

LEOPARD43PC

FAST cat



Powered catamarans have a lot of attractions for both the cruising boater and day sailor alike, who can enjoy the stability, space and fuel frugality, as can be seen here on the Leopard 43PC, writes **KEVIN GREEN.**



The Leopard 43PC is the latest model in Leopard's new power cat range, and follows on from the launch of the 51PC. Leopard builder Robertson & Caine now claims the mantle as leader in design and production in the Power cat market with approx. 200 boats annually built for the private and Charter management programs globally. These numbers dwarf most other manufacturers apart from European cat builders Fountaine Pajot and Lagoon who also continue a strong presence in the power cat and sailing markets. With these production volumes and with decades of experience it's not surprising that I've found Leopards to be highly functional boats.

So the arrival of the first Leopard 43PC in Australia found me aboard on the Gold Coast with seasoned Leopard agents David Flynn and Kelly Want. The internal layout of the L43PC is very similar to the L40SC I experienced in France last

year, which proved a very nimble hull under sail. Creating a slightly larger semi-displacement version makes sense in the growing power catamaran market but to do this Robertson & Caine built an optimized hull for power cruising. Narrower underwater with volume astern, the hulls are aimed at reducing drag, so this vessel is not simply a sailing catamaran without a mast. A point of difference from competitor the Lagoon 40 MY is the grunt. Lagoon has 80hp engines and I found it to be a competent performer, while the Leopard 43PC has powerful 260 horsepower motors, which gives the choice of displacement cruising or high speed (21.5kt) modes of operation. Another point of difference with the Leopard is the fly bridge and GRP hardtop, from where you can see hazards well ahead in the shoal waters found in tropical Australia, something I had wished for when delivering a cat through the inner maze of the Great Barrier Reef a few years ago.

ABOVE LEFT: Sturdy guardrails, toerails and flush hatches are a good features of the Leopard 43PC. *Image Kevin Green*

RIGHT FROM TOP:

Comfy upholstered benches, including a double at the helm make the Leopard flybridge a pleasant and seaworthy space. *Image Leopard Catamarans*

The wet bar includes an electric plate and there's an optional ice maker and bar fridge available. *Image Leopard Catamarans*

The aft cockpit is sheltered for comfortable alfresco dining and abundant locker space. *Image Leopard Catamarans*

The saloon has two exits and both have large scuppers to prevent the ingress of water. *Image Kevin Green*

HUGE FLY BRIDGE

Three levels of living starts at the top with a huge fly bridge that extends aft. Ascending to this level via the inboard facing steps from the cockpit reveals a covered area with lounge that seats eight along with the wet bar aft. Provision is made here for the optional electric/gas barbecue, fridge and icemaker. Offset to starboard at the front is the steering console, with a lip ahead that is a sunbathing platform and also shades the forepart of the saloon. Sturdy railings all round, including on the wet bar are welcome. The GRP hardtop may not enhance the aesthetics but nevertheless is sturdy and effective, offering protection from the elements in all weather. On top of the hardtop, is plenty of room for electronics such as solar panels, radar, television antennae and aerials, all located safely away from crew. Plastic clear screens can be fitted here for winter boating. At the console there's some smart technology,

thanks to the use of EmpirBus digital switching integrated with the 12inch Raymarine main chart screen and 6inch A65 Raymarine screen, giving simple menu driven management of systems. For example, there are multiple music zones and light dimming. Over on the right side of the hydraulic steering wheel is the Yanmar display showing fuel burn, temperature and other key engine data; and back from it, the twin throttles with ignition switches. A good safety feature is the Seafire engine suppression system which is very welcome on privately owned vessels.

GALLEY FORWARD

Steeping down into the aft cockpit access to the interior is via a sliding door with adjacent window, with deep 6inch wide scuppers. Volume is maximized inside by the vertical walls, which are cleverly disguised by the exterior saloon sloping bulkheads. As on the 2015 Leopard 40 sailing model, the galley is

TOP: The tall flybridge and spacious aft deck gives the Leopard plenty of usable space. *Image Leopard Catamarans*

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:

The outside bench has swinging backrest and the area adjoins the inside lounge which benefits from the sliding window to create a large party area. *Image Kevin Green*

Sturdy and high guard rails feature throughout the Leopard and are especially needed on the flybridge when underway. *Image Kevin Green*

Not on our review boat but worth having is the sturdy electric davits found on most Leopards. *Image Leopard Catamarans*



ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:

The foredeck cockpit is both pleasant relaxing area and a safe way to access hatches at sea – a sturdy door seals it off. *Image Kevin Green*

The console is functional with ignition controls at knee height but would benefit from a spray dodger. *Image Kevin Green*

An example of the davits hoisting the dinghy well clear of the water. *Image Kevin Green*

The extended transoms maximise the waterline and reduce the chance of hobby-horsing, something more likely on smaller catamarans. *Image Kevin Green*

The steering console is protected well by the large fibreglass bimini; forward of it is the elevated sunpad. *Image Kevin Green*

forward beside the foredeck door; alongside the optional lower helm station with full throttle controls, navigation equipment and forward facing work station. Alternatively, simply use the socket installed here to operate a Raymarine remote handset to control the autopilot. The L-shaped lounge adjoins the aft cockpit so there's plenty of airflow, thanks to the large sliding window. Soft and durable upholstered dining settees offset the sleek modern cabinetry of the saloon and cabins. The joinery is well built and precise as only CNC machining can do, with a nod to the latest Euro interior profiles.

Usefully, the table lowers to become a bed and is strongly supported, a good example of the 'strong and simple' Leopard philosophy gleaned from the experience of building large

numbers of boats, whose owners have traversed millions of bluewater sea miles. So there's nothing too quirky or awkward. The galley is a good example of this, as it has a functional L-shaped configuration, hard wearing real Corian worktops surrounding the three burner gas hob and oven with microwave above; along with ample cupboards. A deep stainless sink and dedicated draining compartment for dishes, two drawer refrigeration (one Vitrifrigo freezer and one fridge of 212L) located to the aft complete this functional layout. Above the refrigeration is the 12/240v distribution panel, which controls all systems including optional generator, air conditioner, navigation and communication equipment. As mentioned, the company's control software has been integrated into Raymarine screens for simple menu operation of systems including battery monitoring, so there's a second A65 screen at the electrical panel for this, which handily shows engine revs, so there is no need

to ascend to the fly bridge when in autopilot mode at the lower helm.

PRIVATE SUITE

Stepping down into the starboard hull brings me to the owner's suite. Closed-off by a sliding door, there's a double berth (1.50m by 2.05m) aft, office table/vanity amidships and large bathroom forward. The shaft drive layout dictates that the engines are beneath each aft bunk and are accessed by an electrically powered motor lifting the bed base/engine access hatch. Nice touches in the owner's berth include adjustable reading lights, a spacious hanging locker and most importantly, plenty of headroom. The aft facing window is another good feature that the skipper particularly will enjoy. A moveable ottoman at the vanity ensures the floor space is kept clear. One niggle for me was the lack of escape hatch in the hulls, which also enhances natural light, however there are two exits in the saloon. Quality features abound such as sturdy

fittings and a high standard of joinery throughout. The owner's bathroom is spacious, with enclosed shower cubicle and electric head. Portside, the layout has the bathrooms amidships and berths fore and aft. The forward berth contains an inner second bunk, ideal for a child while aft is a substantial double, and there is ample volume to avoid stuffiness. Other features include generous lockers, bookshelves all around, and storage under the forward berth. Ventilation is good throughout, with Lewmar hatches topside, electric fans, 12v and 240v outlets, USB ports and opening portlights.

FOREDECK COCKPIT

On deck, the fly bridge covers the entire aft cockpit and the elongated hulls create bathing platforms on both quarters. Leopard's trademark electric davit hoists weren't fitted to our review boat as the owner will be fitting a crane on the foredeck where there's plenty of space for a dinghy.

For outside dining in the aft cockpit there's the U-shaped bench with fiberglass table plus another bench to starboard, and swinging backrests give access to deck lockers. The sliding window allows food to be passed out but of course the actual cooking takes place in the forepart of the saloon. Nearby the galley is the forward door – strongly built with three locks – for access to the bow cockpit, which is a signature Leopard feature intended to fully utilise all deck space safely. Here the waist deep cockpit has large scuppers (one foot by 4inch) and seating to safely enjoy the thrill of speed, or for some privacy at anchor; and of course gives quick access to the foredeck and the two huge storage lockers. The two water tanks are found in these lockers. The



ABOVE LEFT: The aft beds are electrically lifted to reveal the shaft driven Yanmars and there's separate access to the transom bulkheads where generators and air conditioners are located. *Image Kevin Green*



ABOVE RIGHT: Domestic systems are controlled by user-friendly menu driven software from EmpirBus on Raymarine A65 touch screens. *Image Kevin Green*

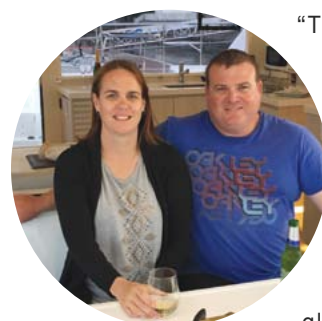
centerline mounted vertical 1000W Lewmar windlass with remote control is enclosed in a dedicated locker, which makes lowering and raising the ground tackle from the deep forward cockpit a definite safety plus in choppy seas. The rode runs below the deck safely out of harm's way but is easily accessible, and there is a second bow roller fitted for light ground tackle. Deck fixtures are substantial all around including sensible midships cleats, cabin top grab rails and effective non-slip topsides. Other good features include corner seats integrated into the forward stanchions and flush hatches which leaves the foredeck clear for sunbathing and relaxing.

DEDICATED HULL DESIGN

The Simonis-Voogd hull design is very similar to their previous work with the company so continues with the tall narrow hulls, optimized to reduce drag, especially at the fine bows but with a 800mm bridge deck clearance. "Space-wise this yacht gives you the same dramatic

difference as we experienced on the Leopard 40 SC. The interior volume is 30% bigger than on the earlier L39 PC and the fly bridge area starts challenging that of the 51 Powercat," said designer Alex Simonis. The same pronounced hard chine – that gives more beam up top where it's needed – runs from the bow to stern but more contemporary rectangular portlights are used now instead of rounded the ones from earlier models. As mentioned already, main engine access is via the aft cabins where our review boat, hull #2, has the raw water cooled 260hp Yanmar with conventional shaft drives. The heavily soundproofed engine room has sufficient space around it for accessing service points while outside in the cockpit, there's hatches containing the Northern Light generator set to port and air conditioner units in each, plus plumbing. An emergency tiller can be fitted on the swim platform, and the four bladed propellers are protected by skegs forward of each shaft drive.

Sailing off Surfers Paradise



"The decision to purchase a Leopard Power Catamaran was quite simple, especially when we compared it to other power catamarans in our preferred size range. Most notable features were the superior finish and quality of build, the rugged and practical engineering, the freshly styled interior and the spacious and practical layout. Leopard Catamarans offer their customers the delivery options of ex- factory in Capetown South Africa, shipping, or by water to their global destination. After speaking with a Leopard Catamarans contracted delivery crew, I was convinced that the Leopard range of catamarans are built to withstand the rigours of extended ocean crossing.

An earlier day charter on a Leopard 51 Powercat demonstrated its capabilities well. In short, the Leopard 43 Powercat is fuel efficient, value for money, and stood out above the other brands on offer, with a lot more boat and options for a lot less money !"



The electrical panel includes a Raymarine A65 control screen for the menu driven domestic controls. Image Leopard Catamarans



The forward set galley is unique and well equipped and allows a couple of people to cook simultaneously. Image Leopard Catamarans



The owner's bathroom has a separate shower and the entire area is moulded so easily cleaned. Image Leopard Catamarans



A sliding door ensures total privacy in the owner's suite but there's ample hatches to avoid stuffiness if it's shut. Image Leopard Catamarans



The vanity is fine but the portlights could be larger. Image Leopard Catamarans



The dinette table drops to become a bed and the open aft window creates plenty airflow. Also a chart table is in the port quarter (not shown). Image Leopard Catamarans

Leaving Marina Mirage on one of these mild autumn days on the Gold Coast we spun the Leopard 43PC on her axis to ease round into the channel before motoring along the Broadwater to the seaway and the open ocean. Sitting at the helm alongside my hosts David and Kelly I enjoyed the ride, perhaps buffeted a bit by the breeze – a simple low windshield could be installed at the console – before I took over to push the 11-ton hull through a few maneuvers. Turning the hydraulic steering, the 43PC obediently fell off to port and then starboard as I got the feel before pushing the speed to a relaxed 7kts. With the engines spinning at 1,300 and consuming a meagre seven litres in total, this would give us a fantastic range (approx. 1,200 miles in mild conditions). However coming north against the East Australian Current would require a fast cruising speed so I pushed the throttles and felt a

smooth lifting in the hulls as without a judder we reached 19kts, burning 100 litres for both engines which spun at 3,500rpm. The 2-foot chop gave a fairly good test for the L43PC, which cut through the swells to windward with only the occasional splash reaching me on the fly bridge. Putting the hammer down, the 43PC maxed-out at 21.5kts without complaint as the fuel burn rose to 110 litres. Leaving the helm on autopilot I went below to check out sound levels in the owner's suite and found that yes, it was noisy, but I could easily hold a conversion so that accounts for tolerable in my book, however you may disagree.

A neat way to learn more about this vessel is to charter through the Moorings or even explore various charter ownership options. But whatever way you look at it the Leopard 43PC is a luxurious, comfortable, durable and efficient cruising power catamaran.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price (as tested)	\$1,069,000
LOA	13.0m (42ft 8in)
LWL	12.44m
Beam	6.72m
Draft	0.94m
Displacement	11,700kg
Load Carrying Capacity	5,000kg
Holding Tank Capacity	90L
Engine	2x 260hp shaft drives
Fuel	1,000L
Water	780L
Berths	6 or 8
Heads	3
Showers	3
Cabins	3
	(with a 4 cabin option)
Design	Simonis-Voogd



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