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The Show Goes On in Miami and France

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If you're looking for a new boat this winter, you should start making travel arrangements to visit one or both of the best displays of new multihulls in the world.

Although it's not billed as a multihull show, February's Miami International Boat Show has become probably the best venue in North America to check out the latest offerings from the world's catamaran builders. Over the last 10 years, the ratio of cats to monohulls has increased dramatically, and along with the Annapolis show in October it has become an essential showcase for builders. Each show sees several new models debut, and there is plenty of opportunity for test sailing after the event.

It doesn't hurt that southern Florida is ideal multihull country, and its proximity to the Caribbean islands and growing markets in Central America is another bonus—as is the February warmth that attracts hundreds of visitors from the frigid North.

If you want to scope out boats in a more exotic setting, you shouldn't miss the world's sole multihull-only show—the International Multihull Boat Show in La Grande Motte, France. If anything, this show, now in its 11th year, is an even better bet than Miami if you're a serious boat buyer, as it attracts a more focused crowd, making it easier to get face time with the builders and designers.

La Grande Motte is on the Mediterranean coast, near Montpellier airport. Access is easy by air or train, and for international visitors there is the attraction of spending a few extra days sampling the culinary delights of the region or heading to Paris, just a few hours away by TGV.

Walking the docks, you hear a dozen languages spoken, with visitors coming from all over the world and a much wider selection of brands than you'll see at any show in North America.

The Miami International Boat Show (miamiboatshow.com) is held at Virginia Key, Florida, from February 13-17. The International Multihull Boat Show (multicoque-online.com) is held in La Grande Motte, France, from April 15-19.

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