THE QUERIDA MIA

A PARAGON OF SIMPLICITY—AND LUXURY

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The Lagoon 450 Catamaran Cruiser is a latter-day interpretation of the ancient catamaran, a multi-hulled boat. In this modern version, the two hulls house bedrooms, or cabins, and bathrooms.OPPOSITE PAGE: A special sail used for sailing downwind, a gennaker pulls the boat back to harbor.

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OPPOSITE: The rear of the boat descends on both sides for easy access into and from the water. Normally between the two descents is a small power boat which was used to take this photograph. ABOVE: The upper deck from which the vessel is steered.

IT FLOATS STEADILY AMONG BOATS of countless variety in the marina of Subic Yacht Club. The Querida Mia, a Lagoon 450 catamaran, is double the width of most. The owner, who's also the boat's captain, stands proudly at the stern.

"That's how my wife calls Mother Mary," he says of the boat's name, "and it's related to the name of one of our products."

A sleek machine

The Querida Mia took nine months to build to the owner's specifications in France. Then it was transported by freighter to Hong Kong, where it was assembled. From there it sailed 24 hours to Subic, where it was handed over to its owner in January 2011.

It's 45 feet long, 26 feet wide, with a mast 76 feet high. At the front of the boat–or "bow"–is a cockpit lounge, a place to experience cruising with the sea breeze and warmth of the sun directly on you. It's like a sofa over the sea. For an even more exciting thrill, there are two large nets directly over the water, where you can work on a tan with the water splashing directly underneath.

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At the back of the boat—or "stern"—there is a table and built-in seating for al fresco dining and lounging. The seating stores gear for snorkeling, scuba diving, or fishing. A lowered deck with a ladder makes it easy to get back on the boat from the water. On this lowered deck, there is also a small powerboat (or sea taxi), which can be used to go ashore, or visit other boats while at anchor.

Slip resistant walkways on portside (left side) and starboard (right) and handrails make it easy to go from one part of the boat to the other. There is a canopied upper deck where the vessel is steered, commanding a 360-degree view.

With provisions and planning, this boat can sail all over the world, day or night, windless or in a squall.

Three bedrooms, called "cabins", each with its own bathroom, are in the two hulls of the catamaran. The master suite occupies one whole hull, and it includes a bedroom, a work area with a sofa and a bathroom.

Between the hulls is the saloon—dining area, a complete galley with oven, and an interior cockpit. Cabinets and countertops are laminated wood, the ceiling is faux leather, the lights are LED. Concealed under floor and behind walls is commodious storage. "There's beer in the floor cabinet," the captain offers.

The furniture is teakwood as are the floors of bathrooms and cockpits. The entire interior space is air conditioned.

"But I didn't buy a boat for luxury. I bought it to sail," says the captain.

Wind power

Harnessing wind power is what he loves about the yacht.

"I learned sailing on a small boat. As soon as I learned how to sail this boat, we went out almost every weekend. Subic is the best because it is well protected. However, when using the head (the toilet), don't press the wrong button. It will suck in black, oily, stinky water from the sea."

His single crew member prepares for departure: ropes are untied, the tap into the electricity of the marina is unplugged, and engines started.

"Our last was a two-week cruise from Subic to Punta Fuego, Min-

Blonde wood finishes in the saloon. To the side of the sofa is the sliding door leading to the master suite in one hull. Beside the door, within the cabinetry is one of several refrigerators. There are storage compartments hidden in the floor. LEFT: The galley with stove, oven, microwave, refrigerator and sink. Across it is an interior cockpit for steering the boat in inclement weather. Between the two areas is the doorway leading to two bedrooms and bathrooms.

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ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Opposing views of the master suite, which includes a bedroom, sitting area, study and bathroom. Watertight transparent windows on the ceiling have sliding mesh shades to diffuse sunlight.
ABOVE RIGHT: The bathroom floor is made of ash teakwood striped with rubber to prevent slips. Three buttons beside the toilet, or "head" in nautical language, can extract stored fresh water, seawater, or dump water out to sea.

doro, Boracay, and Coron, in a fleet of five catamarans, cruising in formation!" recalls the owner. "We never checked into hotels. From a boat, we saw the Philippines through a different perspective. You can see it up close; you can talk to people."

He turns off the engines and releases the sail. His crew member runs across the deck, ties slacking ropes on automatic cranks. The sail balloons to a crescent shape, and the boat's speed increases.

"The wind pulls the boat and it's faster when harnessing upwind. Tacking is zigzagging through the wind at an angle," explains the captain. "Using wind is more exciting so we only use the engine for electricity when anchored."

The boat begins tacking. The sail flutters violently as the starboard rope slacks, and the portside rope is pulled. The boat turns portside.

"We strictly follow the menu because of limited supplies. We only use the fridge for veggies and meat. Also, we don't use utensils to save water. To heat or thaw food, we leave it under the sun. As for the trash, we throw biodegradables into the water, and non-biodegradables in the can."

The aft cockpit at the rear of the boat has a table and seats for al fresco dining. The seats also serve as compartments to store gear for snorkeling or diving. RIGHT: Lounge chair across the dining area beside freezers. On the rail is a grill. LOWER RIGHT: Sunken lounge area in front of the boat. Stretched between the hulls are nets you can sit or lie on with the water directly beneath.

The boat arrives in Triboa Bay, a cove of clear blue-green water, almost surrounded by ridges of thick jungle and mangroves. The forest is alive with the sound of birds and monkeys.

Sailing

"It's like having a rest house that you can bring anywhere," says the owner. It's a luxury that comes at a price. "The boat's more expensive than a house, plus there's around P150,000 per month on maintenance, parking, salaries, and insurance. We spend P300,000 yearly to lift the boat, remove barnacles and repaint the hull."

On the way back to the marina, the crew member pulls down the main sail. The captain presses a button and a winch pulls up a blue, white and green gennaker, a sail used when sailing downwind at a slow pace. It billows beautifully in the wind.

"My dream is to go to Palau," he says. "It would be a three-month adventure."

The exhilaration is addicting. Says the owner: "When we're on land, we would just find any reason to go out and sail."

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