

15-20 METRES  
50-65 FEET

# Pinta

**Pinta Smeralda may be just a day sailing cruiser, but her owner's love of racing means she employs some of the lessons learnt by her America's Cup yacht builders and Admiral's Cup-winning designers. BELOW: The interior is not exactly spartan, but light in weight and ambience**

Industrialist Willi Illbruck's racing *Pintas* once formed the cornerstone of many German teams in the Admiral's and the Sardinia Cups. Originally tagged *Pinta 96* during her design and build, the new yacht is now called *Pinta Smeralda* and she arrived at her Sardinian berth from New Zealand ready for three generations of the Illbruck family to enjoy at their home there. For Illbruck, the love of the sea is undimmed and this yacht affords all the comfort and performance of a large machine whilst unshackling him from a big crew.

The key is her light displacement. True *Pinta Smeralda* has a colossal rig, but doing away with surplus weight has meant the ballast weighs less than you would expect with loadings on the sail handling systems reduced too. Until such time as the monster green asymmetric spinnaker is set, one person can steer, tack, gybe and reef this yacht.

Illbruck noticed Luca Bassani's Wally Yachts and the same flush-fitting retractable windlass and invisible headsails and mainsail sheeting systems are aboard *Pinta Smeralda*. But Illbruck wished to maintain proven relationships, none more so than with designers Judel/Vrolijk. Previous J/V *Pintas* have been in winning Admiral's Cup teams twice, a victorious Sardinia Cup team whilst the 1992 one-tonner became the first of that class to be a double world champion.

This seventh *Pinta* posed Rolf Vrolijk a string of problems. High speed was paramount, yet so was the need to fit



into the berth in Porto Cervo. 'The basic concept was to get the maximum performance out of a boat which fitted the available mooring box: 18 by 5 by 2.5 metres,' said Vrolijk, though clearly if the hull was to produce sufficient righting moment for the powerful rig, a deeper keel was necessary.

The solution is a lifting stainless steel fin with a high volume lead bulb at its tip. 'Maximum lift and maximum stability,' explains Vrolijk. There's little to betray the keel's existence as its box forms the passage from the saloon forward. On deck too, there's little to see, though a lift-off hatch shows that the fin is guided by sliding surfaces on leading and trailing edges with a wedge locking mechanism. Springs ensure these engage if the hydraulics fail and if that should ever occur, either one of the two rams is powerful enough on its own to raise or lower the keel.

The bulb weighs 5.4 tonnes and to make the entire installation neater the rams are inside the 1.1-tonne fin. The rockiness of the Costa Smeralda coast meant considerable thought has gone into the keel's crash worthiness. Neil Wilkinson, a consulting engineer from Auckland and part of the 1995 Team New Zealand America's Cup squad, ran the numbers along with composite engineers from another Auckland specialist, High Modulus. The result is that the keel's weight is suspended from the deck and a crush zone is achieved by inserting a cassette inside the keel box.





Pinta Smeralda has topped 15 knots downwind and makes a good 9 upwind. Her big rig on a carbon spar is nevertheless simplicity itself to control, the mainsail slipping so unobtrusively into the boom and the slightly overlapping headsail furled at the press of a button by the helmsman from his steering console

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The saloon has been given the lion's share of the available interior space, which is understandable in a day sailer destined to slip along the shores of Sardinia. The cool interior is by New Zealander Brett de Thier. **BELOW:** Functional galley details make use of the possibilities of composites and reflect her owner's dislike of cruising frippery



Like engine and rig controls, the keel is commanded from the twin helm stations from where builder Steve Marten set about bringing the yacht to life. Vrolijk resisted the temptation to make the keel ultra-skinny and the sensibly wide chord means that 'tracking is not too nervous'. This frees Marten from concentrating on holding course as he reaches for a button and watches the mainsail unroll from inside the U-section boom and climb the mast. It's a long way up too, for 1.5m (5ft) was added to the mast and 300mm (1ft) to the boom during building. The mainsail, from North Auckland, is loose-footed and, despite the absence of battens, has decent draught and a leech that stands up.

The in-boom furling system is one of Marten Marine's own Leisure-Furls and the carbon-fibre spar is based on an America's Cup class section. A mandrel inside the boom takes the belly out of the sail as it is rolled to reef it, effectively an automatic depowering system. The beauty of the roller boom is that there is next to nothing to betray its presence.

By contrast, the roller jib is standard fare. But the headsail is not, being only a 112 per cent. This slightest of overlaps and the swept-back spreaders make self-tacking simple: a hand for the wheel and another for joysticks controlling the sheets and Marten was in complete control. During the sail, *Pinta Smeralda* heeled initially to the slightest puff, settling swiftly as form stability steadied the yacht up. 'The hull shape is similar to our latest IMS designs,' explains Rolf Vrolijk, 'but with slightly more fullness to accommodate the interior.'

A day-sailing cruiser she might be, but *Pinta's* form is still pitched at performance. To achieve as much sailing length within the overall limit, the yacht has a near vertical bow and a short stern overhang. The bow sections – there is very little of the canoe body immersed – have a pronounced V-section with a narrow entry. 'But', adds Vrolijk, 'there is enough reserve displacement for safety.'

During the soft 6-8 knots late afternoon breeze, *Pinta* sailed high, fast and balanced on the wind. Around 9.5 knots was an easy gait. With the wind abaft the beam, the boat can be supercharged by either a fractional jib top or a masthead reaching spinnaker. The former is tacked on to the bow but the latter is flown off a bowsprit which projects 1.1m (3ft

7in) beyond the stem once a button is pressed in the sail locker. The masthead sail is a monster which has been tamed via a squeezer and a sock.

Offwind, 15 knots have been achieved, though we managed only two thirds of that as the breeze faded. *Pinta Smeralda* seemed to offer all the speed you could desire, across a wide range of wind angles, without showing any light airs weakness and with all the docile handling of a Laser dinghy.

None of this would be possible were it not for her light construction which complements the carbon rig. This was one reason why Illbruck returned to Marten Marine, from whom he's already had three race boats. Marten also built Michael Fay's America's Cup K boat and the Whitbread maxi *New Zealand Endeavour*.

The hull is a foam-cored carbon structure, whilst the deck, bulkhead, floorboards and cabinetry use Nomex aramid paper honeycomb. With off-white painted finishes and fawn Alcantara overheads, the interior is as light in appearance as its structural weight. Its design is the work of New Zealander Brett de Thier and the intended use as a day boat means that the saloon is by far the largest space, with an expansive U-shaped settee to port and linear galley opposite.

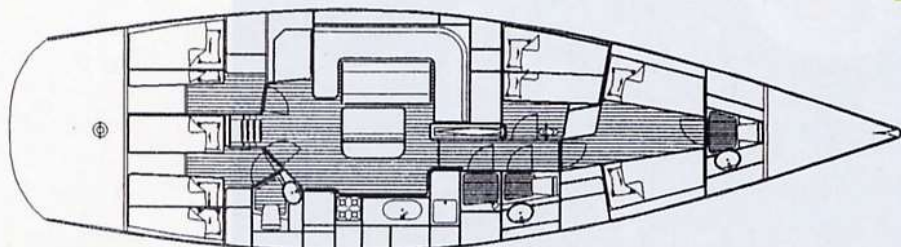
The engine is amidships, concealed in the backrest of a centreline saloon settee. This has permitted good space aft for two cabins, the starboard one of which has its own washing facilities. Forward of the saloon and to one side of the keel box is a comfortable guest cabin with shower and heads opposite whilst the owner's cabin is forward, complete with separate washroom.



The yacht is not weighed down with heavy ancillaries; apart from the usual navigation kit there is air conditioning in all cabins, a Sony TV in the saloon and freezer and refrigerator in the galley.

On deck, the fit out is even more minimal with little or nothing to interrupt the teak-clad decks save a vestigial coachroof and a large bimini-protected cockpit. The most novel features are at opposite ends: an anchor is stowed on a gantry underneath a bow bomb door, which arcs forward and passes through a gate in the pulpit; while aft, the low transom hides a fold-down bathing platform and ladder with hot and cold fresh-water shower.

Yacht design never stands still, but right now *Pinta Smeralda* stands as the new for swift, automated sailing. 'I expect this project will find a lot of imitators,' says Illbruck.



## P I N T A

LOA	18.3m (60ft)
LWL	16.5m (54ft)
Beam	5.m (16ft 5in)
Draught	2.5-3.8m (8ft 2in-12ft 6in)
Displacement	19.5 tonnes
Ballast	7.9 tonnes
Sail area	202m <sup>2</sup> (2,174sqft)
Naval architect	Judel/Vrolijk & Co
Interior designer	Brett de Thier
Builder	Marten Marine