

New Day Catamaran Starts Service in Curaçao

By Els Kroon

Almost all Caribbean islands have their catamaran day charters for tourists. Curaçao, however, had none, until now! Last August, a brand new 54 ft catamaran was launched from the well-known Gold Coast Yachts wharf in St. Croix. *Jonalisa* left the island mid August, destination Curaçao.

In a two week passage, owner Cees Tukker, his wife Marja, and a select crew of experienced sailors like Gijs Boer, his son Sergei, and Edwin Versteeg sailed the new boat to her home base Curaçao. Underway the boat's features were thoroughly tested and teething troubles were solved.

On the first reach from St Croix to Virgin Gorda, *Jonalisa*, named after Tukker's grandchildren Jonathan and Lisa, showed her special speed skills, reaching 25 knots on an average of 22 knots, sails up, motor on. From Virgin Gorda the cat was sailed to St Maarten, where the time needed for an emergency repair was used to test some excellent restaurants in Marigot, Grand Case, and Philipsburg.

Via Montserrat and Martinique, the course was set south to Curaçao after a short delay caused by heavy weather conditions.

Until recently, Tukker owned a Sea Ray motor yacht, but often talked about sailing on a catamaran of his own. By placing the order for *Jonalisa* in 2003 he made his dream come true. He bought the boat to cruise with the family as well as to do day charters, so the purchase would give some return on his seven-digit investment. By adding a generator, AC, and other live aboard comforts, Tukker's cat is more luxurious than the usual charter boats.

Jonalisa can be sailed single handed from the helm station with the help of three Lewmar 48 EST electric winches, a perfect feature, considering the age of the owner and the desired comfort. The ingeniously-designed saloon can be transformed into two double air conditioned bedrooms. Tukker also added extra cupboards and a lean over at the helm to keep the captain dry as well as protected from the sun.

From day one, the new catamaran has been well received on the island, accommodating many stay-over tourists for a trip to the uninhabited island of Klein Curaçao as well as cruise tourists, who take the tour to the west side of the main island.

To make his investment profitable Tukker sought and received cooperation from local boat tour operator Bounty Adventures. For many years, manager/owner Perry Hoogendam has offered a good diversity of sailing and boat trips on Curaçao. He owns the 90-foot wooden classical schooner *Bounty*, which is mostly put in for snorkel trips along the Curaçao shore with a rope swing as one of the most favorite features. A second boat, the twin diesel trawler *Coconut Blues*, was added for deep sea fishing trips. The fast catamaran *Jonalisa* completes the product, sailing to Klein Curacao in only an hour. This trip is also perfect for scuba divers and even Snuba is in the pipeline, since Bounty Adventures will soon be Curaçao's exclusive Snuba operator.

With two big hotels, the Curacao Hyatt and the Renaissance, nearing completion there is a place in the market for *Jonalisa* and, according to Tukker, even for a second catamaran. In 2010, Gold Coast Yachts is ready to take new orders! Until then, *Jonalisa* can prove her quality in the sometimes choppy seas around Curaçao.

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