

What makes a blue-water cruiser?

Dick Durham speaks to a sailor who built his own boat to make sure she ticked all the boxes

After 40 years and 215,000 miles of ocean sailing, Dick Beaumont decided to put his wealth of experience into finding the perfect boat for his retirement. He had a list of red lines when it came to design, but he could not find a boat which did not cross at least one of them.

And so, instead of settling for second best, he had his own, *White Dragon*, a 66ft sloop, built in China and sailed her back to the Mediterranean. So admired was the boat that a sailor asked him to design him a smaller version, so Kraken Yachts was born and the Kraken 50 launched in 2019.

We asked Dick, 65, chairman of Hong Kong-based Kraken Yachts, to take us through the '10 Commandments' of his design philosophy.



White Dragon was custom-built for ocean passages

LONG, INTEGRAL KEEL

'You don't want a boat which is hard to helm, broaches easily or won't heave-to. Good directional stability makes the autopilot or helmsman work less.

'The loss of a keel is catastrophic but although it is rare, it is not rare enough. The simple problem is that, to save on the expense and complexity of having moulds that combine the hull with the keel, most production boats are made in two pieces: hull and keel.'

SKEG-HUNG RUDDER

'We hit a whale in the South Atlantic and it bent the skeg shoe slightly, which we discovered only when hauling out. The steering remained unaffected all the way from the collision to the eastern Mediterranean. Would a blade rudder have survived the impact? I'm not taking that chance.'

HEAVY-DUTY CONSTRUCTION

'Design engineers will tell you that a small lay-up will take the load. I'm not here to argue with them, but I do not want my hull punctured by a coral-head, which is why the bow section is 20mm thick and no part of the hull is less than 15mm.'

NO SLAMMING

'Flat-section hulls aimed at speed are the last thing a blue-water cruiser wants. A slamming hull upwind puts stresses on every nut and bolt of the boat and rig. With a good build radius around the keel entry, I can sail at 8 knots into the wind without any sense of slamming.'

RAKED BOW

'A raked stem will be buoyant and rise over seas, whereas a plumb bow ensures a wet boat. A raked bow also means that in the event of hitting something it is very likely to be a glancing blow, rather than stopping dead.'

DEEP, WELL-PROTECTED COCKPIT

'If a big sea should break over the boat, you need to be in a deep, safe pit. It is also important to have good seating at the helm with a backrest and 360° vision even when sat down.'

STRONG, EASILY-HANDLED RIG

'Over-spec the rig whether wire or rod. I believe a rig should be able to withstand an accidental gybe. Yes, there is a slight disadvantage with windage, but that's a small price for peace of mind.'

NAVIGATION STATION

'You need to be able to work out your position accurately even if your electronic navigation systems fail, including the plotter. For that you need a proper compass, charts, and a hand-bearing compass. Also it's imperative an hourly log is kept up, not just of position, course steered and wind speed, but of battery, fuel, and oil levels.'

COMFORTABLE, DRY INTERIOR

'The crew needs a good sanctuary after their watch, with a hanging locker at the bottom of the companionway so they can take off their oilies as soon as they are below. You need berths with lee-cloths or lee-boards, and good cooking provision with all mod cons. You are on a cruising boat after all, not a stripped-out ballroom.'

GOOD STOWAGE

'A large living space at the cost of stowage room is a mistake. If you have four crew for 15 days of ocean passage the amount of kit they have is considerable. And you will need a sack of potatoes and a sack of onions just for starters provision-wise to feed them! That's before we get into the needs of the boat: endless tools, spares, and manuals.'



DICK BEAUMONT is chairman of Kraken Yachts and has over 200,000 miles of ocean cruising under his belt