

THREE UNDER TEN Boat Show Finds

businesses so that I could not only have a MiniCat of my own, but also sell them to people like me all over the U.S.”

Caslow’s business is named Red Beard Sailing, a nod to the bushy red beard the founder sports. To date, they’ve sold about 75 MiniCats.

Local sailor Jim Dwyer first saw the MiniCat at the Annapolis Boat Show last year. He lives on Kent Island just off the Chester River. While not a died-in-the-wool sailor, Dwyer nevertheless is an avowed watersports enthusiast.

“We have powerboats, Jet Skis, SUPs, kayaks, canoes. If it floats, chances are we have it! I was looking for a little boat to teach the kids how to sail. I met Alex, bought the Minicat 420, and the next thing I know, he shows up at my door with the boat ready to help me rig her and give her a go on the water.”

The 13-foot boat only weighs 96 pounds. Deflated, it fits into two easy-to-carry duffels. It only takes 30 minutes to set up and fully inflate.

“I like the way this little boat handles,” the 60-something Met Life executive says. “We load it up with grandkids, all properly adorned in safety gear, and head out onto the river. The boat just skims over the water. And, I don’t think you can get into as much trouble with it as you can with other, rigid-hull cats.”

Dwyer figures he’s introduced the whole neighborhood to sailing. “That’s about a dozen kids who now love to jump on the MiniCat and have fun on the water.”

What’s next for Red Beard Sailing? “We’d like to build a racing fleet of Minis,” says Caslow. “And stage an owner’s regatta. You can take these boats anywhere; they even fly as checked baggage. Try that with a Hobie Cat!”

MiniCats start at \$4200 and go up to \$6200-plus, depending on size and accessories.

Check them all out at redbeardsailing.com.

MINICAT 420 SPECS

Length: 13.9 ft.

Weight: 97 lbs.

Sail Area: 104 sq. ft.

Base Price: \$5200

Capacity: 900 lbs.



■ Jim Dwyer’s son John sailing the MiniCat with kids/grandkids on the Chester River.

THE INFLATABLE SAILING DINGHY: FROM BAG TO BAY IN 20 MINUTES

If an inflatable monohull is more to your liking, look no further than the 10-foot, six-inch Tiwal (pronounced *tee-wall*) which starts at \$5400.

The product of a French industrial designer whose father wouldn’t let her take his big boat out on her own, the Tiwal has the unique distinction of being the only sailboat ever to be displayed and sold at the prestigious Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.

Reached at her headquarters in western France, designer Marion Excoffin explains the design challenges she and her team faced when first conceptualizing the Tiwal: “I am not a boat designer,” she says in heavily accented English. “That could be an advantage in a project such as this. I approached the challenge from a fresh perspective, and the result is a product that is easy to transport, easy to set up, and easy to sail.”



Excoffin opted to utilize a tough PVC with a UV-protective layer for the outer skin of the boat, hiking racks made from lightweight aluminum, and a carbon mast and foils. A lightweight rod, rather than a boom, is used for the foot of the sail, and it won’t do too much damage to the heads of the unwary. The key to the sailboat’s performance is the V-shaped hull.

“This was the most challenging aspect of the design,” the 33-year-old designer says. The name comes from the Old Breton word *divall*, meaning “to protect” and emphasizes the boat’s safety.

The whole shebang weighs 110 pounds. Excoffin claims that most people can assemble the boat in around 20 minutes.

Chesapeake area sailor Eric Tsibertzopolus, 47, is a believer. He owns two Tiwals: one that he sails on the Potomac and the Chesapeake; the

■ The Tiwal in action. Photo by Stephanie Cande



other, which he sails in the Aegean Sea. Not bad.

Tsibertzopolus has been sailing out of the Severn Sailing Association since 2002. He saw the Tiwal at the 2014 Annapolis Sailboat Show and bought his the following summer. He likes the simplicity of the design.

“For me, the Tiwal is all about utility. When I cannot find crew or if the wind’s too much to singlehand the Johnson 18, I load the Tiwal into the back of the car and go. I can sail off a floating dock, a ramp, or the beach. Lake, river, the Bay, the Aegean Sea: you name it, I’ve done it all.”

His two sons, ages 9 and 11, are experienced Tiwal skippers as well.

For the past two years, Tsibertzopolus has packed his Tiwal aboard an airplane and taken it to France for the Tiwal Cup, an international gathering of Tiwal owners that is part regatta, part floating party.

Excoffin describes her Tiwal Cup events this way: “It is all about conviviality. We get 40 or 50 owners from all over the world and throw a big bash in a really fun location. That’s what Tiwal



■ Marion Excoffin, the French founder of the Tiwal.



is all about: enjoying the water and friends with a minimum of hassle!”

The eye-catching Tiwal comes in one color combination: yellow and black. Excoffin says there are more than 900 Tiwals happily plying the water all over the world. About 15 percent of the boats are sold as toys aboard superyachts. Check it out at tiwal.com. ■

Tiwal 3 Specs

Length: 10 ft. 6 in.

Weight: 110 lbs.

Sail Area: 75 sq. ft.

Base Price: \$5700

Capacity: 440 lbs.

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