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# BLUE WATER Sailing

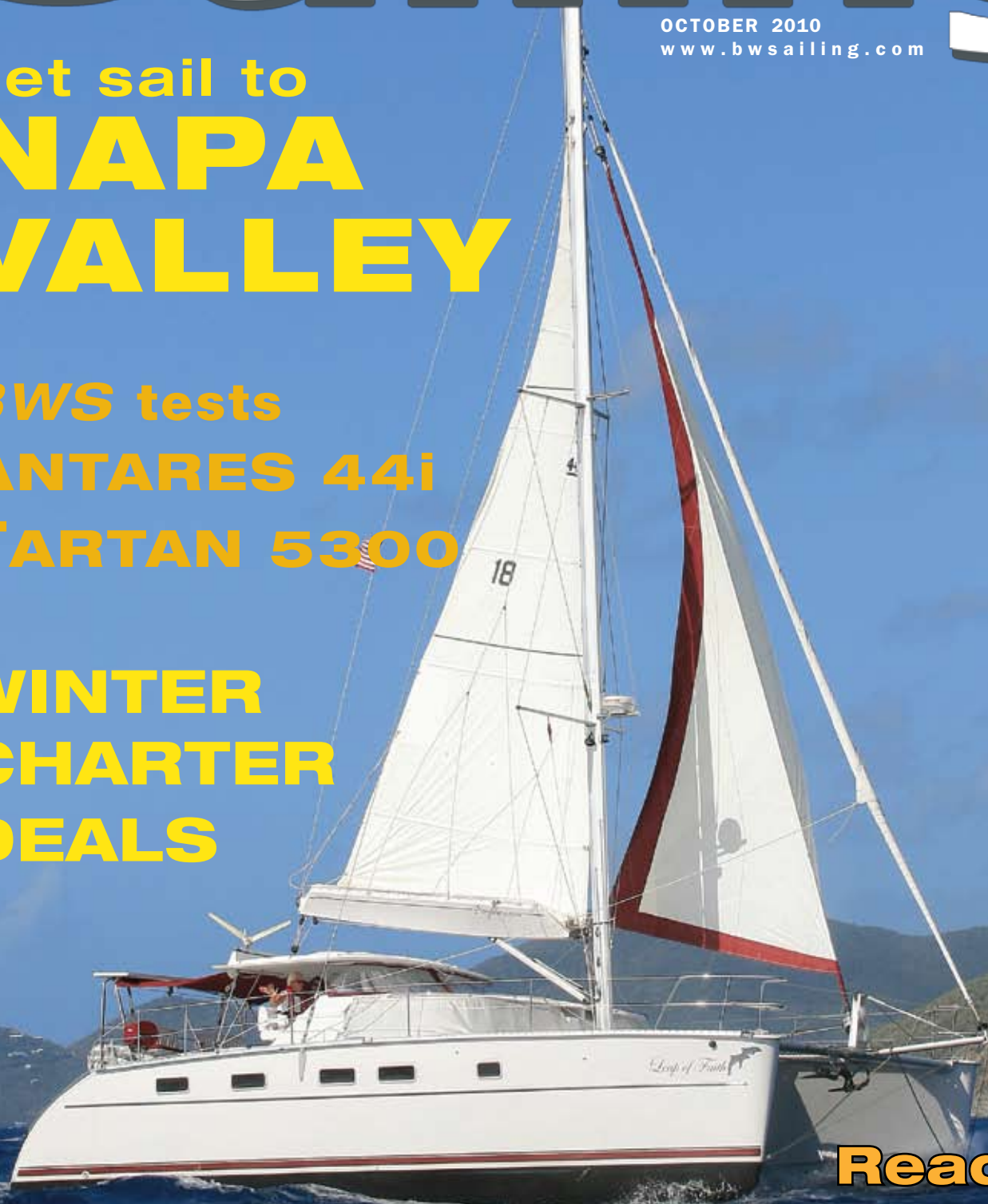
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A True Blue  
Water Cat

# Antares 44i

By George Day

**I**t was a crystal clear August day when we set out from Gloucester, MA to give Bob and Jan Crandall's new Antares 44i *Sea Spray* a test sail. We cleared the harbor mouth, zigged our way through the lobster pots and rolled out the big reacher as we passed the sea buoy. To the south, we could see Marblehead, and beyond that Boston's skyscrapers.

With less than 10 knots of breeze,

the 44i reached along at half the true wind speed, making 4 to 5 knots under reacher alone as the breeze steadily built. The first thing we noticed about how the big cat handles is the sureness of the steering. The Lewmar Mamba direct link steering system connects positively to the big rudders, so the boat seems to run on rails and reacts positively to course changes.

This is Bob and Jan's second

Antares 44i, so they are experienced owners who had a lot of input in the way the new boat was set up. All recent 44s come with windshields that close the gap between the cabin top and hardtop— an innovation that the Crandalls and Antares' chief designer Ted Clements came up with for the first boat.

Before moving into their first and now second Antares cats, the Crandalls cruised some 57,000 miles



Bob Crandall

aboard their first cruising boat, an Oyster 485. They loved that boat, but as their tribe of grandchildren expanded they decided they needed a boat with a much larger cockpit and more accommodations. As Bob and Jan put it, the only cat on the market that compared favorably in design and quality with the Oyster was the Antares 44i.

One of the innovations that the new owners put into their boat was a Selden in-mast furling mainsail. Normally, the 44i comes with tall, high roach, fully-battened mains that really give them a fine turn of speed. The in-mast furling sail is smaller than the standard, so it has less power but is much easier for the Crandalls to handle.

Once we were 10 miles offshore, we rolled out the mainsail and began power reaching. The breeze had built to 15 knots and whitecaps were forming on the wave tops. The 44i reacted by scooting ahead at nearly 9 knots at 60 degrees to the apparent wind. It was impressive to feel the boat—which displaces 19,000 pounds—accelerate as we gathered way after each tack.

The boat's motion through the waves was stable and easy. Unlike some cats, the 44i did not pitch as it sailed through the chop because the hulls have quite narrow bows and sterns and the weight inside the hulls has been concentrated near the centers of gravity. The waves were not large enough to slap under the bridge deck. Bob and Jan have many thousands of miles aboard their

first Antares and report that wave slapping under the bridgedeck is rare.

The wind was blowing straight

ownership—went in search of a suitable place to build boats. Owners Jeff Woodman and Rob Poirier were looking for a boat building center with a combination of long traditions of yacht quality finish and the advanced technical knowledge

out Gloucester harbor, so we finally rolled up the big reacher, rolled out the genoa and began tacking homeward. Under this rig, with the main strapped in and the headsail drawing nicely, the 44i tacked in 90 degrees and sailed at 7 to 8 knots in the 15-knot breeze. With Jan at the helm and playing the lifts that puffed off the shore at Norma's Woe, we soon sailed past the old Gloucester lighthouse and into the famous harbor.

Under power, the 44i handles easily and can turn inside its own length. The twin Volvos are extremely quiet inside their well-insulated, amidships engine compartments. Under sail, the 44i sails well and easily with all control lines accessible in the cockpit; the lines run aft from the mast in a conduit built in under the saloon floor and are then handled at an electric winch at the back of the cockpit or at a winch right next to the helm. A couple's voyaging boat, the 44i can be handled by a solo watchkeeper.

### THE ARGENTINE CONNECTION

The Antares began life as a PDQ Antares 44 built in Canada. Two years ago, the company folded up its tents in Canada and—under new



Jan Crandall

needed to build modern, cored, lightweight composite structures. They were also looking for that unquantifiable quality of passion for finely finished oceangoing yachts.

Their search led them to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and to Memo Castro and Santiago Alvarez Forn, both experienced offshore sailors and veteran boat builders. Although North Americans may not be aware that B.A. is a world-class yacht building center, Europeans and Italians especially have been building high tech, high quality custom yachts in the city for many years. And, South Americans have been buying and sailing Argentine production sailboats for generations.

The logistics of moving the molds and the company from Canada to B.A. is a story in itself, but suffice it to say the saga has ended well and Antares is now producing six boats a year out of two facilities near the Rio Plata, with a full order book running through 2011.



have a look at the Crandalls' new boat in the near-completion stages before it was shipped to the States. And I was lucky enough to be at the plant for an *asado*, when all of the staff celebrated the launching of a new Antares 44i with a lunch-time feast of grilled Argentine beef and blood sausage.



The team of builders that Memo and Santiago have assembled has a huge amount of experience building light, advanced cored hulls with fine interiors. Many of the craftsmen have been working together for years, and several of them now have their sons



Celebrating the launch of a new Antares 44i

Last winter, when Jeff and Rob extended an invitation to me to fly to South America to see the new facilities and meet the builders, I jumped at the opportunity for two reasons. First, I was eager to see where, how and by whom the boats were being built. And second, I was keen to make a pilgrimage to the leading land of polo (the horses-and-mallets version), which has become something of a passion of mine in recent years.

I joined Jeff and Rob in B.A. for two days of visiting with Santiago and Memo and the local team, and to

working with them. Their pride in their work shows the care they take to make each lamination, joint and installation as perfect as possible. That's the passion Jeff and Rob were looking for.

After our factory visits and a thorough tour of the Crandalls' new 44, Jeff and Rob joined me for a day of watching high goal polo north of B.A. at the Ellerstina estancia near the city of Pilar. For Jeff and Rob, seeing the sport for the first time and watching the best polo players in the world playing a local grudge match was a revelation; for me, it was pure



George Day (white) playing polo in Argentina

spectator heaven. The next day, I was lucky enough to join some local players in an afternoon game on borrowed horses. Polo is a passionate sport full of fast action, brave ponies and hot-tempered players, which is why the gauchos of the Pampas are the world's best.

#### THE 44i CONCEPT

Antares builds only the 44i. They produce six boats a year right now and each one is created for its owners as a semi-custom offshore cruising boat. The 44i was not created for the charter market, so the compromises that inevitably creep into any yacht design are skewed toward the needs of a self-sufficient, offshore sailing couple.

Designer Ted Clements has spent his life in the marine business in Canada and has worked with some of North America's leading builders. For the creation of the 44i, he started with a blank sheet of paper and began solving one problem after the next.

First, the boat had to be a good sea boat that was safe offshore while still light enough to be fast and fun to sail. Ted started with the hull shapes, which as noted above are narrow and well-balanced fore and aft. He concentrated on getting the right clearance for the bridge deck so wave slapping would not be a problem. This elevated the saloon, which in turn gave the 44i fairly

high topsides.

The reverse sheer line gives the design a distinctive look and provides maximum headroom and volume where you need it. The rudders are fitted to full depth skegs so they are protected from flotsam, lobster pots and weed; plus, the boat can dry out on its own bottom and will stand safely on the keels and skegs.

The 44i's rig comes standard with a large, high roach mainsail, a full genoa and a roller furling reacher fitted to a short bowsprit. This combination creates plenty of horsepower, which translates into high average speeds and quick passages. But, unlike the other cats in this size range, the rig is short enough to fit under all but one of the bridges on the Intracoastal Waterway, since there are times when staying inside is the most comfortable way to cruise the U.S. Atlantic coastline.

The 44i is 10,000 pounds lighter than most of the cats in the mid-40-foot class. Clements and the builders have gone to great lengths to make the boat as light as possible without forfeiting strength and stiffness. The hulls are infused composite structures with Corecell cores above the turn of the bilge.

Interior structures—bulkheads, furniture panels, cabinet doors—are honeycomb cores with veneers laminated onto them. The 44i has a Brazilian cherry finish that looks elegant and gives the boat a fine yacht finish. But pick up a door or panel and you will be amazed at how light the pieces are.

The 44i is a concept boat, and in execution, the designer and builders have delivered a light, fast cruiser that can be sailed by a couple and will turn in 180- to 200-mile days regularly in favorable conditions.





## THE DETAILS MATTER

While the 44i can have owner-specific modifications, the concept for the standard boat from the outset was to deliver the best equipped and most thoroughly thought out cruising platform on the market. The list of standard equipment is truly extensive.

In the engineering department, twin Volvo engines have been chosen for reliability, quiet operation and a worldwide service network. A genset is installed in a dedicated locker in the starboard hull, where it is invisible and totally quiet. Both of the engines and the genset are completely accessible for routine maintenance or repairs. A Sea Recovery watermaker also comes standard.

To make the 44i as self-sufficient as possible, solar panels have been built into the hard cockpit top. These will keep the huge standard battery bank (750 amp hours) fully topped up and keep the fridge and freezer cold indefinitely. Interior lighting can be a serious energy sink, so LEDs can be used throughout to reduce the draw to almost nothing.

Cruising is an indoor-outdoor way of living, so the 44i has been designed to make the outdoor experience as comfortable and dry as possible. The cockpit windshield keeps wind, rain and spray off the crew; the hardtop keeps sun and rain out of the cockpit; and the entire cockpit can be enclosed with isinglass panels that will keep you warm and dry even in a driving rainstorm.

A cruising boat needs to have an anchor system that really works, so the 44i has been supplied with two primary anchors and chain rodes on bow rollers that are operated by a powerful anchor windlass. The anchors are equipped with bridles that can be hooked and unhooked from the chain rodes from the safety of the foredeck.

Cruising couples have a way of collecting a lot of gear, spare parts, toys and souvenirs along the way, so on-board storage is vital. The 44i has storage to spare with two forward, watertight compartments large enough for bicycles, inflatable boats, spare sails and much more. Under the cockpit sole, there are two large lockers for everything from cleaning equipment to spare lines and deck tools.

Knowing that the best tropical cruising grounds are also the best regions for underwater exploration, the 44i's builders offer a custom dive compressor for filling bottles and a hookah system for use right off the boat.

Details matter, and in the 44i, almost nothing has been overlooked.

## THE CRUISING LIFE

The 44i is truly a liveaboard boat for a couple or family. The cockpit has two U-shaped bench seats around a table with a folding leaf so you can seat six for outside meals



or twice that many for sundowners.

The standard interior design has the galley amidships in the port hull with double guest cabins fore and aft and a head all the way forward. The master suite is in the starboard hull with the sleeping cabin aft, the huge head and shower forward, and a dressing room in between. Both the master cabin and the aft guest cabin have full queen beds.

The saloon has a dinette to port, a desk or navigation station to starboard, and a chest of drawers and cabinets aft next to the door. This is where the standard washer-dryer is installed.

The galley has 18 square feet of counter space, 15 storage lockers and four drawers. A microwave oven is standard, as are the propane stove and oven. The fridge is huge for a boat of this size and is accompanied by a large separate freezer.

In 44 feet, the Antares 44i offers a huge amount of living space that has been very cleverly thought out for self-sufficient cruisers who will be living aboard for long periods of time.

**BWS THOUGHTS**

The Antares 44i is a unique cruising catamaran. The boat has a distinctive, shippy look that makes it unmistakable in any anchorage.



The underlying concepts in the design and the attention to detail in both the build and equipping phases of the boat's creation are incredibly sound.

Ted Clements is a creative designer who has a practical way of solving problems. If you want to be entertained and educated by an independent spirit, check out [www.catamaranconcepts.com](http://www.catamaranconcepts.com).

The move to Argentina has allowed Jeff and Rob to bring together the knowledge and passion of B.A. craftsmen with their singular vision for building an offshore cruising cat. The result is a truly successful boat that is at home anywhere the wind blows.

**Antares 44i**

<b>LOA</b>	<b>44'0"</b>
<b>LWL</b>	<b>43'6"</b>
<b>Beam</b>	<b>21'9"</b>
<b>Draft</b>	<b>4'0"</b>
<b>Displ.</b>	<b>19,000 lbs.</b>
<b>Mast height</b>	<b>61'0"</b>
<b>Sail area</b>	<b>850 sq. ft.</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>150 gals.</b>
<b>Fuel</b>	<b>120 gals.</b>
<b>Holding tank</b>	<b>60 gals.</b>

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# Antares<sup>44i</sup>

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