

Text: Dick Sawyer - Photos: All rights reserved

# TOBAGO 35

*If you want to sail far, without spending too much...*



The coachroof "cap" and the stubby bows are typical of Fountaine Pajot from the 1990s. Note the shallow depth of the Tobago 35's skeg keels.

Built in fewer than 100 units through the 1990s, the Tobago 35 didn't see the wider distribution of the models in the following decade.

But that doesn't prevent this compact catamaran from being an excellent opportunity for those with smaller budgets.

Late 1980s: cruising catamarans are just beginning to make a place for themselves in the sun... Fountaine Pajot is one of the first builders to bet on two hulls rather than one: the success of their Venezia 42 gave them good reason. Jean-François Fountaine decided to create a complete range around his flagship model: the Marquises 56 for luxury charter and the Tobago 35 as her little sister. The distinctive features are the "cap" at the front of the coachroof, which is very useful for protecting the saloon from the sun's most vertical rays, and the stubby bows. The 35 retains the same design style, with great curves.

### **She's got potential, but not upwind!**

Light and well-canvassed, the Tobago 35 is undeniably a fast boat: she's quickly capable of reaching 10 knots, without forcing as long as there's a breeze. With 20 knots of wind on the beam, the polars promise 9 knots of boatspeed, and well over 10 knots if a downwind sail is set. A square-topped mainsail, gennaker and folding propellers will even make this model a very powerful and exciting machine to sail. On the other hand, although her very short skegs allow her to be used for almost all kinds of fantasies when approaching the beach and discovering lagoons, they are not deep enough to give much grip upwind in light airs. 35 feet is a little short in size for comfortable offshore sailing, but the Tobago is nevertheless safe enough to embark on long passages. But

beware of overloading: the narrow hulls of this Joubert/Nivelt design aren't cut out for that...

### **A clear deck layout**

It would be difficult to be more minimalist: the deck layout is very clean and favors flat surfaces, as are the well-cleared side-decks and the vast trampolines. The cockpit, which is well sheltered, is spread out width-ways, and is home to the helm station. This area is protected by a canvas or rigid bimini - though this protection was not fitted as standard.



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The sugarscoops aren't so easy to access: modern ergonomics have made huge progress! The deck hardware is sufficient for routine maneuvers, but the yard really sought maximum simplification. You're not going to spend much time sat enjoying trimming the sails... but there's nothing stopping you from improving the equipment on this catamaran - that's all this boat needs to work better.

### Two or three cabins, but no doors...

The nacelle is well-protected from the tropical sun thanks to the forward extension of the deckhouse and the virtual absence of any horizontal hatches or windows. Space inside is pretty generous. The dining area is pushed forward on the port side. The teardrop-shaped table is questionable: in practice, circulation is good, and six people can comfortably eat there, or even more with the addition of a stool or two. While the galley, close to the cockpit, is well equipped with plenty of storage space and an opening hatch, the chart table is more of a token gesture. The

instruments are concentrated there, and nothing more. The standard version offers three cabins: one dedicated to the owner is fitted out athwartships in the port hull, with a heads compartment. To starboard, two guest cabins and no doors - zipped covers are fitted instead. The Twin version offers only two cabins and the same number of bathrooms. The finish is sober, even rustic, though it was improved after 1996.

### Conclusion

Launched some 30 years ago now, this model is particularly interesting today because it meets the emerging demand of many young family crews. Minimalist, efficient, accessible, easy to maintain, the Tobago 35 meets specifications that some shipyards, the likes of Aventura and Excess, are once again looking at after a long period of neglect. Obviously, a catamaran 10 feet longer will offer incomparable comfort... But the best multihull is going to be the one you can afford!



| TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS                         |
|--|
| Shipyard: Fountaine Pajot                        |
| Architects: Joubert/Nivelt                       |
| Material: Polyester and balsa polyester sandwich |
| Hull length: 34'9" (10.60 m)                     |
| Waterline length: 32'10" (10.00 m)               |
| Beam: 19'2" (5.85 m)                             |
| Draft: 3'1" (0.95 m)                             |
| Light displacement: 8,820 lbs (4.00 t)           |
| Upwind sail area: 730 sq ft (68 m²)              |
| Mainsail: 430 sq ft (40 m²)                      |
| Genoa: 300 sq ft (28 m²)                         |
| Engines: 2 x 10 hp diesel inboards               |
| Fuel capacity: 32 US gal (120 l)                 |
| Water: 58 US gal (220 l)                         |
| Number built: 89 units from 1993 to 2000         |
| Second hand price: from € 80,000 ex-tax          |
| Full test in MW #20                              |

- +++ Convincing performance off the wind
- ++ Smaller budget required
- + Shoal draft

- Limited payload
- A bit disappointing on a beat
- Relative comfort

### POINTS TO CHECK

Structurally, the Tobago 35 is well-built: most units remain rigid and sound. The same goes for the rig and appendages, well-sized. The forward beam has been sometimes known to suffer from corrosion and/or micro cracks at the hull junction. The fittings, which are quite basic, may have suffered from prolonged humidity but are nonetheless easy to refurbish. Most often, this operation would be limited to the headlinings and upholstery. As with all models over 20 years old, all peripherals should be closely examined. Engines, electrics and plumbing are to be checked as a priority. As for the electronics and sails, they'll no longer be the originals - and this is a good thing!

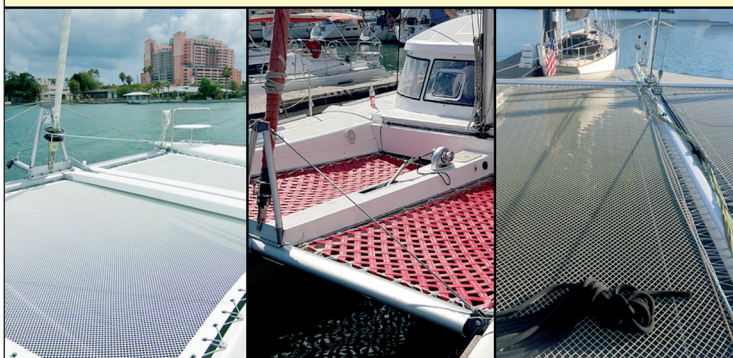
- 1/ The Tobago starts becoming efficient from 10 knots of breeze, with a clear preference for being off the wind.
- 2/ There are sugarscoops, but access requires you climbing over the cockpit coamings.
- 3/ The deck layout includes a huge trampoline.
- 4/ The most common layout was the three-cabin version, with a single bathroom.



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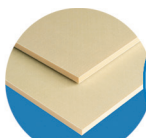
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