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## Cruisers plans to launch a bruiser of a yacht



Cruisers Yachts

This rendering shows Cruisers Yachts' 59-foot Cantius, which will have generous space for entertainment — with the cockpit, galley, salon and helm all on one level. It will be available in the fall.

By [Rick Barrett](#) of the Journal Sentinel  
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Wisconsin boat builder [Cruisers Yachts](#) has designed its biggest yacht ever and plans to launch the vessel, followed by others like it, this summer.

The Oconto-based company, a division of KCS International, says the 59-foot Cantius-series yacht will have generous space for entertainment — with the cockpit, galley, salon and helm all on one level.

The \$2 million yacht is aimed at people taking long-range cruises as well as day trips. It will be the flagship vessel of Cruisers' lineup, which includes 48-foot and 54-foot yachts.

Cruisers employs more than 300 people. The company fell on hard times during the recession but has been on the mend and has brought people back from layoff at its Oconto boat plant.

"We are putting a lot of money back into the business for new products," said Matt VanGrunsvan, KCS International marketing director.

Cruisers designers worked with Facheris Designs and DeBasto Designs, both in Florida, in creating plans for the 59-foot yacht.

"Overall they brought a lot to the party," said Tony Martens, director of product design and engineering at KCS International.

"It really resets the bar for Cruisers and the Cantius line moving forward," Martens said.

Boaters will be able to enter the yacht's cockpit from the swim platform by ascending four steps. From there, they will find a large seating area and bar. The swim platform can be raised with a hydraulic lift to haul a personal watercraft, tender or dingy out of the water.

"There are no steps once you get into the cockpit and galley level. That's a big item," VanGrunsvan said.

In the upper salon, a sofa with seating for three will be flanked by end tables with storage. A 50-inch television can be raised when in use and concealed when not in use. The TV will be in view of a dining area that has seating for six people.

The galley will have a refrigerator with freezer, a full sink, a stove, microwave and storage. A dishwasher is optional.

There will be digital controls, meaning functions such as lighting can be controlled with an iPad.

The yacht will be powered by twin Volvo diesel engines producing 950 horsepower. It will be unveiled this summer and available at dealerships in the fall.

Overall, "it's the most impressive design we have ever had," VanGrunsvan said.

Yacht building is an important niche in northeast Wisconsin, where the brands include Carver, Marquis, Palmer Johnson, Burger, Cruisers and Rampage. The industry also supports dozens of suppliers, including companies in the Milwaukee area.

The high-end boat business has experienced a slow recovery since the global recession, fueled partly by the creation of smaller yachts appealing to a wide base of customers.

The American market is strong, VanGrunsvan said, but the strength of the U.S. dollar has made it more expensive for overseas buyers to acquire American-made yachts.

In late July, hundreds of people from around the world are expected to attend Cruisers' annual dealership meeting in Sturgeon Bay. A prototype of the 59-foot yacht is scheduled to be unveiled at the meeting.

The company has boosted its international sales efforts, placing emphasis on China and other developing nations, and it now has dealerships in about 20 countries.

There's a lot of "new money" in China and Eastern Europe that benefits yacht sales, according to VanGrunsvan.

The typical age of a yacht buyer is between 45 and 70.

"But there's also a wave of younger buyers. People 35 to 45 have done well in their lives and are getting into boating. Often we are seeing them buy larger boats right off the bat," VanGrunsvan said.

Rising oil prices can hurt yacht sales some, but it's not like a meltdown on Wall Street.

The 59-foot yacht has a 650-gallon fuel tank.

"If someone has the financial means to purchase a yacht, the price of fuel doesn't really matter to them that much. It might affect how they use the boat; they might not go on as many trips," VanGrunsvan said.

The harsh winter in the Northeast has resulted in slower spring yacht sales.

"Boston and the Northeast are a big market for us. Normally we would have boats in the water for sea trials by now, but with all of the snow and ice built up we aren't able to do that yet," VanGrunsvan said.

"Instead of getting those sales in March or April, they're going to be pushed off to May or June," he added.

Still, there's been a strong response to news of the 59-foot yacht.

"We are getting calls from people from all over the country who want to fly to Wisconsin to see it. There are people who want their name on a waiting list for it," VanGrunsvan said.

## **About Rick Barrett**

Rick Barrett covers manufacturing, telecom and agriculture. He has received Best in Business awards from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers and was co-recipient of a Barlett & Steele award for investigative business journalism.

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