

Test

Isla 40

To chance upon an island...



Test location: Bandol, France

Weather conditions: slight sea, 5 to 15 knots of southeasterly wind.

“With his three winches and two banks of clutches, the helmsman easily manages all sailing maneuvers.”

This new catamaran - entry model in the Fountaine Pajot range - was a real surprise for the summer of 2020. An upstream communications blackout was orchestrated to offer a bonus in addition to the manufacturer's two new flagship models - the Samana 59 and the Power 67 - at this fall's boat shows. Having been cancelled at short notice, the shows have been replaced by private viewings. It was after the first of these, at Bandol in the South of France, that we were able to discover the Isla 40.

For a few years now, all the sailing catamarans bearing the Fountaine Pajot signature have had island names - with the names of some of them, such as the Samana - ending in an "a". So, for the manufacturer's entry-level range, why not use the generic term - in Spanish, to keep the "a"? This is the choice validated by the manufacturer.

Inverted bows

It's quite amazing how the inverted bows alter the silhouette: the Isla 40's design is as sporty as it is seductive. In this pivotal 40-foot size (below this, some crews might hesitate to embark on ocean passages), the performance/comfort compromise is a subtle equation, for want of space: hulls that are too narrow deprive the boat of double berths in the forecabins, a nacelle that is too large on the other hand, translates into displacement and consequent windage... The Isla 40 scores highly, with sufficient but

controlled volumes everywhere. A visible compromise on the water - the balanced silhouette is pleasing, but also on paper with a light displacement of less than 9 tons and a sail area of nearly 105 m² (1,150 sq ft) - giving a very favorable sail area to weight ratio. Note the generous semi-circular sections of the hulls, capable of carrying the load, but also the fine entry bows and the comfortable bridgedeck clearance. The hulls adopt a discreet chine on their inboard sides.

A little bit of technical...

The hulls built using infusion process are made up in three sections: the underside of the nacelle, the inboard topsides and the outboard half-hulls. The sandwich consists of a balsa core and skins made of multiaxial glass cloth. The deck and the coachroof, true to the yard's know-how, are injected parts - vacuum lamination in a two-sided mold. A closer examination of both the bilges and the electrical circuits inspires confidence: all elements are accessible and the connections are carefully made. The engine compartments are particularly large. The three-cylinder

motors thus benefit from easy access for maintenance operations. The alternators provide 35 A at idle and 100 A at cruising speed to the on-board batteries. The house bank is fitted higher up to prevent any of the consequences of flooding. It should be noted that the Isla 40, in addition to its sandwich construction, is equipped with four buoyancy zones. The assembly of the catamaran's steering components is robust and all the elements such as the rod connecting the two rudders and the autopilot ram are accessible.

Square-topped mainsail and overlapping headsail

Our test model was equipped with twin 30 hp Volvo engines. This powertrain is available as an option - the manufacturer offers 20 hp motors as standard, but with the 30's, the Isla 40 can maintain an average speed of 7 to 8 knots without pushing it. The helm and maneuvering station is raised, but not on the flybridge - always a compromise on the middle ground. This layout offers many advantages: perfect visibility over the water, user-friendliness thanks to the double bench seat and the proximity of the cockpit, accessible sailing maneuvers, the possibility of intervening on deck, a pleasant silhouette, better centering of weights, more mainsail area... But no real flybridge, even though steps and a railing allow easy access to the bimini.

The mainsail is quick to hoist. As soon as the overlapping genoa is unfurled, the Isla 40 starts to move even though there's barely a ripple on the water. However, we are far from being in "light" configuration, as the fuel and water tanks are 80% full. She tacks easily in spite of a still low speed to get closer to where the breeze looks to be. There, with 8/9 knots of wind, we strode along at 5 knots at an angle of 50° off the true wind. No need to head up any further - the Isla 40 prefers the sails just a little open. The cable linkage results in a fairly neutral helm feel - but the course stability is excellent.

The wind finally settled down for good between 12 and 15 knots: we took advantage of this to unfurl the gennaker. This gave a guaranteed turbo-boost, with the GPS displaying between 8 and 9 knots. From his three winches and two banks of clutches, the helmsman easily manages all sailing maneuvers. An optional, small fixed bimini provides protection. The sturdy aluminum structure holds well in the wind: the Isla 40 should perform nicely in windier conditions and bigger seas.

A tried and tested deck layout

The first impression when you come aboard the Isla 40 is that the deck is clean, bare and efficient. The side decks are at least 0.62 m (2 feet) wide; the non-slip is effective even when wet, and the handrails are right there on the coachroof. Forward, the manufacturer offers sunbathing space, just behind the trampolines. As for the cockpit, it is protected by the generous - yet discreet - bimini. The anchoring gear is well designed and easy to use.

Close to the galley, the table measures 165 by 83 cm (65" by 33). It seats five, but with the addition of four stools, you could squeeze in ten guests. The manufacturer also offers an extension. To starboard, a comfortable lounge is an invitation to idleness. This seat is complemented by a 1.86 m (6-foot) aft bench seat. The large open areas facilitate circulation and access to the deck as well as to the wide sugarscoops.

She's still got the "peaked cap" roof!

The sliding bay door is of course the passing point - all on the same level - between the cockpit and the saloon. The opening is wide: the main door, which folds away into the bulkhead of the nav-station, measures 1.90 m high by 0.79 m wide (6'3" by 2'7"). Above the galley, an additional 72 cm (28") opening provides an attractive interior/exterior connection. With headroom of 2.08 m (6'10"), there is plenty of volume. Fountaine Pajot has kept its sloping, forward windows, topped with the peak of a cap. This configuration avoids the greenhouse effect. The only overhead opening in the coachroof is of a moderate surface area. The windows are wide on the sides, with the view very open towards the stern... so many windows make the saloon particularly luminous, especially since the structural uprights of the coachroof seem rather discreet. Forward, the two very large opening hatches provide effective ventilation. The L-shaped galley is completed

by a 3-burner hob, oven, double sink and drawer-type refrigerators. **All the navigation equipment is grouped together to starboard, near the cockpit. This new layout is very strategic, being close to the helmsman, meaning that a comfortable watch can be kept from the interior. As a result, the saloon has a very enticing lounge, to port. All this means that you can keep watch in the warm and dry, with a view of all the necessary screens. The saloon table can be transformed into a double berth. The overall finish, very close to that of the Elba 45, is very attractive.** In the hulls, there are three or four cabins and two to four bathrooms. The width of the doors is 43 cm (17"). In the aft cabins, there are island beds. The mattresses are of excellent quality, and the ventilation is well designed. Note that the inverted bows mean that the hulls can accommodate a skipper's berth.

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We took great pleasure in sailing aboard this catamaran. She's well-balanced under sail and so easy to handle. A single-hander will manage fine... and novice sailors will quickly get their bearings as the miles go by. Inside, the saloon offers remarkable comfort and conviviality for a 40-footer. **If you try it, you'll want one!**

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Technical specifications

- > **Builder:** Fountaine Pajot
- > **Naval Architects:** Berret-Racoupeau Yacht Design
- > **Length:** 11.93 m (39'2")
- > **Beam:** 6.63 m (21'9")
- > **Draft:** 1.21 m (4')
- > **Displacement:** 8.9 t (19,620 lbs)
- > **Mainsail area:** 59 m² (635 sq ft)
- > **Genoa:** 36 m² (390 sq ft)
- > **Engines:** 2 x 20 hp or 2 x 30 hp Volvo
- > **Fuel capacity:** 300 l (79 US gal)
- > **Water:** 2 x 265 l (2 x 70 US gal)
- > **Construction:** composite balsa glass polyester sandwich (infusion process for the hull, injection for the coachroof and deck)



Versions & Options

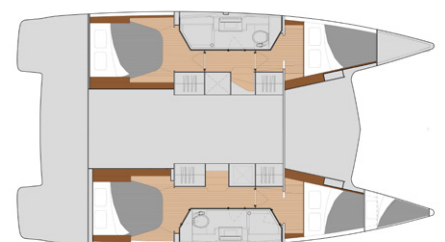
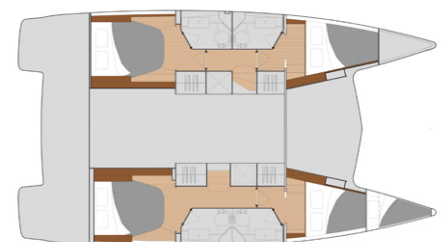
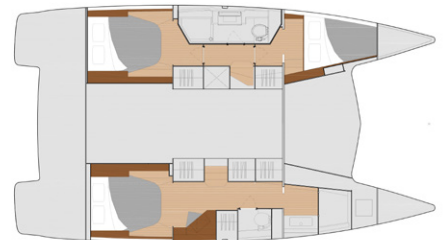
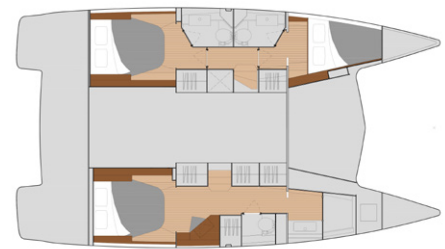
Versions available and prices excluding tax:

- > 3-cabin, 3-bathroom Maestro: € 299,637
- > 3-cabin, 2-bathroom Maestro: € 298,669
- > 4-cabin, 4-bathroom Quatuor: € 302,439
- > 4-cabin, 2-bathroom Quatuor: € 301,318

Principal options excluding tax

- > Grand Large Pack: € 15,500
- > Oceanic Pack: € 28,500
- > Comfort Pack: € 36,000

- > Fixed helm station bimini: € 2,292
- > Garmin 1 electronics package: € 13,000
- > Solar panels 3 x 100 W: € 3,890
- > 60 l (15.8 US gal) / h Watermaker: € 10,125
- > 30 hp engines: € 614
- > Three-blade folding propellers: for 2 x 20 hp: € 1,632 /
for 2 x 30 hp: € 1,999
- > Hull and saloon heating: € 11,780
- > Sails in Hydranet: € 13,144
- > Gennaker: € 3,090
- > 3.15m (10') Hypalon dinghy and 15 hp outboard: €
7,907
- > Commissioning: € 10,800
- > Handover and training: € 2,600





+ The inverted bows give a modern and elegant silhouette to the Isla 40.

+ The sleek rig, the overlapping genoa and the square-topped mainsail reflect the architect's desire to provide this model with a decent sail area.



+ The helm station - and sail maneuvering position - at mid-height offers a perfect view of the water and the sails, while remaining very close to the cockpit.



+ This catamaran can easily be managed by a short-handed crew or even a single-hander.

+ Safe movement around the deck is ensured by wide side-decks, flush hatches and handrails on the coachroof.



+ The cockpit features a table to port, a lounge on the starboard side, and a large open area in between.





+ The saloon incorporates a lounger for the watchkeeper: sat here, you can keep an eye on the sails thanks to the overhead panel and see your course on the plotter.



+ The navigation instruments are grouped together at the after end of the nacelle, to port. Note the roundness of the furniture, a design borrowed from the Elba 45.



+ The aft cabins are equipped with comfortable island beds.