



# It's a top cat

Multihull fans will find much to like about the new Moorings 4000 – and it might even just convert a few monohull devotees too, writes Caroline Strainig.

Okay, so I own a monohull, but occasionally, just occasionally, I can be tempted to stray, and I admit that this straying is becoming increasingly common. I've now gone from a "no way" to a "maybe" in terms of crossing over when retirement and some more serious cruising are in the offing.

Much as devout monohullers hate to admit it, multihulls do have a lot going for them. Their shallow draft enables you to anchor close in, which gives you more protection from the elements and makes it easier to explore. Then there's the benefit of being able to sail relatively flat. It's wonderful to make lunch, have a drink or go to the loo without having to hang on like grim death. That's not to say these boats don't rock and roll – when seas get up a bit they do pitch and can slam – but the heeling feeling is absent and life is definitely a more upright affair.

The Moorings 4000 is one of an increasing number of multihulls finding their way into Australian charter fleets and private ownership because of these and other pluses. It's the latest in a series built by South African builder Robertson and Caine for The Moorings, which is one of the world's largest charter companies. This series was designed primarily for chartering, but most models are also available in three-cabin versions aimed at private owners called the Leopard series. The first Moorings 4000 to arrive in Australia, Crackerjack, joined the company's Hamilton Island fleet late last year and belongs to a private investor. I was invited to sail it during a visit to the Whitsundays to research copy for *CH's* Whitsunday feature, which will run in the April issue.

### She's got the look

First off, I must say the 4000 is a looker. It's one of those boats that elicit an almost-visceral reaction, or at least it did in me. Curved lines, big eye-like windows on the side and lots of gleaming white fibreglass. It shouts class from every pore. Even just looking at it in the marina and knowing you are going to take it out is enough to make you straighten your back, puff out your chest and



The 4000 at anchor in Maconnia Inlet in the Whitsundays. Insets: Under sail and the view from the helm station.

feel like cock of the walk.

### Rig and sail plan

The 4000 is main-driven and sports a large roached, battened main, fractional rig, swept-back spreaders and a Profurl self-furler with 120-percent genoa.

The sail plan is one of the better ones I have come across. Most controls come back to Spinlock jammers and two self-tailing 48 CST two-speed winches just to starboard of the helm, the exception being the in-line reefing, which comes back to a block at the foot of the mast.

The traveller is up out of harm's way on the hard top, as is the boom, which is high-set.

A SailMate self-stacking mainsail handling system with lazyjacks and an integral sail cover makes raising and dousing sail single-handed relatively easy.

“Curved lines, big eye-like windows on the side and lots of gleaming white fibreglass. It shouts class from every pore”

### Cockpit and deck layout

Pride of place in the cockpit goes to the large U-shaped table, curved seat next to it and straight seat to starboard. One of the features I liked most here was the nifty lifeline-cum-gate set-up that enables you to close off this area from the back deck – ideal for keeping small children contained.

Sliding doors lead into the saloon and a small sliding window over a servery ensures keeping the helmsperson well supplied with food and drinks is an easy task even when the main doors are shut.

Aft on the back deck is a curved set of white fibreglass davits and in the port transom a fold-down swimming ladder and cold shower.

Forwards is a large trampoline and small single pulpit seats to port and starboard, which are great spots for quiet reflection. Sun-visor-like steps on the forward side of the saloon windows make for easy access to the cabin top and help restrict glare inside.

Side decks are wide and relatively easy to traverse, although an intermediate stay midships does have to be navigated.

## New boats: Moorings 4000

Stowage comprises a large lazarette/liferaft locker just aft of the cockpit seat, gas locker (big enough for two) in the seat to starboard and two large lockers in the foredeck that house the water stowage and fenders. The anchor locker is on the foredeck and reasonably deep. The 1000W electric windlass with remote can also be used to raise the main.

The helm station is top-notch. Visibility is excellent, both forwards and upwards, and a clear panel in the hardtop gave a good view of the masthead wind indicator. Depth-sounder, log, wind indicator, chartplotter and autopilot (all Raymarine) and Plastimo compass are right in front of you. The seat also accommodates two – great for those who want to cuddle up to their partner.

A hard-top bimini keeps the cockpit shaded and protected from the elements most of the time, with a sliding section of hatch over the helmsperson so he/she can be in or out of the weather as they desire. Roll-up shades on the sides and rear of the hard top and a removable clear on the front provide further climate control.

Access to the twin 40hp Volvo saildrive engines and quadrant is good.

### The saloon

The light and space hit you as soon as you open the sliding doors: panoramic windows give 360° views and numerous opening hatches and portholes ensure maximum ventilation and light. A table and large L-shaped curved settee that can seat six



ABOVE: A table and large curved settee are the focal point of the saloon, which has panoramic views. LEFT: The shower has a door and can be closed off from the rest of the head.

BELOW: The double berths in the forward cabins are slightly smaller than the aft ones, but should still be adequate for most normal-sized couples.



comfortably is the focal point, but the refrigeration and galley come a close second once you familiarise yourself with them. Those who have owned boats lacking in refrigeration will ooh and ah over the large, 12v front-opening fridge and freezer, while those who do the catering and washing up will drool over the galley. In addition to good, well-thought-out storage, this has a double-bowl sink and, best of all, a draining compartment next to it where you can stack your soapy dishes, rinse them and leave them to dry. Sure beats drying up soapy dishes with a



The helm station – everything at your fingertips.

grubby T-towel!

Power is well catered for by three house batteries and a dedicated battery for each engine. The chart table is over the fridges and is large, but there is no dedicated storage for charts and those planning a circumnavigation will have to find somewhere else to stow them.

Another must-mention is the instrument panel, which is just inside the saloon door to port and features among other things an amperage and DC voltage readout, stereo/CD player and VHF radio.

Décor is mainly white and cream, with minimal timber veneer trim and plenty of easy-care Laminex.

### Down below

Four steps lead down from either side of the saloon into the hulls, which are identical: cabins forwards and aft and a head midships.

Each cabin has a double berth, although in the forward ones these are tapered slightly. My partner and I opted to sleep in one of the larger aft berths, but we tried one of the tapered ones for size and thought most occupants normal-sized couples would find them adequate.

In the forward cabins that awkward space in the forepeak that exists in every catamaran has been used for a small secondary berth, although most wouldn't use it for that, but for stowing suitcases and gear.

There are two or three hatches and fans in every cabin, and ventilation and light are accordingly good, as is

## THOUGHTS FROM AN OWNER

Sydney-based Crackerjack owners Matthew and Vera Martins' love affair with sailing started in 1997 when they were married on Hamilton Island.

"The day after the wedding ceremony, we undertook our first bareboat charter," Matthew Martin said. "Since that day we have had cruising holidays in the Whitsundays on monohulls and catamarans with various charter companies. The dream to turn this experience into a business was mine from the beginning. It took 17 months of convincing for Vera to be turned around, but when we took delivery of Crackerjack in September 2004, it was a dream come true."

They decided early in the research phase on a catamaran because of their stability, layout and growing popularity worldwide.

"It all fell into place when we found the Robertson and Caine-built catamarans to have everything we were looking for in a boat and more. Performance under sail is fantastic and would more than satisfy all but the diehard monohull enthusiast, and the level of inclusions of a high standard, whether it be the bigger-than-average 40hp Volvo saildrive engines, the electric flush toilets, or the navigational aids, which include chartplotting gear and autopilot. This equipment level as standard was unmatched in the Whitsundays, which was surprising to us as it could singularly add to the enjoyment of a charter holiday."

Martin and Vera were particularly impressed with the style and layout of the boat.

"It is very family-friendly, with the 10-berth capacity, hard-top bimini, galley-up (on same level as saloon) design and large open-plan cockpit/saloon. Under sail, it can be managed easily by one person," he said. "It is simply the best boat available in the size to create a relaxed holiday for a wide variety of charter groups, and we figured that had to be the best formula for success. Add to that the fact we are in one of the best cruising grounds in the world and we were in."



Those who have to do the catering will love the big front-opening freezer and fridge, which are ideal for the Whitsundays. If heading into rough stuff, obviously you need to ensure they are tightly packed so your food and bottles don't rattle around.

stowage, with good-sized hanging lockers, shelves and compartments under berths.

The loo has an enclosed shower, hand basin and an electric toilet with macerator and holding tank that can be switched to direct discharge when allowed. A plastic sliding cover over the toilet-roll holder warrants special mention: it's a much better solution than having the roll behind the door of the hand basin cupboard as is the norm on most production boats. Speaking of things toilet, the seat of

Stepping out... this photo shows how the hulls step out just above the waterline. The Moorings says this produces more room internally without sacrificing performance. The innovation has also been used in the 4200.

the object in question is also larger and more house-like than that on many boat toilets. Makes contemplating your navel a much more pleasant task.

Like the rest of the boat, timber is used largely only for trim and easy-care, man-made materials proliferate.

### Performance

We weren't surprised to learn the 4000 has an innovative stepped hull, which enables increased volume while minimising wetted hull surface, producing good load-carrying capacity

## THE MOORINGS AND ROBERTSON AND CAINE

The Moorings' South Pacific regional manager, Richard Ray, said The Moorings' association with Cape Town-based South African boatbuilder Robertson and Caine began in 1996 when The Moorings decided it wanted to develop a boat specifically for charter guests.

"This led to the birth of the R+C Moorings 4500, a boat that quickly gained public recognition when in 1997 it was awarded the Charter Boat of the Year by the US magazine *Cruising World*," Ray explained.

"In the same year the first of the 3800s was launched, followed closely by the 4700, which became The Moorings' crewed-yachts division flagship. In 2002 this role was passed onto the impressive R+C Moorings 6200.

"In August 2001 The Moorings launched the 4200 (four-cabin four-head), which was the first to feature the innovative stepped hull.

"Robertson and Caine builds only for The Moorings, so it is a true partnership."



## Practical: Moorings 4000

and good performance.

Conditions during our two-day outing ranged from 15-25-knots plus, with winds easing to 15 right at the end. Like most charter-orientated cats, this is a reasonably heavy boat and needs a bit of puff to really get going, but it's more performance-orientated than most cats designed primarily for the charter market.

With a double-reefed main and full headie in 25 knots of wind on a close reach, Crackerjack achieved up to eight knots and nine off the breeze. When winds eased to 15 knots the speed quickly dropped a couple of knots or so.

It pointed around 40-45°, which is about standard for a catamaran. If you luffed up accidentally and weren't quick to correct, you did have to settle down on the new tack before you could tack back, or start an engine to assist you. Again, this is in no way unusual. It's one of the prices you pay for twin hulls and all that space.

In terms of features and fixtures

that could be improved, the hard-top bimini near the winches did prove something of a head magnet when the sliding hatch was open. My other half, Alex, whacked his head several times while doing the sheets, and a soft rubber buffer or design rethink would be in order here. The in-line reefing system could also do with a bit of tweaking. As mentioned earlier, it comes back to the mast, where the reefing line has to be threaded through a block on the deck. An extra block here would make it easier to swap between reefs. We put two reefs in initially because the forecast was for 20-25-knot winds and couldn't be bothered to trade down to just one or none when winds eased towards the end of our sail, partially because we were in ultra-relaxed mode and partially because of this.

### Summary

This is a top-quality catamaran in terms of looks and workmanship and also a boat that can give you a real thrill under sail. I'll never forget zooming along at seven knots plus to windward with a glass of chardonnay in one hand, the other lightly on the wheel and – best of all – sitting dead level on a comfortable seat while doing it.

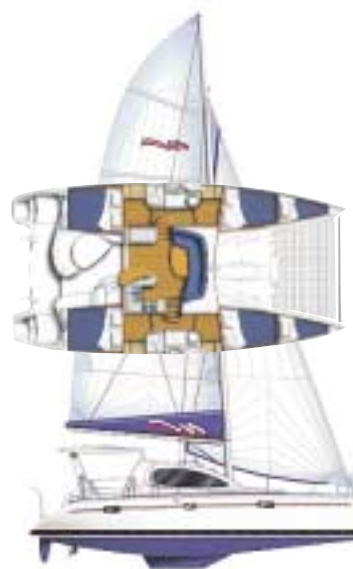
*ED'S NOTE: Midway through production we heard that the 4000 had won two prestigious boat-of-the-year awards from the US magazines cruising world and sail Magazine.*

### ● CHARTERING CRACKERJACK

Chartering Crackerjack will cost you \$820 a day low season, \$940 mid and \$1150 high. If you'd like something a little bigger or smaller, the Hamilton fleet also has a Moorings 3800, 4200 and 4600. For those on a budget, smaller monohulls are available from \$370 a day low season. Don't forget to ask about specials when booking. The Moorings frequently offers these in off-peak periods – 10 days for the price of seven etc.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA:** .....11.9m  
**LWL:** ..... 11.44m  
**Beam:** ..... .6.14m  
**Draft:** ..... .1.18m  
**Displacement:** ..... 11,000kg  
**Engines:** .....Volvo 40hp x 2  
**Fuel capacity:** ..... .350 ltr  
**Water:** ..... .760 ltr  
**Mast height:** ..... .19m  
**Sail area (110 percent genoa):** . .94.8m  
**Berths:** ..... .8+2 in forepeaks  
**Construction:**  
GRP with osmosis warranty  
**Price:**  
\$565,000, which does not include GST (charter investors can claim this back). This includes a comprehensive inventory; The Moorings does not offer yachts with lesser specs in line with the comprehensive equipment list the company offers on its yachts globally. If you'd like to buy your very own Crackerjack, another 4000 will arrive in the Whitsundays in July and is available for purchase.  
**For more information:**  
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