

ARTICLE SAILBOAT

A cruiser ahead of its time can make sabbatical dreams come true

The Jeanneau Trinidad 48 should have been more successful in North America when it was introduced in the early 1980s, and it should be better known as a used boat today. Why? Because it's a solid bluewater cruiser with a sensible hull shape, a commodious interior and a friendly deck saloon-style pilothouse. But it never caught on. In some ways the Ribadeau and Dumas-designed Trinidad was ahead of its time. Just take a look at the sleek deck saloon models that dominate Jeanneau's lineup today. They trace their roots to the handsome Trinidad. Three-, four-, or even five-cabin Trinidads were a good value when first launched in 1981 and are still good values on the used market. It's definitely a boat worth retrofitting, both from a cruising and financial perspective.

Look outside the box

Our retrofit odyssey takes place in the Caribbean. That's where you will find the best selection of used Trinidads. This powerful 48-foot sloop or cutter was a popular Caribbean charter boat during its seven-year production run. It was also a successful private cruiser in Europe and many of those boats ended up in the Caribbean when their owners decided to spend a winter in the sun but had no taste for the more challenging passage home. Large uncluttered decks and a spacious cockpit make the Trinidad an ideal warm weather cruiser.

Here's the situation. The stock market is sinking, the housing market has sunk, your spirits are sinking and you desperately need a year out of the rat race or you fear you'll sink too. That's it, you are going to do it, pluck the kids out of school and take a sailing sabbatical in the Caribbean. Now you need a plan.

These days, it actually makes sense to buy a boat down island. Facilities have improved dramatically and there is a worldwide market for parts and fittings. Items can be shipped to St. Martin just as easily as Chicago, Annapolis or Fort Lauderdale. Why buy a boat on the mainland and then beat a thousand miles to the islands? Besides, you intend to do most of the retrofit project yourself, and it's more pleasurable working in the tropics. The retrofit is just the beginning of your new life.

You fly off to the islands and find an ideal boat for your Caribbean sabbatical. It is lying in St. Martin. Not surprisingly, it's a 1985 Jeanneau Trinidad 48. It is relatively well equipped although much of the gear is dated. The interior arrangement allows each of your three kids to have a private cabin. There's plenty of room left over for a large, airy saloon and decent-sized galley. Storage is iffy but you can improve that and besides, you won't need a lot of clothing for the next year anyway. The best feature is the brand-new Westerbeke diesel. And the price is right, the French owners are asking \$139,000. After some lively negotiation, a sea trial and complete survey, you buy the boat in St. Martin for \$125,000.

Your first sail is to Bobby's Marina, in Philipsburg on the Dutch side of the island, where the boat is hauled out. Bobby's is always crowded because it is one of the best yards in the Caribbean. The cost of hauling the boat out is \$326. Because you will be working on the boat yourself, your lay days cost you \$39 for each day on the hard. Old adage or tired cliché, either way, "time is money" certainly applies to boatyards. You hope to complete your repairs and upgrades quickly, within a month, and then when the family arrives, splash the boat and head south down the Leeward Island chain. You have allotted 20 percent of the purchase price, or \$25,000 toward upgrading the boat for serious cruising and living aboard. That should be plenty but you will have to prioritize your needs and spend your dollars wisely. If you can motor away from Bobby's in a month's time, your yard bill will be \$1,500.

Start with the basics

Every retrofit project should start with the core structure. In this case the hull and deck are solid and in good shape. The surveyor inspected the keel-to-hull joint and didn't find evidence of serious groundings. (I once looked at a Trinidad in Fort Lauderdale that had broken athwarts. When the boat was later hauled it was easy to see that a terrible grounding had caused the problem.) The hull had a few blisters but nothing to worry about, and by the time the boat is launched a month later, you won't even be able find them. The rudder blade was partially waterlogged, so a weep hole is drilled into the bottom to let it drain while you're on the hard. The rudder bearings and partial skeg are in good condition. Being on the hard will make one of the big items on your retrofit list, replacing the seacocks, a lot easier. Just before launching, you will paint the bottom yourself and it only seems natural that you should use Petit Trinidad antifouling paint. You will need three gallons, because 48 feet is a lot of boat to paint, and with various rollers, trays, paint suits, etc., the total cost is \$900.

One of the first calls you make is to Peter Grimm at Super Sailmakers in Fort Lauderdale. Building sails requires lead time. Peter knows what you're looking for—good performing sails that will hold up in vigorous trade wind conditions. You have decided to order a new genoa to compliment the old but still serviceable roller-furling main. The genoa is the driver on the Trinidad. Grimm recommends a 135-percent genoa.

"It will certainly need to be furled at times during the blustery winter months," Grimm said, "but in the light summer winds, you will be happy to have more sail area." He also recommends a clew height of 4.5 feet that will set nicely with the Trinidad's moderately long genoa tracks and still provide good visibility and easy tacking. Grimm will build a sail using 8.7-ounce Marblehead Weave Dacron, which he considers the best all-around fabric available. It is durable and stretch resistant. He will include a foam luff, double-taped leach and foot and stainless corner rings. You choose a white UV sun cover. The cost is \$4,250, plus \$75 for shipping to the islands, for total \$4,325.

The next project is to remove and ship the huge bimini off to Merle Stewart in Fort Lauderdale. While the spray dodger is still serviceable, the bimini, which is almost 10 feet wide and 8 feet long, is well worn. Sun protection is crucial in the tropics

and it is cost effective to have Merle build a new one. She would prefer to design, measure and build from scratch. However, as a former cruiser who raised two kids aboard, she understands the need to keep within a budget. She will use Sunbrella fabric to duplicate the old bimini and the new one will fit nicely on the old stainless frame. The total cost is \$3,000.

The surveyor suggested a separate standing rigging survey and this is your next step. Roger Underwood, of Nance and Underwood Rigging and Sails in Fort Lauderdale, is an authority on re-rigging boats for offshore cruising. Roger and his crew have put thousands of new rigs in boats (including mine last year), and he knows his stuff. His advice is straightforward. If the rigging is more than 10 years old, and the boat has been in the tropics, it should be replaced. The cost of replacing the rig, with respect to the overall cost of the boat is small. The cost of replacing a shattered mast is not small. You decide to follow his advice, skip the survey and replace the wire and terminals.

Although it seems cumbersome, it is still cost effective to remove the old standing rigging and ship it to Nance and Underwood. They will duplicate it and ship it back. With the rig out of the boat you carefully inspect the turnbuckles, toggles, etc, as well as the chainplates. Crevice corrosion, usually found on the chainplates where they pass through the deck, is a serious issue. At this time you also inspect the Harken roller furling unit on the forestay and decide that it is still in good shape. You use Bobby's Marina crane to lift the mast out of the boat. With it lying alongside the boat, you can check the wiring, replace the masthead tri-color with a new solar-powered model from AquaSignals, and also add a new Windex. When the mast goes vertical again you will seal and secure it with Spartite mast wedge system.

Nance and Underwood used standard 1x19 stainless wire rope and Sta Lok terminal ends. These mechanical fasteners are more expensive than swage fittings but they hold up better in the tropics. They are also repairable in case of an emergency and will increase the resale value of the boat if you choose to sell when your sabbatical is complete. The new rigging arrives just a couple of weeks after you shipped. Cost, including parts, labor and shipping, comes to \$4,800. A rigger from Bobby's Marina needed a day to take the old rig off and a day to put the new rig up. His charge, including the crane time to lift the mast out and back in, comes to \$1,200. The Aqua Signal Quick Connect Tri-color mast headlight, Windex and Spartite purchased at the local Budget Marine Store, the largest marine retailer in the Caribbean, came to \$400. The total re-rigging cost is \$6,400.

You know from experience that it is often too windy in the Caribbean to fly a chute, even an asymmetrical. However, you also know that you'll be doing a lot of reaching and running, so you order a new Forespar Line Control Whisker Pole. You decide to stick with the telescoping aluminum pole, in lieu of the carbon inner sleeve, for two reasons. First, it saves a bit of money, and secondly, because the pole will be stored on the mast, ready to deploy, you won't need to lift it into place. You choose the 15-27, meaning that the standard pole is 15 feet long and can telescope to 27 feet. The cost, ordered through Defender, is \$1,500, including shipping.

On deck has been refit, now it's time to tackle the interior. The first project is to replace the below the waterline seacocks, and the Jeanneau Trinidad 48 has plenty of them. You will need three for each head—the toilet intake, outlet and sink drain—and there are three heads. Including the galley sink drain and engine intake, you will need 11 new valves all together. You decide to go with corrosion-free Marelon ball valves from Forespar. The mix of $\frac{3}{4}$ intakes and $1\frac{1}{4}$ outlets, flanges and new hose clamps comes to \$760 when ordered through Budget Marine. Removing and installing seacocks is hard work, and it has to be done right so that nothing leaks. You commission Bobby's Marina to undertake this project. It is a two-day job, and that's with you lending a hand. At \$40 an hour, the labor charge comes to \$640, for a total of \$1,400. Not a bad price for serious piece of mind.

At this point, we've spent about \$19,000 and haven't added any sexy new electronics yet. And while the integrated combo plotters, AIS systems, satellite communications systems are alluring, they are not necessary. A tough, reliable autopilot is. You choose the Raymarine system because the product is well proven and the company has excellent customer service. There are three steps in choosing the autopilot: the control head that is mounted at the helm, the drive unit mounted belowdecks on the rudder quadrant, and the corepack, which includes the course computer, flux gate compass and rudder feedback indicator. For the control head you opt for the ST 7002, a familiar unit with four-inch LCD display and easy to use keypad. You also select the Type 2 linear drive unit, capable of handling boats to 44,000 pounds of displacement. You choose the S3 corepack, compatible with your first two choices. You order the unit from Defender for a total cost of \$4,000, including shipping. Now, of course, you must install the beast. This is a do-it-yourself job, but a full day's project.

We've just about spent all the money we have. However, there is one last important project—you need ice cubes for your drinks, especially after sweating in the lazarette installing the autopilot. Reliable and efficient refrigeration makes cruising much more enjoyable. Most cruisers have decided that simple 12-volt refrigeration makes the most sense these days, and you opt for the old, reliable Super Cold Machine from Adler Barbour/Waeco. The Danfoss compressor is efficient and quiet, and it is also easy to install. The addition of the water-cooling unit and two in-box fans add to the efficiency and are necessary for tropical cruising. You choose the largest evaporator the company makes, the VD 153, a closed unit that acts as both a freezer and icemaker. Again, you find it most efficient to order the unit from Defender and have shipped to Bobby's. As a yacht in transit, there are not duties applicable. Total cost is \$1,300.

It is finally time to splash the boat and head down island. The Jeanneau Trinidad 48 will be a gracious host for your family's Caribbean sabbatical. And I wouldn't be surprised if, five years from now, you're not anchored off a Pacific atoll, stretching a sabbatical into a completely new lifestyle.

LOA 47'7"
LWL 41'4"
Beam 15'1"
Draft full-keel 7'5"

Draft centerboard up 4'7" down 8'8"
Displ. 28,000 lbs.
Ballast full-keel 10,528 lbs.
Ballast centerboard 10,080 lbs.
Sail Area sloop 1,220 sq. ft.
Sail area ketch 1,300 sq. ft.

Project list and cost summary

1985 Jeanneau Trinidad \$125,000

Retrofit budget:

1. Boatyard haul and storage \$1,500
2. Bottom job \$900
3. New 135-percent genoa \$4,325
4. Replace bimini canvas \$3,000
5. Replace standing rigging \$6,400
6. New whisker pole \$1,500
7. Replace through-hulls \$1,400
8. Install autopilot \$4,000
9. Install refrigeration. \$1,300

Total retrofit work \$24,325

20% of purchase price

Grand total \$149,325