

# Sea Trial: Mahe 36

Story by Chris Caswell

*I don't usually start my reviews by referring to the boat in question as "cute", but it just seems appropriate here. The Mahe 36 Evolution from Fountaine Pajot is a pocket-sized sailing cat that is long on performance and generous in space. It doesn't surprise me that there are many of these in bareboat charter fleets around the world.*

*For one thing, this is the perfect size for two couples and perhaps a kid or two who get to camp out on the convertible settee. But for two couples without kids, well, this is definitely the cats meow.*

*But first, a word about Fountaine Pajot. The Mahe 36 starts with Joubert/Nivelt hulls topped with Olivier Flahault's layout, and you get a boat that draws its DNA from both the hundreds of cruising cats that the company has built as well as the all-conquering ocean-racing catamarans that have given France the lead in multihull development.*

*The Mahe 36 is the smallest in the Fountaine Pajot line, but far from the least. And, from poking around in all the nooks and crannies, she seems to have all the hallmarks*



and strengths of her bigger sisters.

On the Mahe 36 that I reviewed (the "Duo" version), each hull is devoted to one cabin, with a door that closes each off from the saloon. The berths are aft, and the entire forward area is devoted to a sizable head with shower.

After three years of production and more

than 120 of the original Mahe 36s sold, the company redesigned the cat with more features drawn from their larger yachts. The most obvious change is the full-length fiberglass hardtop, but also twin sinks in the galley, opening windows in the forward saloon.

But before I delve into the niceties, one

of the features of the Mahe 36 is literally her size. Two generous cabins with ensuite heads in a 36-footer means charterers don't have to draw straws to see who gets the "other" cabin. They're both great.

The Mahe is small enough that a couple could handle her easily both under sail and either anchoring or mooring. She's

small enough that she's not going to break the budget when you decide to splurge and stay at the two-buck-a-foot marina and, with under four feet of draft, you can anchor in the calm water close to the beach that deeper yachts can't reach.

The Mahe 36 comes in two configurations and, before you book your charter, make sure which one you're getting. There's the Duo I described, and also the "Trio", a three-cabin version that puts another cabin in the port hull where the head was located. The Trio is probably better as a family boat, since everyone now shares the one head in the starboard hull.

The two-cabin version gets a pair of large berths which are within an inch of being queen-sized, so there's no shortage of sleeping area. Both cabins have opening ports and most of the Mahe 36s have dockside air conditioning with shore cords.

The cockpit is where you'll be living, unless you're sprawled on the trampoline forward, and there is a permanent fiberglass table for alfresco dining and seating for use while underway. I liked the solid Bimini top that shades the cockpit all the way to the back handrail, and it incorporates a clever dual helm seat as well. The sail track for the mainsail also runs across the top of the Bimini (on the later models), which gets it nicely out of the way.

Speaking of the helm, it has great visibility, although be forewarned that the standard boat doesn't provide a mini-Bimini to keep the skipper's head from searing in the sun. In looking at several charter Mahe 36s, several have added a Bimini for the skipper (such as the one at TMM Charters) and it's something to consider when choosing.

All the sail controls for main and jib lead back to a pair of self-tailing Lewmar





The galley is tucked aft to port so the chef isn't in the traffic pattern, and it's nicely convenient to either dinette or cockpit. The standard boat has a 3-burner propane stove as well as a propane oven, and a 12v refrigerator is in the bulkhead just forward of the galley. It's only 130 liters (34 gallons) in size, so be sure you borrow an ice chest from the charter company to handle enough provisions for a week. On some Mahes, the owner has given up some storage under the chart table opposite the galley to install a second electric refrigerator, which is most useful.

Each of the cabins has a nearly queen-sized berth, and there is a large stowage bin under the berth which hinges upward. A hanging locker and shelves complete the cabin, and another hanging locker and more shelves are in the passageways forward to

the heads (on the Duo).

Each head has a manual toilet which may have been upgraded on some of the charter yachts to an electric version. I liked the Mahe heads because they aren't cramped and they offer a real shower stall rather than the usual "soak everything" shower in the head itself. A curtain serves as a shower door, and all the water goes into a pan with an electric sump pump.

One thing that the Mahe 36 doesn't have is a generator, so keep in mind that you'll only have air conditioning at dockside when you run a shore power cord to an outlet.

Ventilation is good on the Mahe, with opening hatches in the saloon (plus the big double doors), and each hull has large forward hatches as well as hatches in each cabin.



40 winches with stoppers and a convenient bag for stowing the tails neatly. Standard equipment is for manual winches, but many of the Mahe 36s I've seen in charter have been upgraded with at least one electric winch to save your muscles.

The rig features ball-bearing cars on the mainsail for easy hoisting, and a stack-pack system for easy dousing and storage. The jib, of course, is roller furling, and this is controlled at the helm.

Power for the Mahe 36 is a pair of Volvo Sail Drive diesels of 20hp, and controls are on a pedestal at the helm.

Inside the saloon, there's a lot of well-arranged room. A U-shaped dinette is forward with opening ports for ventilation. The table easily seats six, and a bench seat (on later models after 2010) provides for another two.





On deck, there are wide side decks well-protected by double lifelines, and the helm is at deck level so the skipper can move out onto the deck without any steps. Like most cats, the Mahe has easy steps down the transom of each hull, with a folding swim ladder on one side or, in some cases, both



sides.

The trampoline between the hulls forward is an essential part of every sailing cat and, if you haven't spent an evening sprawled on the tramp with a cold rum drink and an array of stars overhead, well, you haven't lived.

Anchoring is simplified by an electric windlass tucked under the foredeck, with an

underdeck roller for a Danforth or plow anchor. Also on the foredeck is a large locker divided into three compartments for stowing fenders, docklines and other gear.

Many of the charter Mahes have a simple davit system sprouting from the stern rail so you don't have to tow the

dinghy everywhere.

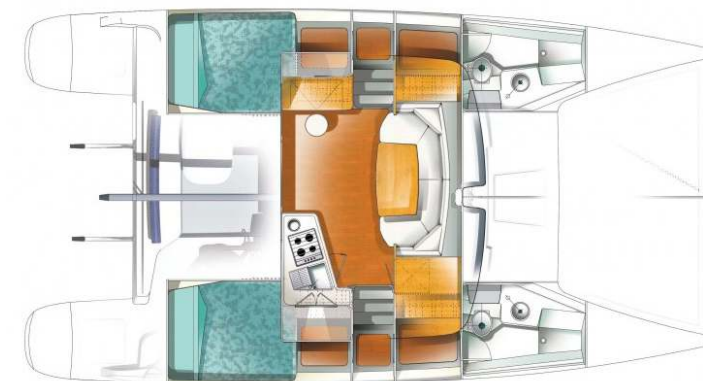
Like all cats, the Mahe 36 is happiest on a reach, close to broad but, not surprisingly considering her ocean-racing lineage, she gets upwind quite nicely and won't frustrate the monohull sailor in your.

Under power, her widely spaced props give you great maneuverability when docking or



turning in a tight slipway. Top speed is around 11 knots, with a cruise at 7-8k.

I genuinely liked the Mahe 36 and I think she's a perfect bareboat for two couples or one couple with kids. And, after you spend time aboard, you'll call her cute, too



LOA 36'1"	Disp. 5 tons
Beam 19'4"	Sail 506 sq. ft.
Draft 3'7"	Fuel 53 gal.
Power 2xVolvo 20hp	Water 140 gal.

