



Passport to paradise

Eric Verbeeck tells us why the 44-metre Sunreef catamaran CHE is the perfect yacht for a round-the-globe cruise of a lifetime

It's not unheard of for an owner to decide that he wants to cruise around the world and to spend some leisure time exploring the wonders of the blue planet; what is surprising is when the chariot of choice is a superbly appointed 44-metre catamaran. But that's exactly the decision taken by Erik Verbeeck. *CHE*, the biggest ever catamaran built by Sunreef, was expressly commissioned and specced to be anything but a luxury, harbour-hugging sunpad. And it's no blind punt – Erik's previous yacht (also called *CHE*) was a Sunreef 74.

"With my first *CHE* I discovered the behaviour of the catamaran form on the sea, and the incredible comfort and stability. It differs a lot from the monohull – it's a very surprising and pleasing feeling," he says, and the more he thought about it, the more the big cat form made sense for an extended cruise. "I like the possibility of the close approach to land that the catamaran allows, thanks to its low draught. It means the boat is protected even in challenging weather by staying close to the coast, anywhere in the world, without having to look urgently for the marina," he says. As an exploration tool, here was something that not only took you to regions that other yachts couldn't reach, it also boasted enhanced comfort at sea and unsurpassed levels of safety.

What came out of the experience of the first *CHE* was the idea of a more extensive cruise. "My project for the new yacht was a round-the-

The Sunreef 114 *CHE* will be visiting parts of the world that other yachts don't reach.

world trip spread over a couple of years. That is why we wanted to have enough comfort for guests and crew. Our new *CHE* had to easily accommodate up to eight passengers and six crew. We wanted all parties to be able to find some intimacy, and at the same time live comfortably in one community. The size of our new *CHE* is ideal for this. The crew have their own quarters with a saloon, a dining area and comfortable cabins. Guests can also enjoy their own space and privacy, but in the end we all meet on different common decks such as the cockpit, the flybridge and the internal saloon."

Once the deal was signed in xxxxx, Erik – in his professional life a successful property developer, who knows a thing or two about managing projects – kept a close eye on the build. "The build of the yacht presents all the challenges of a land construction with the movement factor as an extra! Because of my business experience, it was very interesting for me to follow the build. Sunreef was in close contact with me and I had regular updates on design and construction. The shipyard did a very good job in communication and everything proceeded according to the schedule, which was essential for me."

There is nothing fussy about the yacht's interior – it's an informal, practical and calming place to be, and suits long stays. "It's a harmonious interior design," says a very proud Erik. "In fact, my wife Cha Cha designed it according to our taste and philosophy of life. She was able to use her creative skills, enhanced by Sunreef designers. All materials and colours used on *CHE* are a result of this co-operation."

"She chose the grey and white colours of the exterior for the interior as well. It's something sober, because she didn't want anything to compete with the beauty of nature where *CHE* will be sailing. However, to give the boat a touch of sensuality and a holiday ambience, she incorporated turquoise colours in some decorative elements, such as table tops, cushions and so on – a reflection of the sunny lagoons that *CHE* will explore."

A key area of the layout is the galley, cited prominently in the main saloon. "As in many homes, it is a central meeting area, and I'm glad it's just next to the saloon. This way the crew and guests can socialise more easily, and it helps to create a welcoming atmosphere. I also enjoy watching my meals being made right in front of me," says Erik.

Last year, Erik broke the yacht in with some cruising around the Mediterranean, giving him a chance to discover his other favourite on-board spots. "I spend the most of my time on the flybridge with my crew. Overall I'd say my favourite places are the port and starboard seats on the bow, the flybridge and the comfortable sunpads of the cockpit," he says. With so much deck space to play with, this isn't a yacht you'll be spending much time on below.

So which places in the world is Erik most looking forward to visiting? "Truthfully, there is no place that I want to visit more than any other. I'm curious about the entire world, of all the seas and oceans – I would like visit them all! For that reason we plan to do a round-the-world trip in five or six years, starting in spring from the Caribbean through the Pacific Ocean, the waters of China and the Indian Ocean, which we have already explored in our previous yacht."

And perhaps the most striking thing about the yacht is the shocking pink spinnaker and distinctive yin and yang logo. "Of course," says Erik, "it's the symbol from Taoist philosophy representing eternal harmony and balance. And that is what we wanted to achieve with *CHE*. It applies to everything – the guest/crew living areas, the interior design, the environmentally friendly technical solutions on board, such as reduced energy consumption, oil and grey/black water treatment systems, and extended storage space for compacted trash. And the name is important, too – it symbolises freedom. Ultimate freedom is what I feel when sailing."

"I've been sailing since the age of six on sail and motor yachts. My parents always had boats, I have also chartered yachts, so I am familiar with what come with a yacht – the pleasures, the dangers, the small issues that can make things difficult. Having passed through all these different situations, my new *CHE* seems a paradise for me." Paradise, and a passport to a unique kind of freedom. **SYW**



Specifications

LOA	34.00m (11ft 6in)
Beam	12.80m (42ft 0in)
Draught	2.50m (8ft 3in)
Mast height	47.00m (154ft 2in)
Displacement	115 tonnes
Engines	Twin 455hp Cummins
Guests	8
Crew	6
Classification	Bureau Veritas and MCA
Interior	Mrs Cha Cha Verbeeck and Sunreef Yachts
Construction	Sunreef Yachts

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"Guests can SOCIALISE more easily and it helps to create a WELCOMING atmosphere"



Above: Owner Erik Verbeeck is very proud of his latest *CHE*.
Top: The galley is a central feature of the main salon. *CHE*'s Mauritian chef Sony Namdev has worked in Malaysia, Japan and Australia.
Left: The décor in the twin guest cabins, as the rest of the yacht, is in caramel bamboo with upholstery and fabrics in grey to echo the hull colour.
Right: *CHE* is the largest sloop-rigged cat ever built, and the second-largest multihull in the world.

