

Marlow-Hunter 50AC



The Marlow-Hunter 50 is designed for either coastal or long-distance bluewater sailing and carries a CE A/13 rating.

Mission

The Marlow-Hunter 50 is designed for entertaining around home, coastal sailing, or passage making. Her rig is designed to be easy to handle single-handed if need be with various options allowing consumers to match the equipment installed to the application. Because of lavish use of dark-stained wood below, and due to her many traditional details incorporated there, she should appeal to more traditional sailors. Consumers who are looking for a sailboat that looks like it was fitted out at IKEA need not apply.



Marlow-Hunter 50 anchor roller

The Marlow-Hunter 50 comes standard with a double anchor roller and a single anchor with chain and rode. A roller furling self tacking headsail is standard, but a roller furling over-lapping jib is optional.

The New Marlow-Hunter Brand

The Hunter name has been around for a long time and by staying squarely in the cruising side of sailing at a competitive price-point it was able to survive the great collapse of the sailboat industry in the U.S. in the 1980s when the number of builders went from several dozen to just a few. It did that by keeping its mission clearly in mind: building an easy-to-sail cruising boat for the weekend warrior, at an affordable price -- and by keeping its overhead low. But even low overhead could not save it from the fall-out of the Great Recession.

Since then the brand has been taken over by David Marlow, a veteran sailboat racer, boat builder, and died-in-the-wool cruising yachtsman. Not surprisingly, David has upgraded the brand in terms of both materials and fit and finish work. Further, we think he has added gravitas to his sailboat line by making them more long-range capable, as well for example, replacing balsa core with Nida Core, improving the gel-coat and type fiberglass used, adding more vinyl ester resin and Kevlar and even the removal of chopper guns in order to improve glass to resin ratios. So they look better, and are better, but what has happened to the all-important price? Read on, because we have a pleasant surprise in store.





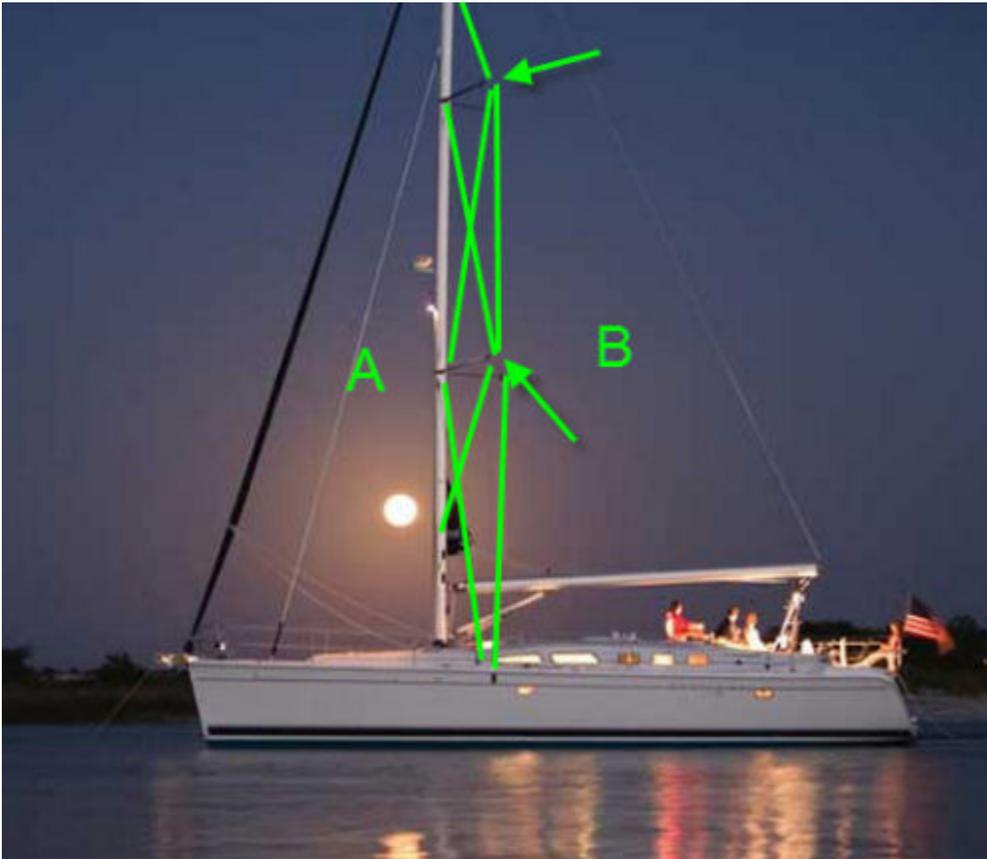
Marlow-Hunter 50 sailing The Standing Rigging

The B&R Rig. Conventionally-rigged sailboats hold the mast upright from four points: a forestay, backstay and port and starboard shrouds directly outboard of the mast. Hunter's B&R rig (originated by sailboat designers Lars Bergström and Sven-Olov Ridder in Sarasota, Florida) moves the shrouds aft a bit and out to the hull sides, eliminating the need for a backstay. This not only reduced windage and weight, it also allows there to be a square-headed on the non-furling mainsail, if the owner chooses, and more roach in the main than would otherwise be possible on both the furling and non-furling rigs. In fact, more and more production boats by other major manufacturers are beginning to recognize this and offer back-stay-less rigs.

MoreStable Rig. The B&R rig's 3-stay configuration has each stay 120-degrees from each other creating what amounts to a 3-legged stool to hold up the mast. Because the upper shrouds are attached to the chain plates on the hull side, the rig has a wide stance and is more stable. Loads are directed to the keel through the hull sides. Because the boat is on the beamy side, this allows the headsail to be sheeted inside the shrouds to enhance pointing ability and making tacking easier while at the same time increasing visibility.

Larger Mainsail. Because the mainsail can have a longer foot and more roach it can have more sail area, thus balancing the headsail in this cutter-rigged sail plan. Mainsails are much easier to handle than large headsails because they are connected to the boat on two of three sides. With the main being able to handle more sail area, the headsail can be larger as well.

Easier to Control. More importantly, a large mainsail is easier to handle than a large genoa forward. Heeling too much in a gust? Ease the mainsheet a bit -- made easy since it ends both on the cabin top at the front of the cockpit and also near the port helm. Hunter's arch-mounted mainsail traveler also helps by moving the mainsheet closer to the end of the boom where leverage works to decrease the load. (Travelers far forward on most cruising boats use leverage against the crewman trying to bring in the mainsail in a stiff breeze.) Marlow-Hunter's design concept is to keep the helmsman at or near the helm thus making the boat easier to single hand.



Marlow Hunter 50 fore triangle

This beam-on picture of a Marlow-Hunter 50 with a rising moon in the background, graphically shows the relatively small fore triangle (A) compared to the one made by the mainsail (B). The arrows point to the swept-back shrouds. Note the reverse diagonal rigging.

A Smoother Ride. The B&R rig has longer, swept back spreaders that support reverse (double) diagonal rigging. Conventional boats have only single diagonal stays. As a result the mast on a B & R rig can have a smaller section, have thinner walls and be lighter. With less weight aloft, the boat both heels and pitches less. Because the boat is not rolling and pitching as much her ride can be smoother. This coupled with the characteristics and features of a Glenn Henderson designed hull contribute to a much smoother ride.

Lazy Jacks and Lazy Boot. The Marlow-Hunter 50 standard mainsail includes traditional, horizontal battens with a lazy-jack system, so the sail stacks itself atop the boom when lowered. A sail cover is incorporated into the bottom of the sail. Tuck in a few corners and straighten a few folds, zip the cover closed, and the main is stowed.



Marlow Hunter 50 mainsail

The Hood Vertical Batten Mainsail is available for yachts from 20' to 70' (6 m to 21 m) and the sailmaker claims that the additional sail on the roach can be as much as 20% greater than in a hollow-leach roller furling main. (Picture is not a Marlow-Hunter 50 rig.)

An optional in-mast furling main makes short-handed sailing even easier but does present the problem of what to do about the leach and does roach have to be sacrificed because conventional battens can't be used? Hunter's answer to both questions is a vertical batten design and a number of sailmakers have come up with solutions that are compatible with their in-mast furling system.

The optional overlapping jib, which stops just slightly aft of the mast (110%) and the standard self tacking jib both come with roller furling.

Optional Staysail. We like a mid-stay for several reasons. One, it helps support the mast and keep it from pumping. Two, it can anchor a roller-furling staysail. In certain conditions this can add as much as a half knot or slightly more to boat speed. In brisk conditions, the captain has the option to completely furl the headsail and just use the staysail which can be made self-tending. Another option is a roller-furling staysail.

Sail Area Caveat: The standard total sail area of the Marlow-Hunter 50 is 1,277 sq. ft. (119 sq. ft.) and the mast height is 68'6" (20.9 m) from the waterline. With both a roller furling headsail and main, the total sail area is reduced to 1,161sq. ft. (108 sq. ft.) with a mast height of 63'4" (19.3 m). Add a staysail to the standard sail plan and the total sail area is 1,316 sq. ft. (122 sq. m).

Shallow or Deep Keel?

Being from the west coast of Florida, Marlow-Hunter is sensitive to the need for shoal-draft vessels in certain parts of the world. For that reason it offers a shoal-draft keel on the 50 that draws 5'6" (1.67 m) and weighs 12,500 lbs. (5,670 kg). The deep-draft version that draws 7'0" (2.03 m) and weighs 9,093 lbs. (2,461 kgs.). With the total displacement of the boat being 3,407 lbs. (1,545 kg) or over 10% different, there is bound to be some performance variations as well. The shoal-draft version has a ballast/displacement ratio of 38% and in the deep-keel model it is 31%. The standard keels are made of iron however Marlow-Hunter also offer lead keels as one of their many options.



Marlow Hunter 50 optional dodger

We like the optional dodger because it increases the length of the sailing season especially if the optional bimini top is also ordered. It also makes cruising more pleasant for guests who are not used to a bit of spray and a breeze. Note the two Dorades (the red vents) which are standard.

Cockpit Utility and Safety

Whether racing, daysailing or cruising, the vast majority of time aboard is spent in the cockpit. Accordingly, Hunter provides easy movement from the cabin or side decks into the cockpit, with the mainsail traveler overhead on a stainless steel arch. Because the boom is over 7' off the cockpit deck, an accidental jibe will not result in injury, and jib winches aft are well out of the way.

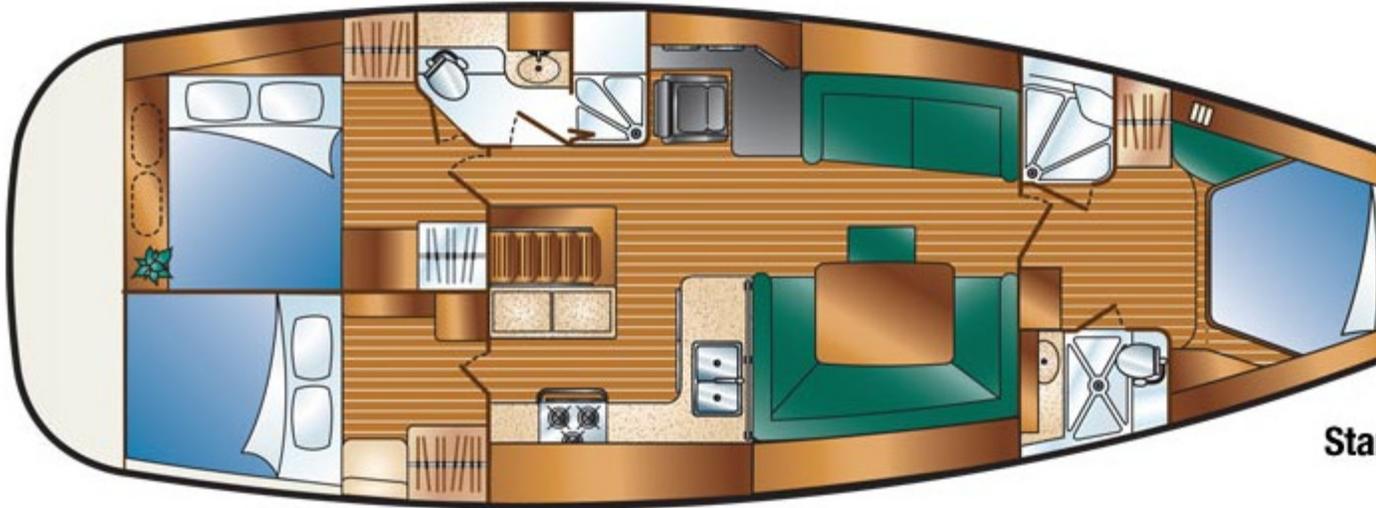
The walkway between the pair of steering wheels provides equally unhindered access to the transom gate. Two additional seats built into the stern provide comfortable seating behind for either the windward or leeward wheel.

The standard stainless steel cockpit arch accommodates the mainsail traveler and provides rigid support for forward- or aft-mounted Bimini tops. An optional canvas Bimini top includes skylights and a solar panel atop, as well as lights and stereo speakers beneath, if desired.

The mainsheet is one endless line that is run from the blocks on the arch, forward to the mast, then below decks and back to the cockpit. It can be trimmed either by the companionway forward, or by the captain just forward of the port wheel. Primary sheet winches forward of the wheels permit the captain to trim the headsail. For single-handed sailing we recommend both motorized sheet winches and an autopilot.

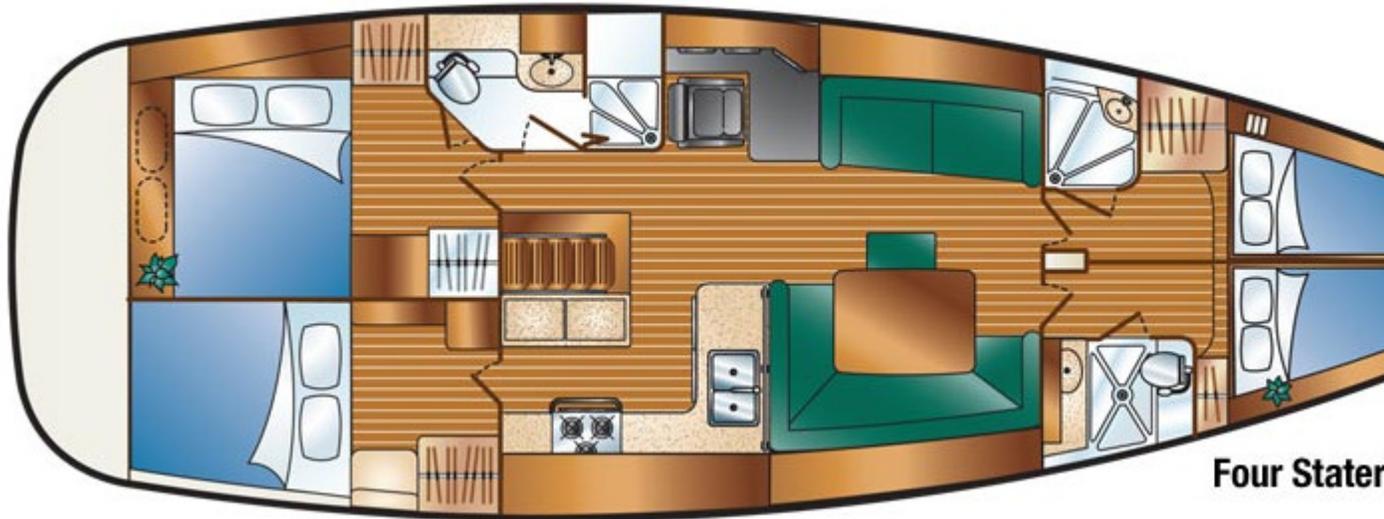
Line Handling

Virtually all line handling (except the topping lift) can be handled from the cockpit. Halyards, downhauls, outhauls, reefing lines and the like are all run back to jam cleats on the coach roof just forward of the cockpit. From there they can be wrapped around a utility secondary winch and be secured. This all can be done easily by one person. Headsail sheets are led further aft and can be trimmed by either crew or the captain.



Marlow Hunter 50 standard layout

Three sleeping cabins and two heads makes a versatile arrangement for cruising with family and friends. The master stateroom forward is pretty much as large as they come in class and we like the way the head has been split in two.



Marlow Hunter 50 stateroom layout

This version certainly has its applications, including chartering.

Main Cabin

When descending the companionway one is at first struck by the amount of wood surrounding this traditional-looking saloon. The main cabin's open layout is enhanced with plenty of light from above and from the long side windows in the trunk cabin. Overall the boat has over 11 hatches, all of which open and have screens, except two. That means when at anchor the boat can be opened up and the breeze can come roaring through. All cabinetry is standard dark cherry. A hardwood cabin deck is standard but optional teak is available.

Galley

Probably the second-most important spot on the boat (after the cockpit), in terms of practical use, is the galley. The Marlow-Hunter 50 has a clever L-shaped galley that includes plenty of counter space with a double-bowl stainless steel sink mounted in Corian counters. A trash bin sits beneath the counter to the right of the sink in what would otherwise be an unusable cabinet corner. Stainless steel grab rails extend the entire length of the galley, both providing a steady handhold and keeping items on the countertops while heeling.

Marlow-Hunter includes a microwave and propane gimbaled three-burner stove with oven. A 12-volt DC front-loading refrigerator and 12vdc top-loading freezer. They also provide dishware for six with dedicated, lighted storage cabinets outboard of galley counters. Additional cabinets and lots of drawers accommodate all of the necessities for a well-fed crew. Also, in the sole is another storage compartment for the ship's stores.



Marlow Hunter 50 galley

The Marlow-Hunter 50 has remarkable counter space in the galley for a sailboat this size. We like the fiddles and the exhaust hood over the three-burner stove.



Marlow Hunter 50 salon

Looking forward, it is obvious that Marlow-Hunter aims to please those who want a traditional-looking yacht inside and we think they've hit the mark.



Marlow Hunter 50 ottoman

Note the Ottoman under the table; it seats another person and doubles as a wine storage hamper.



Marlow Hunter 50 navigatioseat

Here we see what is undoubtedly the most comfortable and plush navigation seat in class. With the advent of electronic chartplotters this is more likely to be a work station away from the office.

Salon

The salon layout is traditional with a U-shaped dinette to starboard and a settee and navigation table to port. This spot is well-designed and has room for all sorts of electronics gear, plus it has a dedicated stand-alone seat instead of a more conventional bench seat. Farther aft is the aft head with a private shower stall. This not only serves the two aft cabins, but also doubles as a day head. One of the things we like best about this space are the horizontal cherry wood battens on the hull sides.



Marlow Hunter 50 starboard aft cabin
The starboard aft cabin.



Marlow Hunter 50 head
This is the head with separate shower stall forward of the starboard aft cabin.

Sleeping Cabins

The Marlow-Hunter 50 comes with either a two, three or four cabin layout. The standard model has one, large master cabin forward. The alternative layout divides the forward cabin in two.

The standard three-cabin layout might be particularly appealing for cruising couples who enjoy guests but treasure privacy. By carefully sculpting seating in the cockpit, and with the added room created by the relatively beamy hull, the builder has been able to tuck two staterooms beneath the cockpit. Even with a queen bed.

The aft cabins are accessed through passageways from the main salon but otherwise are somewhat segregated for privacy.

Low Overhead. There is a drawback, though. Everything from the foot of the bed aft sits beneath the cockpit. While there is 6'6" (1.98 m) of headroom upon entering the cabin, that quickly diminishes. We'd like to see these cabins have large aft hatches in the transom for better ventilation. In a pinch they could be used for emergency egress.



Marlow Hunter 50 forward cabin

The forward cabin in the 3-cabin layout. We'd like to see shelves port and starboard with cubbies. Note the bench seat at left. Marlow-Hunter has also recently added hull windows as standard to this forward cabin.

Forward Cabin and Head

The forward cabin is pretty typical of boats this size. We like the small bench seat to port which helps one to get dressed in the morning. The head is divided; the shower and sink to port and sink and toilet to starboard. The head arrangement is maintained in the model with two cabins forward.

Engine, Generator and Tankage

The standard 75-hp Yanmar diesel and three-bladed propeller will suffice for most sailors, but cruisers can upgrade to a 100-hp Yanmar turning a three-bladed prop. An optional Fisher Panda 11.5 kW generator is available, as are upgrades from the standard 125 Amp alternator to a 160 Amps. At 150 gallons (189 L) the 50 carries more fuel than a number of boats in class, and that can upgrade to 217 gallons (821 L). Water capacity is 200 gallons (757 L), and a watermaker is an option for those wanting to spend some time offshore.



Marlow Hunter 50 sailing

This is the Marlow-Hunter 50's center cockpit -- the largest boat the company builds.

Mid-Cockpit Marlow-Hunter 50

Forty years ago mid-cockpit cruising sailboats in the 35' to 50' (10.7 m to 15.2 m) range were all the rage and thousands of them were built -- all by U.S. builders who are no longer with us. They actually did not work too well at the small end of

the spectrum, but at 46' to 50' (14.02 m to 15.2 m) and more, they were actually quite comfortable. Below they have the obvious advantage of having a large, comfortable master cabin aft that one could actually enjoy. They worked best in the two-stateroom versions, with just one cabin forward, but most were built with three cabins, usually two in the back and one forward because of the charter trade.

The very nature of the design requires that the cockpit be further forward, which means that it is more susceptible to being wet, it is also usually not as large as an aft cockpit version, nor is it as comfortable riding. A third aspect of it is that getting into and out of the cockpit is always like getting in and out of a bath tub.

Advantages of the mid-cockpit design are also manifest. Visibility forward is better. Also, they can be buttoned up with cruising canvas, and with a roller-furling main and furling, self-tending staysail and all lines run to the cockpit, they can be quite cozy even in harsh weather.

In our book, choosing one design over the other for long passage-making with just two couples -- or with just one couple -- would be a matter of ergonomics in a 50-footer more than anything else. There is nothing like getting on a boat and taking her for a sale to get a feel for how the center vs. aft cockpit would work out for long cruises or living aboard.

For entertaining friends, day trips and short cruising around home, our experience is that it is easier to get around on deck in an aft cockpit boat. On the other hand, that huge aft cabin is certainly inviting.



Marlow Hunter 50 preferred layout

The center cockpit Marlow-Hunter 50 in the preferred layout plan.



Marlow Hunter 50 (3) cabin lay out

The 3-cabin version could be an ideal arrangement for family cruising. Note the toilet in the port forward head. We'd put that head in the aft cockpit version with four cabins.

Price

The base MSRP price of the Marlow-Hunter 50 in the aft cockpit version is \$395,990. The MSRP base price for the center cockpit version is \$427,990.

Options to Consider

We think the boat comes pretty well-equipped for just messing about around home, and we don't think there is much need to add anything else except a Bimini top and cushions. Those wanting to do some entertaining may want an icemaker. Sailors concerned about docking a single-screw vessel should consider the optional bow thruster, but remember this boat has a three-bladed prop so she is not as hard to back as is a boat with just two blades.

Those wanting to do some serious cruising will want to load up on options, and the Marlow-Hunter 50 has dozens of them. There is even a "Mariner's Package" which includes a bow thruster, roller furling mainsail, power winches, among other things.

Marlow Hunter 50 solar panel

That is a solar panel (optional) aft of the mainsheet traveler. Hatches in the transom lead to storage.

Observations

Sailboat designers are masters of getting lots of cabins in small boats and we have all endured cramped spaces for a few days in them. But it is not an ideal or even comfortable way to go cruising. It is more like camping out. It is the unwritten about underside of what is otherwise sailing ecstasy.

Essentially that is the reason why people yearn for a 50' (15.2 m) sailboat. It takes about 50' of length in order to have the room inside so that the human proportions finally fit comfortably inside. We think Marlow-Hunter is offering some very compelling vessels here and we are torn between which model and version we like best.



