

TARTAN 3400

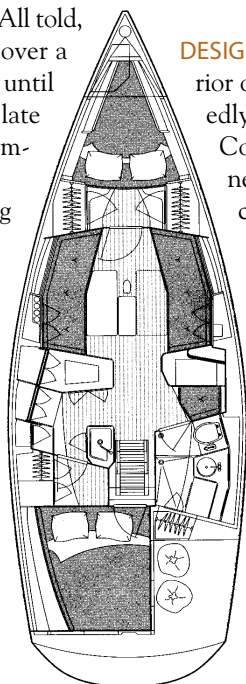
Down East character meets high technology in this handsome, competent cruiser



Starting back in the 1960s, several iterations of the Tartan 34 were among the most prolific models in the stable of this famous Midwestern U.S. yard. All told, Tartan launched about 1,000 over a span of nearly three decades, until the industry-wide crisis of the late 1980s temporarily put this company on the ropes.

Tartan was revitalized during the 1990s under the ownership of Fairport Marine (now Novis Marine) when Tartan re-entered the market with four new models from 35 to 44 feet. All are quality yachts distinguished by traditional styling, but advanced in terms of fit out, materials and manufacturing techniques. These days, Novis fabricates all its hulls using wet prep epoxy technology, and every Tartan or C&C comes

standard with a carbon fibre mast. However, there really wasn't such a thing as an entry level Tartan—until the 3400 debuted for the 2005 season.



DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION The exterior of the Tartan 3400 is unabashedly conservative—a classic East Coast look that will probably never seem dated. The sole discordant note is a large, square-cornered opening in the reverse-raked transom that allows for walk-through boarding (when the swing-up helm seat is out of the way) and, of course, unrestricted self-bailing.

By today's somewhat inflated standards, a 34-foot yacht is generally regarded as "compact" (as opposed to the "full-sized" cruisers from about 40 feet up). That said, Tartan's new 34 is almost 12 feet wide and carries its beam

The combination of self-tacking jib and furling reacher make the Tartan 3400's rig hard to beat.

far aft to provide sufficient space for a voluminous cockpit and very reasonable private aft cabin. Angled bulkheads—something of a trademark for Novis' in-house designer Tim Jackett—are used to enlarge the saloon, nav station and galley without significantly impacting the sleeping quarters or head compartment. It's a tricky game of shifting centimetres from areas that can afford to concede a little space to those that can benefit the most, and Jackett has played it pretty well.

The smallest Tartan compromises nothing when it comes to build quality, starting with an epoxy/CoreCell hull that is post-cured at 63 C° to maximize mechanical properties and prevent the common cosmetic flaws that typically result from resin shrinkage. The balsa-cored deck is built using the increasingly popular vacuum infusion technique with

TARTAN 3400

LOA	10.5 m	34' 4"
LWL	9.72 m	30' 5"
Beam	3.63 m	11' 11"
Ballast	1,588 kg	3,500 lb
Displ.	4,899 kg	10,800 lb
SA (50% IJPE)	27.27 sq-m	620 sq-ft
SA/D		18.8
D/L		171
Fuel	95 L	21 Imp. gal
Water	227 L	50 Imp. gal
Power		29-hp diesel sail drive

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premium vinylester resin and stitched multi-axial reinforcements. Solid (uncored) laminates and/or aluminum backing plates are specified wherever hardware is to be mounted. The hull/deck joint features a husky teak toe rail, secured by recessed bolts that are tapped into full-length aluminum bars embedded in the hull flange laminates. In addition, the overlapping joint is bonded with 3M 5200, a high-strength polyurethane adhesive/sealant.

Deck-mounted shroud terminals are thru-bolted to wide stainless chainplates, which in turn are bolted to husky fiberglass settee backs securely bonded to the hull itself. There's enough of a keel stubby to create a decent bilge sump, and a choice of three different keels—all featuring the same bolting pattern to facilitate keel swapping should draft requirements change. Most West Coast sailors will favour the 1.98 metre (6' 6") fin, but there's also a beavertail (flattened bulb) that draws 1.5 m (4' 11"), as well as a keel/centreboard version that can sneak into waters as shallow as 1.2 m (3' 11").

SAILING GEAR In 2003, Novis acquired Hi-Tech Composites of North Carolina with its unique braiding process for mass producing carbon fibre spars, and since 2004, all C&C and Tartan models have been supplied with carbon masts as standard. Masthead rigs have historically been the Tartan norm, but the 34 departs from the pattern with an "almost masthead" fractional rig. Positioning the hounds (upper headstay terminal) slightly below the masthead encourages limited mast bend for better control of mainsail shape across a wide range of wind speeds. As well, it allows a furling reacher to be hoisted on a masthead halyard and left in place when sailing upwind under self-tacking jib.

The Tartan 3400 is the first in the line to feature a self-tacking jib as standard, although this appealing feature has lately become an option on the larger Tartans, too. Thanks to the tall, yet lightweight carbon mast, upwind sail area is fairly generous for a 34-foot cruiser, even without jib overlap.

Another "first" for the Tartan line is the 3400's so-called pocket boom. This is a huge trough-like unit that neatly

captures the descending mainsail (with a bit of help from the lazy jacks). It's easily stiff enough to avoid the boom bending issues that often stem from mid-boom sheeting, and thanks to carbon construction it's not much heavier than a conventional boom. This feature has proved so popular that Tartan is now making it optional on its larger yachts.

POWER SYSTEMS A 29-horsepower Volvo diesel is installed with a sail drive unit forward, allowing the powerplant to nestle down low beneath the Tartan's gently-sloping companionway stairs. It's a snug fit, but removable panels on all sides provide satisfactory maintenance access. Soundproofing material is good quality, although coverage falls short of 100 percent. On the other hand, very few folks will be offended by the noise levels aboard this yacht. At 2,500 rpm (6.8 knots average), I measured 75 dbA in the centre of the saloon; 3,000 rpm boosted

the speed to 7.1 knots while the decibel reading remained the same. Even full throttle (3,300 rpm at 7.6 knots) produced only a 77 dbA—certainly a credit to Volvo Penta's new D1 engine series.

Also worth noting is the 140-amp alternator that now comes standard on all Volvo sailboat engines. Aboard the Tartan, it charges a standard pair of group 27 Trojan deep cycle batteries (plus a third on the test boat), backed up by either a 30-amp shore power charger or optional Heart Freedom 1000 inverter/charger. The net result is a robust basic electrical system that shouldn't have much trouble keeping up with normal cruising demands, even when powering the local dealer's standard 12-volt NovaKool fridge installation.

Novis Marine does a nice job of electrical installations using tinned copper wire (for added corrosion

Right: The aft galley features an island sink, a sizable cold box with top and front doors and enough stowage space for comfortable coastal cruising.

Below: The galley has symmetrical settees on either side of a drop-leaf table, and has been cleverly tweaked to accommodate a spacious head compartment, forward-facing nav station and private aft cabin.



resistance) and a full bonding system with conduits and/or chafe protection throughout. Similarly, the plumbing is difficult to fault: Marelon high-strength plastic thru-hulls, Whale pressure water system, and, in the case of the test boat, an optional VacuFlush toilet.

BELOW DECKS Although molded fibreglass modules and liners form the foundations of the Tartan's interior, the dominant impression is varnished woodwork, and lots of it. Solid cherry is fitted into overhead recesses for a look that harkens back to traditional plank-on-beam construction. Likewise, the raised panel doors are set in milled cherry jambs, and solid wood is used extensively for trim, cabinet and door faces. Overhead hatches and the opening portlight frames are polished stainless, while the door and cabinet hardware is top quality.

Perhaps not everyone will appreciate the interior of the Tartan 3400, possibly because it's a throwback to an era when sailing yachts had dim, wood-lined interiors and few, relatively small windows. Although the cherry used is a lighter-toned wood than either teak or mahogany, this interior is certainly much darker than the contemporary norm. In the end, of course, it's a matter of personal taste.

As hinted earlier, the 3400's interior works well from a practical viewpoint. The time-honoured aft galley arrangement with symmetrical settees on either side of a drop-leaf table has been cleverly tweaked to fit in a spacious head compartment, forward-facing nav station and private aft cabin. The galley features an unusual island sink alongside the companionway stairs, a sizable cold box with both top and front doors, plus enough stowage space for comfortable coastal cruising—though a bit more counter space might come in handy.

Headroom near the midline is at least 6' 4", however the pronounced camber of the cabin roof makes for considerably less in the galley, head and aft cabin areas. Of course, it's hardly fair to expect a 34-footer to deliver space and elbow room on par with a larger boat, and on balance the Tartan comes through as a very livable mid-sized yacht.



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As experienced cruisers are sure to appreciate, this is one boat that doesn't fall short when it comes to all-weather ventilation. The Tartan 3400 comes with two impressive chromed Dorade vents with stainless guard bars to protect them from line damage.

UNDER SAIL Although the Tartan 3400 is a wider boat than the average cruiser/racer, it's certainly not too heavy, and it carries a rather generous rig. The car-

bon rig, epoxy composite hull and infusion-molded deck combine to control weight and keep the centre of gravity low. In addition, the test boat also had an optional folding prop—still the single most cost effective way to boost all-around sailing performance.

Test sailing upwind in a fickle breeze that ranged from near zero to about eight knots, the combination of main and self-tacking jib moved the Tartan windward at a commendable pace—up to



The Tartan has a robust electrical system, with a standard pair of group 27 Trojan deep cycle batteries (plus a third on the test boat).



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5.4 knots with a tacking angle close to 90 degrees. A 40-inch wheel and fingertip rack-and-pinion steering made for a very pleasant driving experience. With the right combination of main and jib trim, it even proved possible to leave the helm for 60 seconds or more while the boat made its own way to windward.

Unfurling the rope-luff 155-percent reacher delivered a major boost in light air speed at anything up to a close reaching angle. During this phase of the test, a nice 10-knot puff rolled through, and by easing sheets and bearing down we got up to 7.8 knots. By choosing between the self-tacking jib and furling reacher (depending upon wind strength and point of sail), it should be possible to keep the Tartan 3400 moving well in anything over about five knots true, and for sheer ease of handling it's a tough rig to beat.

CLOSING REMARKS From a practical standpoint, a boat the size of the Tartan 3400 makes an excellent choice for many couples, as well as for young families that don't wish to tackle the expense and handling issues associated with a larger yacht. True, the interior is a trifle snug in some areas, but all the same, it's a beautifully crafted sailboat that's fully capable of offshore work if desired.

Novis offers a transferable 15-year warranty against structural problems or osmosis—quite possibly the strongest in the industry and a clear vote of confidence in their new construction methods. As for price, a Tartan 3400 commissioned in Vancouver with a generous assortment of dealer options currently sells for \$249,000. In today's market, this is very respectable value. ☺