

THE LATEST WAYS TO GET ONLINE ON BOARD

Yachting[®]

SINCE 1907

Cruise First Class

The Caribbean Your Way, Secrets of the Maldives Revealed **PLUS** Crew Tipping 101

HOW TO INSURE
YOUR YACHT

Go Cruising in
The Virgin
Islands



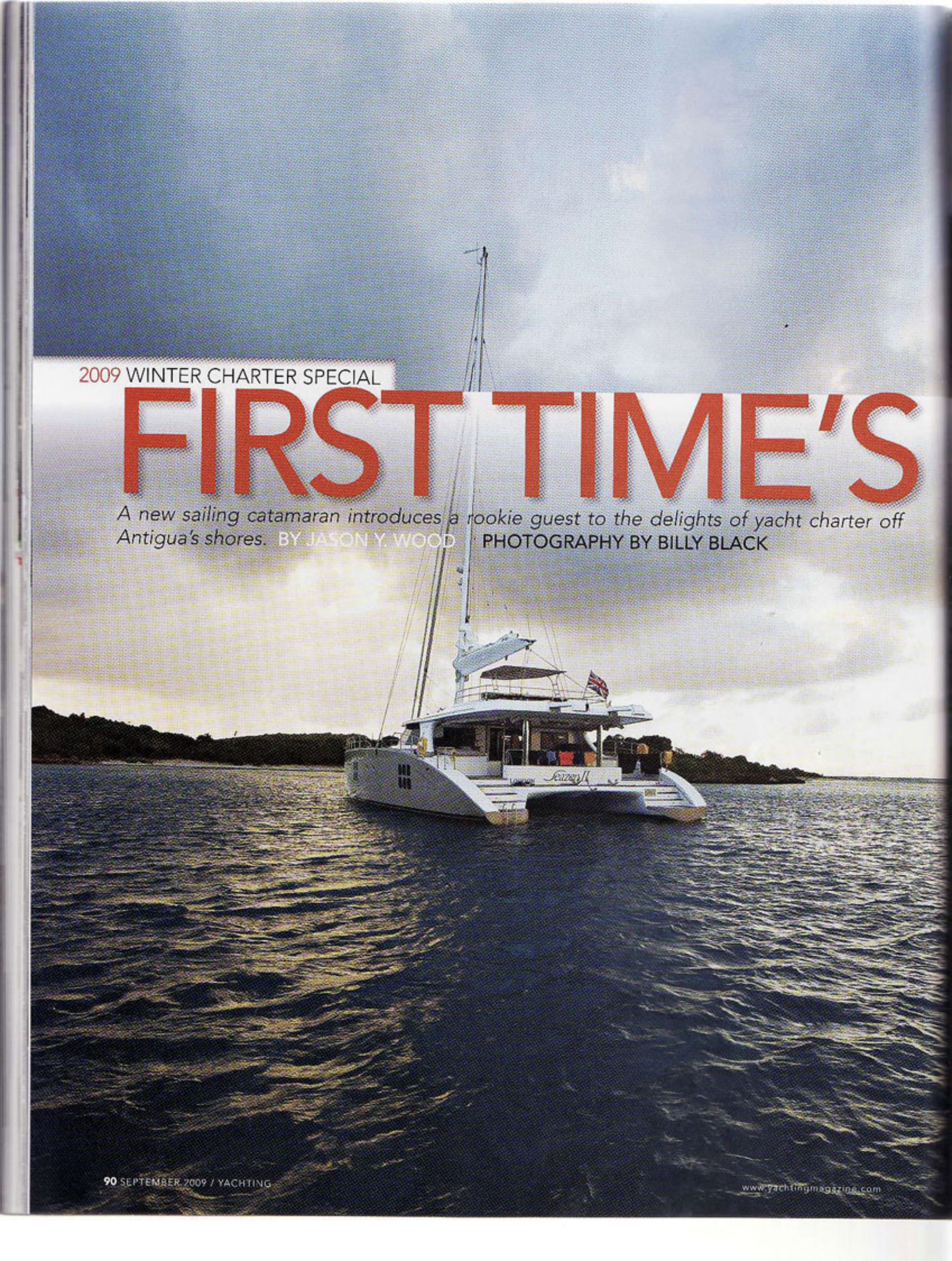
ON THE COVER:
The Sultans Way 001
in the Maldives

HARGRAVE 100,
OUT ISLANDER 64,
MARITIMO 56, HUCKINS 44

US \$7.00



www.yachtingmagazine.com SEPTEMBER 2009



2009 WINTER CHARTER SPECIAL

FIRST TIME'S

A new sailing catamaran introduces a rookie guest to the delights of yacht charter off Antigua's shores. BY JASON Y. WOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

A scenic view of a lake with a forested mountain in the background and a person swimming in the foreground. The water is dark blue with white foam from a boat's wake. The sky is blue with white clouds.

THE CHARM

LUGGING A SUITCASE DOWN THE DOCKS OF A CHARTER SHOW SEEMS A BIT PRESUMPTUOUS. AT LEAST I FELT THAT WAY, AS I STRODE ALONG EACH FINGER OF THE DOCKS,

the *clack clack clack* of my rollaboard's wheels sounding like a train clattering off without me to some exotic destination. I had arrived at the docks of Falmouth Harbour at the end of the Antigua Charter Yacht Show, and I was looking for my ride.

As I passed, the crew on each yacht would look up from their polishing or their coffee, knowing full well I wasn't expected yet, if at all. But they still seemed ready to spring into action, to adapt and adjust and welcome me aboard if needed, since I certainly appeared to need to be welcomed *someplace*.

The yachts were gorgeous, ranging from sporty, if dauntingly rigged, sailing craft to huge motoryachts, their topsides as steep as the walls of a fortress and equally imposing. Engrossed, I had walked right by the yacht I was supposed to call on, *Seazen II*, a new 70-foot sailing catamaran from Sunreef Yachts. And when I say "new," I mean brand spanking. This yacht was delivered from its Gdansk shipyard—as in Poland—directly to its dock at the Antigua charter show and straight into the hands of the crew, and its first charter, which included me. I considered myself a nearly ideal candidate for this particular assignment: After all, what better way to break in a rookie boat than with a rookie charter guest? I've been kicking around magazines about boats for ten years or so, but have never taken advantage of one of these perquisite-laden little holidays—I just never found an invitation that fit into my schedule conveniently. So here was my big chance. *No pressure*, you may say? To which I would respond: There is if you want to get another assignment.

Members of Sunreef's office staff, Martha, Radek, and Agnieszka, as well as two charter brokers, were aboard and getting situated—they were also here to check out *Seazen II*—and they had been in touch with the crew, who were provisioning in town. Everything was coming together and we would be off shortly. In the meantime, I climbed aboard to chill out, because the spacious afterdeck is sheltered from the sun, with large lounges both port and starboard that take advantage of wisps of breeze dockside, and huge pillows to stack up and enjoy. A banquette and dining table stretch across the transom, with five ottomans stowed beneath the table.

As you enter the salon through a sliding glass door, companionway stairs port and starboard lead to the aft staterooms. The salon encompasses a galley behind a high serving counter to port and an L-shaped settee with a couple of ottomans around a dining table. Upholstery and joinery are done up in a palette of cream and dark brown wood, with soft red accents in lamps, pillows, backrests, and a distinct Asian influence permeating the interior. A home theater system and wine fridge are straight ahead as you enter, with the ship's nav station to port. Forward of the galley to port and settee to starboard are

the stairways to the forward staterooms. On the port side, the forward stairs lead to a stateroom with double berth and en suite head, and also crew quarters, which have an en suite head, crew mess, and double berth in the bow of the port sponson. On the starboard side, a double-berth stateroom aft has a shower and head off the stairs. Starboard forward stairs lead to the master stateroom, with a double berth, a desk, and a spacious head, all in keeping with the minimalist décor and color scheme. An additional crew cabin is forward in the starboard sponson, accessible through a deck hatch.

Marine photographer Billy Black and I were installed in the aft port stateroom, with a head and shower off the landing at the base



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
THE AUTHOR AND RADEK
ADMIRE THE AFT DECK; DIN-
NER IS SERVED; THE EXPAN-
SIVE FOREDECK OFFERS SUN-
BATHING OPTIONS; A SWIM
PLATFORM ON EACH SPON-
SON MAKE REFRESHING DIPS
ALL THE MORE INVITING.



of our stairs. Billy chose the outboard berth of the two twin racks, nestled up against the array of six square portlights placed in the hullside. He was immediately and meticulously organized by placing pieces of his gear in the cubbies of the portlights like a strange display of quotidian statuary, backlit by the views beyond. The shelves on the bulkhead on my side were fine, but a bit cluttered with DVDs of French children's television programs. No matter, it was a short cruise so I had just my dop kit and sunglasses to stow there.

When I emerged from my stateroom, Captain Bob Davidson was finishing his pre-departure checks and chef Sharon Munroe, his partner, was finishing stowing the provisions. Bob was sorting out some of the issues resulting from the oceanic crossing. He decided that our shakedown would not take us far offshore, and instead we'd head for a nearby anchorage for the evening.

The captain of another Sunreef sailing cat docked at the show arrived in his RIB tender to help Captain Bob crab us off the dock, and Billy and I helped Sharon with the fenders and docklines. We were off.

As we putted around the docks of Falmouth Harbour and out to the channel, I got a telling glimpse of the world that was opening up to me. The docks fairly bristled with world-class yachts, impeccably maintained, expertly crewed, and awaiting your family's every whim. Want to snorkel as many reefs as you can find? There are charter yachts geared up for that. Want to learn to handle a small sailboat or manage the sails on a large sailing catamaran? That's easy, if you choose the right charter. Want to just relax and

laze in the shade of the afterdeck, getting up extra early so you can hog the best lounge all morning? Don't ask how I know, but there are boats where that's possible, too. Charter is a different way to appreciate more of the navigable water of the world, and the vast variety of boats on it. And I was finally underway.

Bob had decided that we would motor the first day, and as we left the protected harbor I could see why. The seas were a bit confused and as we got out into the wind, it kicked up a notch and got a bit sporty.

The plan was to make the most of our shortened schedule and



capitalize on *Seazen II's* many amenities, which captain and guests would discover together. We would motor west along the southern shore of Antigua, and find a secluded anchorage that Bob knew would suit our needs. As the winds continued to rise and the seas got snotty, we realized that our crew understood the comfort level that this cat would provide. They set a course that would get us where we needed to go, maybe sacrificing a bit of speed—cruise is around ten knots—to keep the cat's motion rhythmic and predictable.

Scudding clouds occasionally darkened the narrow strip of white-sand beach of the anchorage where we ended up. No matter, I didn't want to get all sandy, and, besides, there was barely enough room to spread out my beach towel. A large excursion boat had dumped its complement of passengers on the beach, making for a less-than-secluded cove. But by the time we had set the anchor, they were filing up the stern boarding ladders for a soggy ride back to their respective realities, and we would soon share this cove with just one other cruising yacht.

After a quick dip, I came up the boarding ladder to the lower deck on the portside sponson. We took out the RIB tender, easy to launch from the afterdeck, but opted not to launch the PWC, nestled in its davit-served locker just forward of the mast.

Billy and I helped Bob dig through a storage box in the afterdeck sole, locating, among jugs of drinking water and brand-new snorkeling gear, a folding cocktail table. And as that table stood on its own for the first time, I checked my watch—look at that, right on time. Sharon appeared with a platter of cheese and crackers and some olives, ready to fill drink orders. A couple of brief rain showers blew through that anchorage, creating pleasant breezes for a relaxing evening meal of roasted salmon on the sheltered afterdeck.

The next morning brought coffee and swimming in the anchorage, as we set to planning the day. We decided to sail east to Green Island and spend the night there. So we would backtrack a bit, sailing past Falmouth and English Harbours and around the southeastern edge of Antigua. The island still carries it off—an old Caribbean waypoint and the virtual birthplace of yacht charter in those beautiful blue waters—her lush green hillsides dotted with homes capitalizing on sea views and soft breezes. And as we passed Falmouth Harbour, the breathtaking parade of sail that is the Superyacht Cup was making its way to the course. We watched as these large sailing vessels passed, some of the most beautiful, high-tech machines ever driven by wind, their crews scurrying about, preparing for battle.



THE ISLAND STILL CARRIES IT OFF: THE VIRTUAL BIRTHPLACE OF CHARTER IN





THESE BEAUTIFUL BLUE WATERS.

RADEK AND MARTHA ENJOY THE STARBOARD LOUNGE, AND HIGH RAILS AND WIDE SIDE DECKS LET GUESTS FEEL SAFE GETTING AROUND (ABOVE). SEAZEN II SWINGS AT ANCHOR (BELOW).

I wondered what other wondrous scenes *Seazen II* would witness in her future career. With her schedule taking her around the Mediterranean in the summer and the Caribbean in the winter months, she would surely share anchorages and docks with yachts of every size, both power and sail.

Capt. Bob used the automated sail controls to raise the main and unfurl the genoa, and with Billy helping trim, he chose a forgiving reach. We sat on the top-deck settees and enjoyed the freshening breeze, as it developed into a real wind. I found myself holding onto the back of the settee for balance against the catamaran's roll as Bob grinned broadly and intoned, "It's blowin' a hooley out here!"

We shortened sail and stayed the course and, soon enough, Green Island grew close, and the anchorage came into view. Fortunately, Bob knew his way around because the reef that protects the anchorage is not readily apparent to the unschooled. Bob and Sharon set the anchor, and we swam and snorkeled and cooled off in the sun. Alone with *Seazen II* at last. At least until a large motoryacht made its way into the channel and anchored for the evening a hundred yards away. A man and a boy took the motoryacht's tender out for an exploration of the beach at dusk.

We set up the cocktail table and lit the LED star lights embedded in the afterdeck overhead, as Sharon brought out a platter of homemade sushi. And while the sun sank low and we raised our glasses, toasting *Seazen II*'s first charter, I realized what it was all about. □

Seazen II takes 10 guests at a lowest weekly base rate of €27,500. Sunreef Yachts, +48 58 769 77 77; www.sunreef-charter.com.

LATITUDE AND ATTITUDE

Sometimes the fun of a charter lies in its challenges.

It would seem likely that things can go awry on yacht charters. While the gloom-and-doomers in your group may want to get off, as in *right now*, there's something to be said for pulling together and toughing it out. Without further ado, here are three steps to making the best of a bad situation.

GET CREATIVE. The boat may be unable to handle the next leg of your aggressive voyaging schedule in a timely fashion? Adjust expectations and pull out the cruising guides. Skippers by their very nature are resourceful folks who can figure out some realistic options. Of course, the captain gets the final say, especially when safety is involved.

HAPPY GO LUCKY. So everything isn't going according to plan. Here are the options: Go back to the dock, where you'll stand with your stacked luggage and bake in the sun, or stay out on the water and enjoy the cool breezes and gentle rocking of the yacht. It's not the worst thing in the world to be at sea. Go snorkeling, take the PWC out for a rip, enjoy the delights of remote anchorages, or even dial up a taxi to meet you and bring you to a local restaurant—cell phones and VHF open up inland options. At the same time, we recommend you communicate your displeasure in civil tones to the captain and, if necessary, a charter company representative, when things become unsatisfactory.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES. Remember the charter for what it was, a time to be together (which you were) and enjoy the exotic location (which you did as well as you could). You'll look back on your snapshots and video and your logbook and remember your journey fondly. And you'll be glad you made the most of it, knowing that any charter captain will be glad to have you aboard.