

Camping on water

Virus V8

Tiki 21, Night Lady (Nocna Frajla) and other stories

While I was a child I was fascinated with catamarans. After I served the national army service, from a friend I was given drawings for a catamaran Tiki 21, by James Wharram, one of the pioneers of the catamaran design and popularization.

Using his drawings, thousands of boats have been made around the world that proudly sail on the world's seas and oceans even today. Sadly, due to lack of money, I never made the Tiki 21, but a strong passion remained and was there to stay, towards these fast vessels.

Some time passed by, and while I was sailing the Adriatic, a few times I ran into the "Night Lady (Nocna Frajla)", catamaran which belonged to Branko Kockica (Serbian children entertainer) which was also a James Warren design. The public knows that actor well, on his boat a few serials were filmed as well. It is a catamaran with a modest interior, but it had lots of room outside, where, under the bimini, most of the time is spent any way.

Contaminated with the VIRUS

Lots of water has passed through Danube and Sava, until a boat with similar characteristics has appeared. This winter, on the London and Paris boat show I couldn't see enough it, the new VIRUS V8, a catamaran that is just that, a boat for camping on water. It is scarily fast, easy to transport and is affordable for a average family.

It took me a few months to find the free time and coordinate it with the time of the people who were supposed to present this interesting vessel to me. A few times an agreement was made, but the presentation had to be canceled due to weather conditions, which is more and less usual for this area. Finally I got lucky, on the 17th June I found my self in the VIRUS factory.





During lunch, which lasts from 12:00 to 14:00 here, Mr. Laouen, the designer and manufacturer of V8 gave me and interview:

-Can you please introduce your self?

My name is Laouen and I have been working for Virus boats for five years now. Last year with my father, I purchased a factory next to Lorient in the village Ploujinec Bretanja.

-What is manufactured in the factory?

Currently we are producing recreational rowing boats, as well as well known trimarans, Magnum 18 and

Magnum 21 of which over 500 has been made.

-What is your newest product?

After a few years of thinking we found a niche in the market. A boat which can be transported easily, which can be used for longer trips, boat which is also good for day breaks and with all that in mind, affordable for an average buyer. Due to the fact that most of the summer days are spent outdoors, we decided it should be something with a modest comfort, but with advance performance. At the start of November last year we decided to

make a sports catamaran for multi-day trips. From our project, to Paris premiere, only 6 weeks went by.

-What did you have in mind for the test for V8?

In the afternoon our team A will set a-sail in the V8 and you will be following in our Joker rib in order to make some photos. After that you can go aboard the Virus with Mr. Stephen Walker, our sales representative for Great Britain and do the test in any way what you want, I will be there to help present the boat in the best way. For tomorrow we are planning to leave the port

at about 10:00 when the tide low, and to sail to the Belle island, which is about 25kts away. After about four and a half hours of sailing we should arrive to Port Maria valley, and the tide will at that point be high there, 0.7m. We will go in and wait until tide goes down, until the boat is safely stranded on the beach on its keels. That is the main reason why we decided to use long fixed keels, and not dagger boards, which give lots of headaches during usage, but gain very little on performance.

When we arrived in the marina which is on the river, the V8 was docked in the part for small boats, where, at low tide it is stranded. They say this is only a summer marina, because in the winter from November to April big waves don't allow safe exit to the sea. There was a weak 3.5hp outboard on the stern. The wind was from the side, so we had to give the boat a small push. We easily left through a narrow passage between two buoys, as it was currently high tide.

The V8 doesn't have any electrical instruments, not even a wind shower,

which wouldn't serve the purpose on a rotating mast anyway. The only instrument we actually have is a hand held GPS. We now the wind is quite stable blowing from NW with about 15kts. The waves are only about 0.4m which considerably eases the sail. When they raised the sails, the V8 picked up speed very well with side wind. The balance is held very easily as the crew sits on a bench which is practically outside the hull. From what I could notice, two crew members can serve the boat in moderate wind and sea conditions. The wind suddenly picked up

and one hull went completely out of the water. All maneuvers, tack, jibe... are done quite easily. The wind is still picking up and the waves are rising, and white crests are starting to show which means that the sea is at about 5 on Bofor scale.

Thanks to really narrow hulls, the V8 simply slices through the waves, and doesn't raise any sea spray so the crew stays dry. Monohull boats are already at 45°, and in the RIB, we don't feel all that pleasant either.

Due to big bumps on waves I cannot take

photos any more, Stephen and myself go aboard the V8 and start enjoying a sail, at speeds which very frequently go above 15kts according to GPS. V8 is handling any direction of movement very well, with fast acceleration and deceleration. I can believe that we are going to finish this first test completely dry.

The day after we got up early to get a nice tour of the factory. Everything is very clean, things seem relaxed and everyone is doing their jobs. About 10 rowing boats are being packed and a few last bits are being installed on

Technical Specifications

- Length • 8m
- Width • 4.7m
- Weight • 650 kg
- Berths • 4
- Width on the trailer • 2.4m



a V8 in front of the building. The boat is ready for delivery and in a few days it is going to Corsica. On the dry, the V8 seems even slimmer and I am using this opportunity to carefully see every detail. Inside the hulls, the beds are quite narrow and are appropriate for sleeping only smaller people or children. Under the beds there is a lot of storage space. On the outside, the platform is quite large, and with a bimini it can be turned into a big room which gives great rain and sun protection, which can also be used for sleeping in sleeping bags. There isn't too much comfort and space for a couple of days cruising but for young adventure seekers and us who are not too spoilt there should be enough.

In a nearby bakery we bought some sandwiches and some great croissants with almonds and dry fruit. The crew for this longer part of the

test is Laouen as a skipper, little Sebastian (Frances sailing hope), Stephen and I.

This time I am really concerned how we are going to leave the port due to low tide, the V8 is almost touching the sandy bottom. Laouen starts the little outboard. I am pushing the V8 form the handy bench. Even though it weights only 650kgs, the V8 isn't feeling my weight on its side.

We are raising our main sail straight away, and the rotating mast (which is standard equipment) is helping us so that we don't have to face wind directly.

I just sat down, and Laouen scouted: "Oooo, we have a problem". At that point I noticed as well that we grounded the boat. We set a sail only one hour after the low tide, in order to be at Belle just after the high tide.

We lowered the main sail so that the wind doesn't ground us even more, and Laouen give maximum reverse power to the tiny engine. Luckily it was only sand with a few stones, so we easily released our self's. In a few minutes we are getting to the ocean and after the main sail we are raising the spinnaker as well.

The weather forecast is: wind NW 10-15kts, the sea 3-4 bofors. The white crest's behind us, is telling me that we are moving very quickly. A peek at the GPS tells me that we are at 9.5kts. Because the wind is directly behind us, we have to jibe a few times. This is the maneuver of moving the

sail from one side to another across the stern. Slowly we are exiting the area of dangerous underwater rocks and its time to relax and enjoy. During breakfast Laouen explains to me that in the last few days the oysters have been getting bigger, and that that's why we grounded the boat.

While I was steering the V8 it surprised me that it is so easy to handle and that on the rudder you can feel every little wave as well as vibrations form the speed. In about two hours we started to see the shape of the island. All the ropes are at an arms reach.

As the wind picked up I had to hold the stopper for the spinnaker, so that I can release it quickly if need be. We are traveling slightly above 12kts. They say that it's a bad day if you don't go above 10kts and a very good one if you travel at excess of 20kts.

We are slowly circling around the headland, and we can see the valley in which we are going to settle. In front of us there are already a few boats anchored with bigger drafts. We are entering a valley which reminds of "Trsteno". It is a long sandy beach, very well protected from most

winds. Slowly we are grounding the boat and that is an end of our test.

I exited the boat across its bow, and the water is at my knee. We tied the boat until the tide went out enough so that the V8 is left on the dry. This is a good opportunity to inspect the underwater level of hulls and give it a little clean.

A sail on the V8 charged up my adrenalin batteries for a longer time. Even though it has modest comfort it has excellent cruising characteristics, which can be enhanced with carbon fiber mast and regatta gear.

For the assembly of the boat, I am not going to say that it is easy, but for three people who know what they are doing it should take about three to four hours.

This cat gives the possibility to use it on different seas every holiday, and for the rest of the year you can use it on your local river or lake. It is also very good as a large fishing platform. On a lake, with the use of a electrical engine it can be used for recreation or training of young sailors. On a day trip it can accommodate up to 6 people, comfortably. The winter

days aren't a problem any more, as long as you have a back yard to keep it in.

My conclusion of the V8 is, it is fantastic value for money. The current price in France is about 38,000e with standard equipment. As optional extras I would recommend a trailer and a spinnaker. The waiting list is about 30 days.

This is definitely the only VIRUS I would really like to have.

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