

# Finding MRS RIGHT

Words and photos by **Dougall Love**

The search for the ideal yacht took a Kiwi couple down an unusual route, but they're convinced they've struck the jackpot – in triplicate.

Our two weeks enjoying AC34 in San Francisco was the catalyst that made us decide to be at the next AC on our own yacht, wherever that might be. Sadly, that isn't Auckland and once Bermuda was announced we started to look at more ambitious options to fulfil our plans.

I've done a few offshore miles, am involved in local club racing and we have both enjoyed a reasonable amount of cruising, but my partner Jaz isn't so big on heavy leaning. Also, the logic of slowly dragging a large lump of lead halfway around the world scrambles my brain cells.

We decided we wanted a boat that would be fast, stable, safe, modern and smart. The easy answer seemed to be purchase a cat in Florida or somewhere nearby since there are 'millions' of them just hanging about in that part of the world with nothing much to do.

We've been fortunate enough to have some time away with friends on a very nice 55ft cruising cat and loved the social and private spaces, not to mention the amount of gear that could be carried. But the sea motion seemed kinda corkscrewish and left us feeling a bit green about the cat option.



## SO WHAT TO DO?

Since the time when Peter Blake blew everyone away with *Steinlager 1* I've always thought tris were fantastic – as long as you didn't have to live on one and they weren't called *Rose Noelle*. I've sailed a couple of times on *Vodafone* and can absolutely swear it's mind-blowing – but you sure couldn't live on that either.

So we let the idea of being in Bermuda on our own boat lie while we were busy doing other things – except that it kept coming up and we kept talking about it. Browsing the web didn't help either because there are so many fantastic yacht options out there.

But one day I accidentally came across this website [www.rapidotrimarans.com](http://www.rapidotrimarans.com). The next time the topic came up I showed Jaz and we both went whoa, now that IS interesting! The more we looked at it the more we thought it ticked our key boxes:

- Safe – won't sink, even upside down
- Fast – fast enough to avoid trouble if you want to, fast enough to get you there without dragging tonnes of lead around, competitive in regattas if we wanted to compete
- Comfortable – the motion of a monohull but with training wheels and minimal leaning
- Modern – lightweight and strong with simple (sophisticated?), race-derived sailing systems and equipment
- Spacious – perfect accommodation for what we wanted to do
- Simple – clean lines, sensible design thinking with spacious galley and saloon, open air living connectivity, lots of light, plenty of storage, centralised weight, separate cabins
- Downside – won't easily fit in a marina.



Marina dwelling isn't high on our list of priorities so we got in touch with Rapido Trimarans. Naturally we wanted to be confident in who they were and what they knew about building trimarans, especially in Vietnam. Even if it is a Morelli Melvin design, it has to be built right.

The response was a phone call from MD Paul Koch. That he was an Australian helped a little (er, maybe) and learning that his partners were another Aussie and a Kiwi helped. That they had not long sold their previous business (Corsair Marine), which had built over 2000 trimarans was good, as was the fact that they had been building in Vietnam for over 10 years. With some confidence we agreed to put down a deposit to hold the build slot for boat #2.

In November 2015 we took ourselves off to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) to have a look at boat #1 and to satisfy ourselves that we were on the right track before fully committing. There'd been a mixed response among our sailing friends, with some saying go

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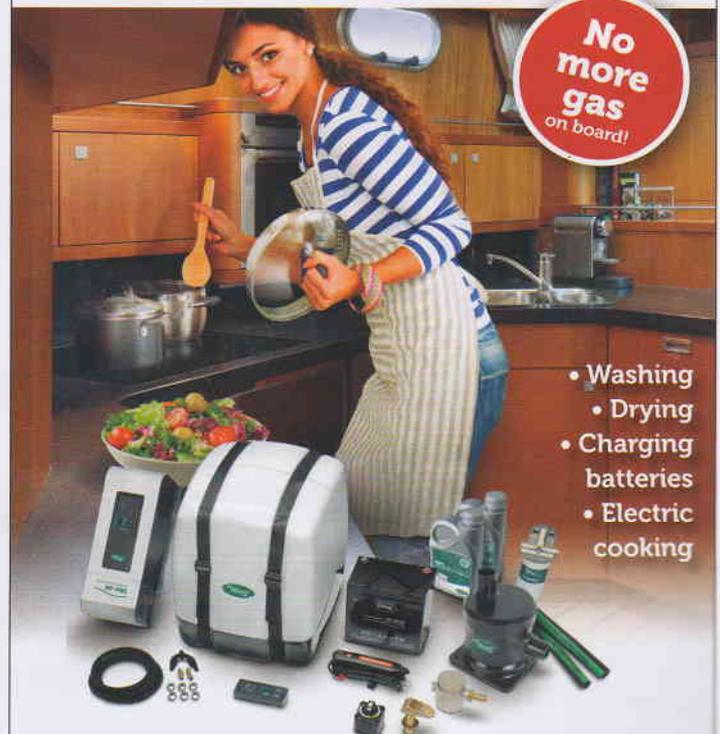
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for it and some saying we should be institutionalised!

The visit proved to be amazing, with the size and scope of the boat blowing us away. With their own autoclave, bake oven, CNC machine, lamination shop, freezers full of pre-preg and a well-planned and managed operation, we were impressed. Boat one was a massive exercise, starting with the moulds and putting it all together.

Despite the boat being built in Vietnam, we also learned of the Kiwi connections:

- BEP Marine supplied the electricals
- Trudesign supplied the plumbing
- Hercules Tanks designed and supplied the fuel and water tanks

- Southern Spars designed and supplied the 23m carbon wing mast
- Gurit Carbon supplied the hull and structural pre-preg
- Dave Potter, Top Logic Electrical Design was involved
- C-Tech Sail Battens and carbon tubes supplied battens and cars
- Morelli & Melvin with its Emirates NZ design team involvement (actually, Pete Melvin commenced designs for the Rapido in Auckland).

And for us North Sails NZ will finish and fit the sails. It certainly opened our eyes to the world-leading yachting standards that emanate from New Zealand and made us proud that so much is contributed from such a small country.

# RAPIDO

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## Rapido Battery Charging

Keeping the Rapido's electrical systems perky falls to a state-of-the-art Mastervolt MLI battery power set-up. It feeds a Mass Combi Ultra inverter, and is supported by solar panels and a heavy-duty Alpha Pro 110-amp alternator and regulator. The power is distributed through the vessel by BEP's Pro Installer and custom switch panels.

The twin MLI system allows the vessel to use 80 percent of the 360 amp-hours available (equating to 10KWh) and the 288 amp-hours can then be recharged by the engine alternator in about 2.6 hours. This is a significant fuel-saver – considering that conventional flooded batteries would require about four hours of running for re-charging.

Another advantage of the energy punch from this small system is weight saving: around 260kg compared to the equivalent flooded bank.

The Master Bus system gives the batteries full control of all charging sources to ensure reliable and controlled charging.

*Rapido One* was launched in May and we joined her from Singapore for a few days on her delivery up to Phuket. The Straits of Malacca aren't known as the world's best cruising grounds, but it was fun dodging ships, barge tows, fishing boats, rubbish and thunder storms for a few days. What we'd imagined about the boat seemed to be completely proven.

She moves well, both sailing and motoring. Her well-balanced helm makes her easy to steer and she turns quickly in a very short space. She is fast – we only experienced light winds, mostly ahead, but when the opportunity was there to unfurl the reacher we consistently cruised between 12 and 14.5 knots in 8-10 knots true wind speed.

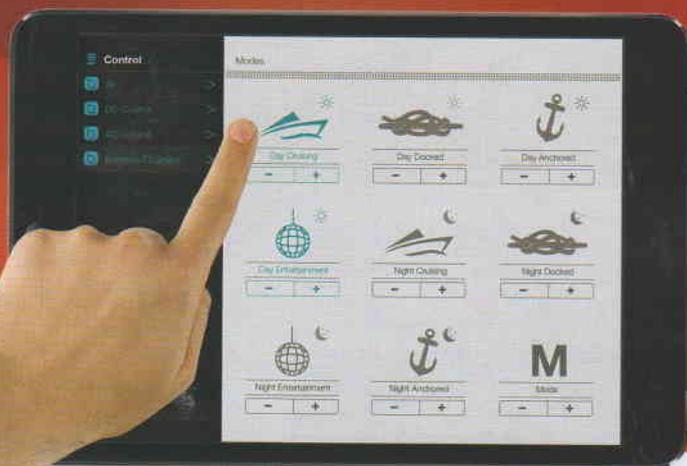
She is comfortable and spacious. We particularly loved the big open galley and saloon, the same-level open cockpit, the spacious forward stateroom with its ensuite and separate shower, the quality of the finishing and the helm station up high where you can see everything and enjoy the sailing. It's a well thought-out design, well-built and finished to a very high standard – just what we want.

Our boat is due to be launched in October. As much as we'd like to simply jump on and head off to the Caribbean and then to Bermuda, the reality is there's still a lot of finishing and preparation to be done first. With all the local connections, Auckland seems like a good place to do that, but that's all going to depend on the launch date, not to mention whether we're ready too!

Then how do you get to Bermuda? The beams do unbolt so it can be shipped – but that's a truck-load of dollars, not to mention squidillions of trampoline ties to fix all over again. The logical route seems to be dipping a bit south and riding the westerlies across to South America, then turn left up via the Galapagos and through the Panama.

In a new trimaran. Hmmm, any starters for crew? **■**

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