



The Spacie 24 looks quite contemporary with a modern paint-job

# Chameleon – a Spacesailer 24

To complement his story “Ten yachts, ten loves” (P42) **Nigel Ridgway** takes a more in-depth look at his current boat, Chameleon, a Spacesailer 24.

Occasionally, a designer will come up with a yacht that is near perfect for its purpose – the Spacie 24 is one of those. Designed by Kim Swarbrick of WA when he was just 23, this little yacht has stood the test of time and is still good buying to get you into cruising on a modest budget. You can pick one up for about \$20,000-\$25,000.

What do I like about these yachts? Well, the proportions are just about right. Beam is one-third length and LWL is 6.40m. The keel is moulded into the hull, so no bolts to worry about, and displacement-to-ballast ratio is almost 50 percent. The GRP hulls were hand-laid and built to Lloyd's specifications.

## Cruising/racing

The boat was designed for cruising/racing and had a good record in quarter-tonner races on the west

coast in the early seventies. In 1972 a Spacie was sailed to Singapore from Fremantle and the owner at that time, John Holiday, wrote to Kim Swarbrick singing the praises of his boat. He reckoned she was seaworthy, comfortable and had heaps of stowage space. I can vouch for that too.

## Below

Coming down below, though the keyhole companionway, you'll find a dinette to port that seats four comfortably. The table is easily lowered to convert into a double berth. To starboard in the galley there is a metho stove, a sink and two roomy iceboxes (one of which could be converted into a fridge). Cupboards below the stove are spacious enough for plenty of stores. There's plenty of storage space under the berths too.

Opposite the dinette is a settee berth. Going for'ard, there is a generous toilet

on the port side, the door of which closes off the main saloon for privacy. Opposite is a hanging locker.

The V-berth is long enough for tall persons and wide enough for two. There is plenty of headroom for sitting up in bed to read.

## On deck

Outside, the cockpit is really roomy for a boat of this size. The seats are long

## SPECIFICATIONS

### Spacesailer 24

LOA	7.03m
LWL	6.40m
Beam	2.53m
Draught	1.4m
Displacement	1995kg
Ballast	907kg



FAR LEFT Main saloon is airy and has a big-boat feel.

LEFT The forepeak has a fairly roomy double berth.

enough for sleeping if it's too hot below and the hinged tiller increases space at anchor. There is a cutout in the transom for easy access when swimming (unique at that time).

At the bow there is a large self-draining anchor hatch and just behind it, a for'ard hatch for ventilation.

The side decks are quite wide for a yacht of this size. The foredeck and side decks only have a slight camber, which makes for a feeling of safety going for'ard. The masthead rig is dead simple – uppers, lowers, baby stay, forestay and backstay with one set of spreaders.

Swarbricks always recommended using an outboard for these yachts. We have a 15hp Honda four-stroke on ours and it pushes us along quickly and quietly under motor. Some were built with inboards – I guess it's personal choice – but we prefer the outboard. Where an inboard engine would be,

we have a cavernous space that is great for stowing the rubber ducky. The companionway steps are easily removed to gain access to this space, and the bottom step houses a useful toolbox.

Sailing performance is good for a yacht this size and age. Of course, a bendy-mast fractional rig will go better but the Spacie has a solid feel about it. Ours is rigged with a Profurl cruising furler and a tri-radial headsail. The full-batten main is jiffy-reefed with two sets of reefs. I would like to add some of the newer Harken batt cars for ease of reefing downwind. We find the boat fun and simple to sail – all lines (except reefing) come back to the cockpit.

**Electrics**

Electrics are dead simple. A 70-amp deep-cycle battery powers a Simrad tiller pilot, a small Navman chartplotter,

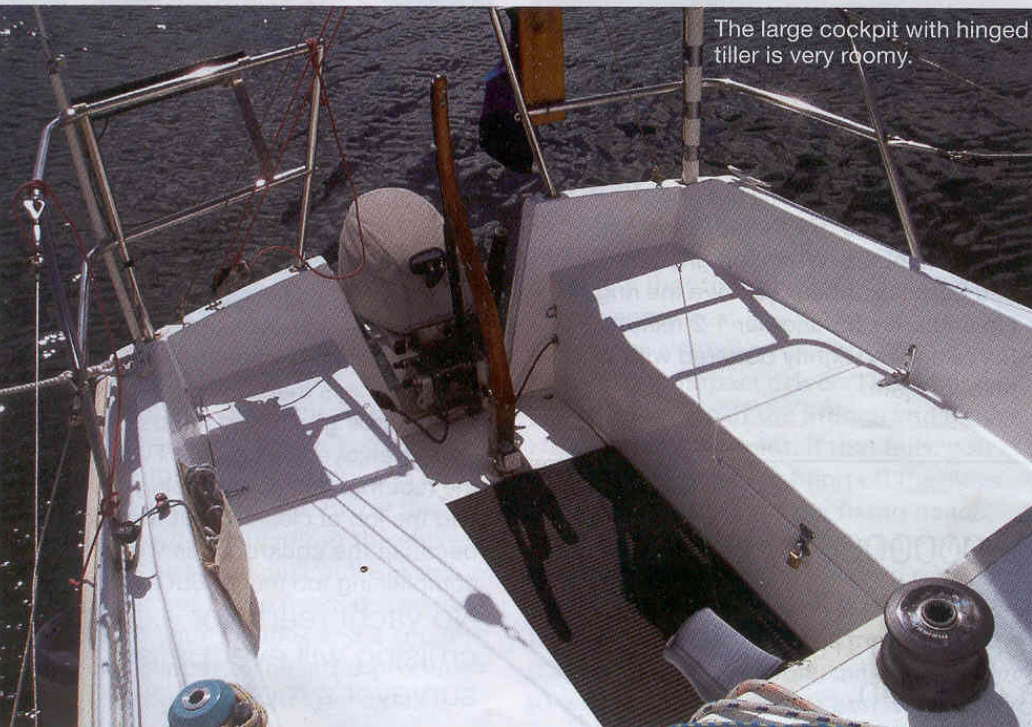
a 27meg radio, stereo radio/cassette player, all the internal lights, plus deck lights and masthead navigation light. I have only one small switch panel. A little 0.5-amp solar panel on the stern rail keeps the battery topped up.

With total water storage of 200L – one 100L flexible tank, the rest in drums – we have plenty for local cruising. We have an electric pump to the sink. A portable shower plugs into a cigarette lighter socket.

It's all pretty simple really and the wiring is easy to follow. The boat is obviously a bit cramped compared to the big yachts we've owned, but it is pretty comfortable for two. For single-handing, the Spacie would be perfect, being so easy to handle.

There is an excellent website on the design, where you can find the boat's history, some great pics and owner anecdotes: <http://www.members.optusnet.com.au/spacesailer24>.

If you're thinking of getting into sailing and buying a small yacht, you couldn't do much better than a Spacie – we've owned two over the years.



The large cockpit with hinged tiller is very roomy.

**cruisinghelmsman Nigel Ridgway**



Nigel and Aileen live in Mandurah Quay in WA. They cruise their Spacesailer 24 locally and are having fun downsizing. Owning a simple little yacht means they can get out on the water quickly and spend less time on



maintenance than they did with a large boat. Annual costs are about half that of their larger yachts – something to consider in retirement (Aileen has retired and Nigel is semi-retired).