



Catalina 425

Plenty of wind, great speed and an excellent sail in English Bay

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Finally, some wind! It had been far too long since this reviewer experienced even five knots of wind for a sailboat review—which makes it pretty-well impossible to evaluate sailing characteristics. On the day of our test, a 15-knot westerly was perfect and the new Catalina 425 was not only tons of fun, but so very easy to sail!

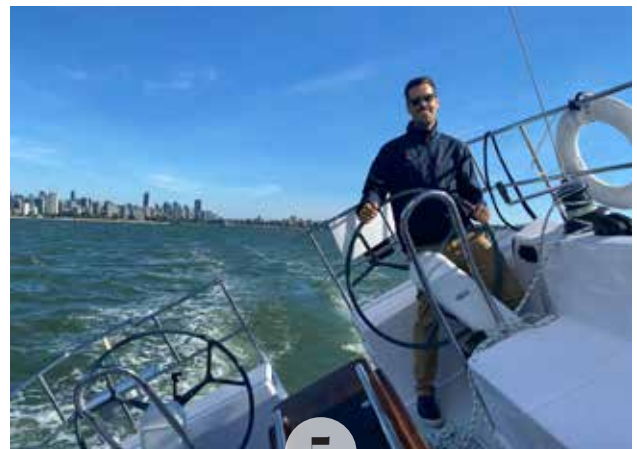
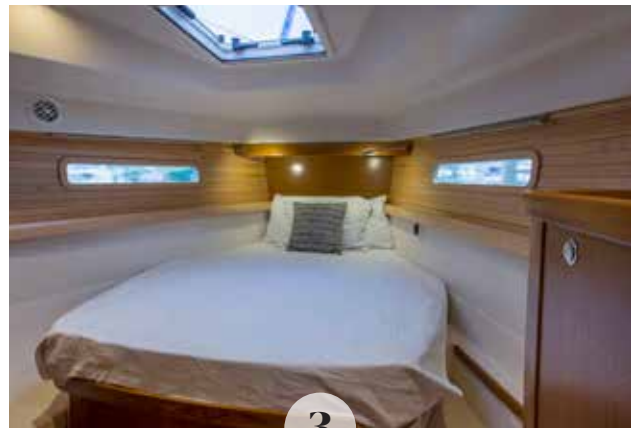
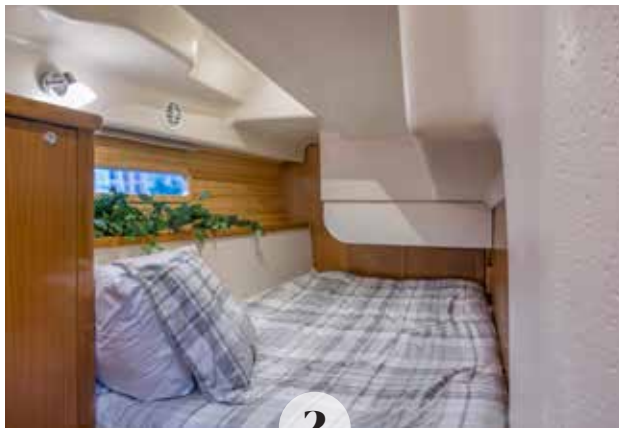
DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION The Catalina 425 (43 feet, six inches or 13.26 metres) is the middle model of the three in the Catalina Ocean Series (385, 425 and 445) offered by this long-time builder. The 425 is equipped with a bow master, two aft cabins and two heads as standard. A furling main, furling jib, single rudder, twin wheels and a bow thruster setup make it a snap to sail and manoeuvre.

The late Frank Butler founded Catalina Yachts back in 1970, and the then California-based company built more than 60,000 sailboats. (Well-known local builder, Forbes Cooper, produced more than 6,500 Catalina 27s right here

in the Lower Mainland, starting in 1974 and through to the 1980s).

The 425, designed by Gerry Douglas, replaces the popular Perry-designed Catalina 42, of which some 1,000 were built until about 2007. The 42 had more of a traditional hull shape while the 425 hull, introduced in 2017, was completely redesigned to make it faster and about 2,500 pounds lighter with less ballast, an almost plumb bow and three more feet of waterline length. The deckhouse was also redesigned with a much sleeker look and elongated, bullet shaped windows.

The hull is solid fibreglass below the waterline and balsa cored above. The ▶



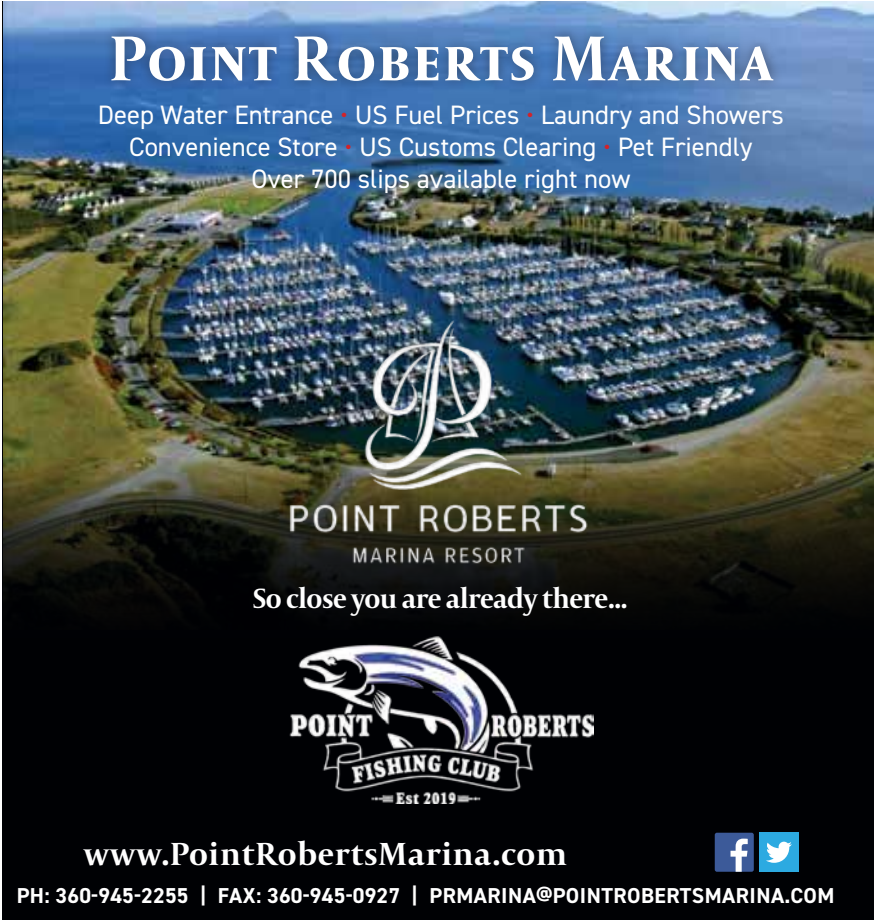
deck liner, structural grid, and hull liner are one-piece molds, with the single-piece deck cored with a honeycomb material. A new hull-deck joint design incorporates a double flange (and molded toe rail) that allows the stanchions to be thru-bolted with aluminum backing plates for added strength. The bow incorporates a watertight collision bulkhead for added safety. The test boat came with a lead fin keel, though a shallower draft wing keel is optional.

ON DECK Boarding is via a swim platform and transom stairs. Lifelines across the walkthrough are unique in that they retract into the stern pulpit, instead of dangling down and getting in the way.

A large door in the transom opens to a substantial storage area, which can also be accessed from the cockpit. Access through the cockpit is between the twin wheels (or side boarding gates) and to either side of a fixed folding-leaf table with a built-in cooler and compass mounted at its forward end. The aft end of the table holds a central 12-inch Garmin navigation pod, which is great as it can be swivelled and seen from either helm station. Both sides of the stern pulpit are fitted with raised, built in seats. Another feature I liked was the solid stainless handrails that run forward from the stern pulpit to the side boarding gates. This is a sturdier setup than the wire lifelines that typically run from the stern pulpit to the bow.

One unusual but interesting idea is a folding leaf for the starboard cockpit seat. Remove the cushion and it flips open to create a sizable sunpad area (or outdoor berth). One might expect access to a cockpit locker here, but this setup allows more space in the cabin below. The portside locker, though, does open to ▶

1. Both the dinette and starboard settees are convertible to berths. 2. The starboard aft cabin features a cosy double berth. 3. The bow master comes with an island berth (with electric lift for storage under the mattress). 4. Boarding is via the swim platform and transom stairs. 5. It was a blast to be screaming along in winds up to 19 knots!




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a substantial cabin/storage area below.

A hardtop dodger, with skylight to make it easier to see the main, covers the forward portion of the cockpit, and this provides good protection from spray and the weather. The test boat was ordered with canvas curtains all round, but they were not yet fitted.

THE RIG The Seldén, deck-stepped double-spreader mast has a single backstay. Nice and simple. It can't get much easier to set the sails with both the optional Seldén electric furling jib and in-mast electric furling. Push buttons at the starboard helm control the winches for furling both sails. The mainsail furling system (with vertical battens) is clever. To unfurl, the outhaul is wound on an electric self-tailing winch on the cabin top, then the unfurl button at the helm is pressed, and both the electric furler and electric winch are synchronized so that the furler motor unfurls while the outhaul pulls it out tight. It's an interesting bit of software that ties the two together. Another set of buttons controls the self-tacking jib. Its sheet runs back to a manual self-tailing winch on the portside coaming. For those wanting larger headsails, a genoa track runs along the deck. A matching winch is on the starboard coaming, and both are easily ac-

cessed from the helm. Mainsail sheeting is controlled by a German double-ended system. All halyards, reefing lines, vang and such lead back on deck to the cabin top to either the electric or manual winches.

INTERIOR The interior is relatively traditional, with two side-by-side aft cabins, the L-shaped galley to port and wet head to starboard. Forward, you'll find the U-shaped lounge with high-low folding leaf dining table. Across from that are two settees with a table between the two. That table can double as a chart table with a hinged lid and storage for small electronics and cruising guides. Both the dinette and starboard settees are convertible to berths. The bow master comes with an island berth (with electric lift for storage under the mattress), vanity and ensuite head with separate shower.

Woodwork is a mix of teak panelling and horizontal maple slats. There is a pleasing balance between the amount of wood and the textured fibreglass headliner and accents. Upholstery is of durable golden-coloured Ultraleather. All doors are framed in aluminum for added strength. Handrails are very well placed—something often missing in modern interior designs. I was happy to



SPECS

LOA	13.26 m / 43' 6"
Hull length	12.7 m / 41' 8"
LWL	11.91 m / 39' 1"
Beam	4.17 m / 13' 8"
Draft (fin keel)	2.03 m / 6' 8"
Ballast (fin keel)	3,040 kg / 6,700 lbs
Total weight (basic)	8,210 kg / 18,100 lbs
Fuel	235 L / 62 USG
Fuel (Optional Aux tank)	69 L / 18 USG
Water	443 L / 117 USG
Holding	204 L / 54 USG
Sail Area/Disp	21.90
Power	Yanmar 57 hp diesel

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see ample storage throughout, which is important for extended cruising. Good natural light is provided by overhead hatches, the deckhouse and hull windows.

The portside aft cabin is interesting in that in addition to access from the cockpit, it has a hinged section that can flip up vertically to provide excellent access to the engine, mechanical space, hot water tank and rudder area by opening several different panels. This is also where the optional four-kW or 6.5-kW Fischer Panda generator would be mounted. That hinged panel can also be used to create a narrower berth and what could be termed a quarterberth, or, of course, when folded down, a regular double berth like the starboard aft cabin.

The galley comes with a Force 10 propane stove with oven and three burners, microwave, top-loading dry storage compartment (which can be optioned with a top-loading freezer), ▶

wine cooler as well as a separate drawer fridge and freezer. The galley offers all you could wish for when cruising for extended periods.

SYSTEMS In addition to the 57-horsepower Yanmar diesel, the test boat was fitted with an upgraded 6.5-horsepower Lewmar electric bow thruster for easy manoeuvring. Heating will be a hydronic system, though it was yet to be installed. Besides the standard instrumentation, an 18-inch Garmin radar was mounted on the mast. The test boat was equipped with upgraded 8D AGM Lifeline batteries. The wiring that was visible, was clean and nicely done.

UNDERWAY The Yanmar diesel with a fixed prop pushed us along at a surprising speed of 7.4 knots at 2,460 rpm and

8.4 knots at wide open throttle (3,100 rpm). This is great speed for a sailboat under power.

While it was a blast to be screaming along in winds up to 19 knots, with a full main and jib we were slightly overpowered, but with a firm hand on the helm, we weren't quite at the point where the boat was rounding up, but too close for comfort, so we furled the main about 25 percent. During a lull in the wind, which dropped to 13 knots, our close-hauled speed was 5.9 knots at 35 degrees apparent.

After an hour or so tacking upwind (without adjusting anything), we went back to a full main and turned downwind. With 17 knots of true wind speed, and an apparent wind angle of 120 degrees, we were speeding along at 8.8 knots. On a beam reach (90 degrees

apparent), at the same wind speed, our speed was 7.5 to 8 knots. It would have been exciting to hoist an asymmetric spinnaker, but alas, that was a sail that the new owner was yet to decide on.

CONCLUDING REMARKS With excellent cruising amenities, the new Catalina 425 will make an excellent platform for weekends or extended voyages, and it comes with a Category A—unlimited offshore—rating. Its interior is well thought out and practical. With a redesigned hull, one could expect to get to destinations at much faster speeds, whether under power or sail. The furling jib and main will make it easy to sail even singlehanded. According to yacht broker Specialty Yachts, the next Catalina 425 ordered will be offered at US\$544,459, fully commissioned.

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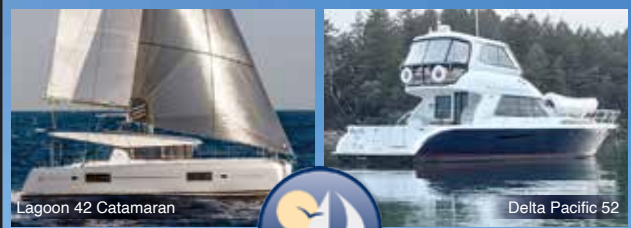
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