing systems, this is a highly interesting yacht that will certainly suit the owner's Pacific cruising plans.



HOUBARA Sunreef Yachts

**LOA** 25m  
**LWL** 23.99m  
**Beam** 11.2m  
**Draught** 2m  
**Displacement** 58T  
**Engines**  
 2 x 355 hp Cummins

**Maximum speed reached under sail**  
 13.8 knots  
**Speed under power (max/cruise)**  
 12/8 knots  
**Range at nine knots**  
 2,400nm  
**Thrusters**  
 2 x Side Power 285

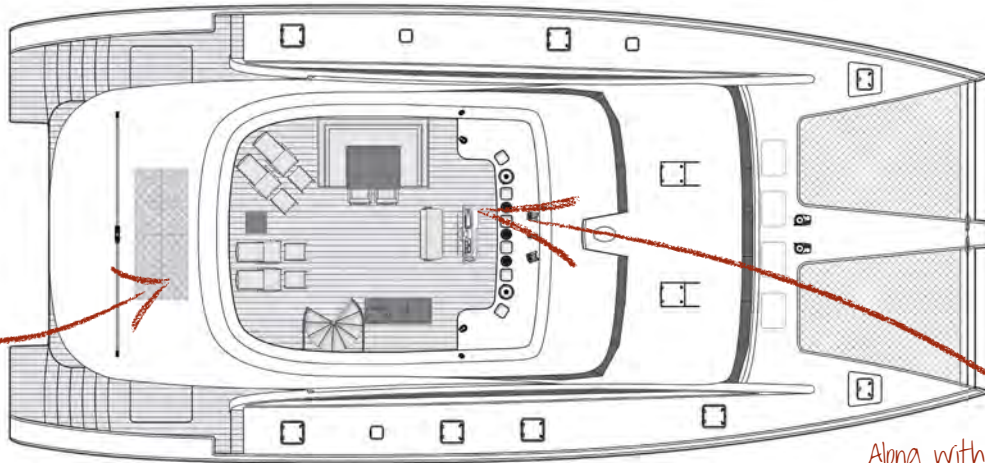
**Generators**  
 2 x 17.5 kVA Onan  
**Fuel capacity**  
 2 x 4,000 litres  
**Water capacity**  
 2 x 780 litres  
**Sails**  
 Incidences Brest

**Sail area**  
 650m<sup>2</sup>  
**Mast and boom**  
 Sunreef Yachts  
**Owner and guests** 7  
**Crew** 2-3  
**Tenders**  
 1 x 5.99m Medline 540

**Construction**  
 Composite; carbon mast and boom  
**Classification**  
 Bureau Veritas  
**Naval architecture/ exterior design**  
 Sunreef Yachts

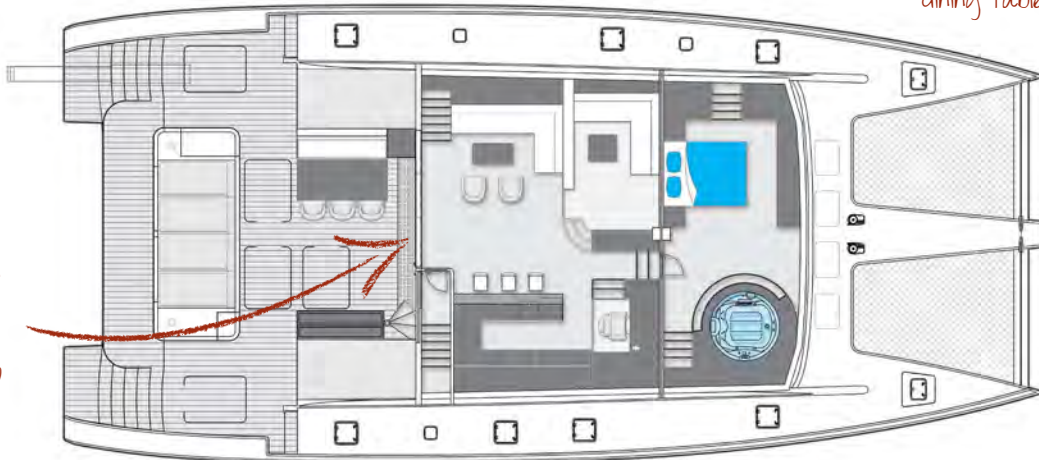
**Builder/year**  
 Sunreef Yachts/2012  
 Gdansk, Poland  
 t: +48 58 769 77 76  
 e: info@sunreef-yachts.com  
 w: sunreef-yachts.com

The gensets are backed up by solar panels and wind generators at the aft end of the sundeck

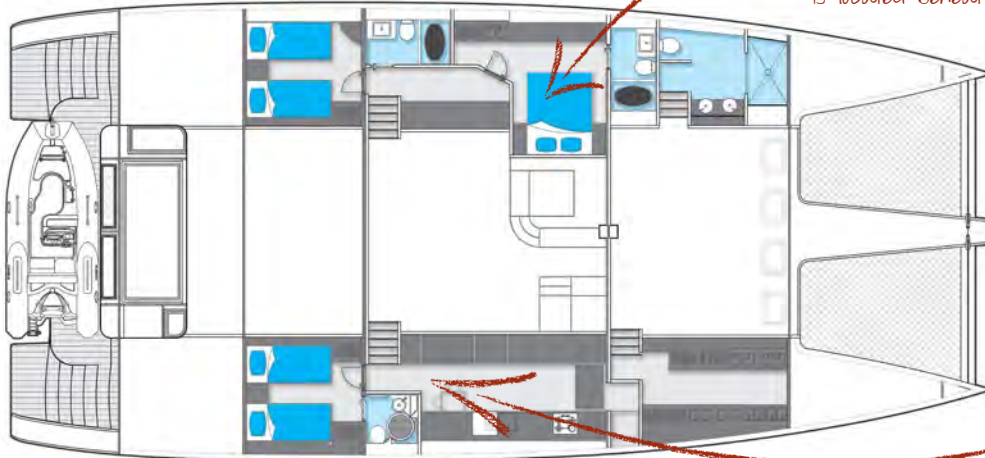


Along with copious seating, this area offers a bar, barbecue and dining table

Glass doors can lower between saloon and aft seating area to create a huge social space



In the port hull, the guest double cabin is located beneath the mezzanine



The crew quarters and large galley are situated next to each other in the starboard hull