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In the Lap of Luxury
Leopard's 53 Powercat

Refit, Restoration, and Design

THE LOVE OF A CAT

The Leopard 53 power catamaran is the purr-fect mix of luxury and comfort for a domesticated ride.

By Steve Davis

One thing I remember about being a charter captain was that a catamaran was the way to go. The wide beam created plenty of room to relax and move about—a huge, open salon, spacious forward bow area, and an aft deck that made for a comfortable living space that could relocate from one playground to the next. Although my time was primarily spent on sailing catamarans, the recent popularity of recreational power catamarans inspired some incredible transformations in the boating lifestyle, one being stability.

“We had been moving boats around from unloading the ship, and as soon as I got on [this boat], I felt like it was really solid; coming through the waves, it was a really good ride,” says Capt. Calvin McEvoy, who participated in unloading boats that were transported on a ship prior to the Miami International Boat Show, about the Leopard 53 that debuted at the 2020 show.

Afterward, the boat sailed north to Fort Lauderdale. “We had five- to six-foot seas coming back from the Miami show,” he says. “Initially, when we came out of the show, we had a southeasterly breeze, which was a little bit rough,

but we handled it pretty well. Then we were running with it, but everybody was feeling comfortable.” If you’ve come out of Miami’s Government Cut with a southeasterly breeze, you know how steep the waves can be, especially with an outgoing tide.

A catamaran, by design, has a much wider base and lower center of gravity than a monohull which helps keep it stable coming off the waves as well as at anchor. McEvoy has brought many catamarans across the Atlantic from the Robertson & Caine shipyard in South Africa, where the Leopard catamarans are built. Due to time constraints, the new model was shipped over and gave McEvoy a pleasant surprise. Design innovations both inside and out made the Leopard 53 a new breed.

“This is the first motoryacht we’ve ever built that has an optional full indoor helm station, wheel, display panels, and everything,” says Katie Baker, yacht sales marketing manager for Leopard Catamarans. “The goal in building this yacht was to make it feel much more like a motoryacht as opposed to a powercat. We wanted to make it more luxurious, more comfortable.”



Clockwise from top: From the aft deck through the galley and the salon to the foredeck, the Leopard 53 opens to a spacious indoor/outdoor entertainment area. The VIP cabin berth is positioned for seaside views, and the optional interior helm duplicates the flybridge helm.

A Gracious Interior

Stepping aboard, it was easy to see that’s what happened. The aft deck and salon had that large yacht feel compared to the catamarans I sailed in the past. The Leopard 53 is the fourth generation in its powercat design process, and it not only improves upon the typical catamaran attributes of space, stability, and efficiency but adds in the elements of a luxury motoryacht—big panoramic windows, retractable sliding glass doors, a modern interior with the cool tones of Silver Riftwood cabinetry, powdered oak flooring, Flexiteek decking, contemporary finishes, a full-size galley, and cabins with ensuite heads.

The owner model is a three-cabin layout with the owner stateroom expanding the entire hull. Large panoptic, hull-length and transom windows allow for plenty of natural light and ocean vistas. A sliding, lockable door provides privacy for the comfortable queen berth aft, vanity table/desk with fitted seat, a small couch, multiple cupboards and drawers, and a double-door wardrobe in the center. Going forward, a double sink with Staron countertop and vanity cabinet with mirror leads to the head and a separate, spacious shower equipped with modern fixtures.

There are two guest cabins with ensuite heads in the port hull that include electric seawater flush toilets. The forward VIP cabin’s raised queen berth with bedside tables and reading lamps is positioned perpendicular to the hull line to face the panoramic windows and take advantage of the views. The aft guest cabin also features the hull windows as well as

large transom windows for daylight. One thing that really makes a difference is the berths are not on top of the engine room. The corridor between the two cabins houses the yacht’s electrical panel and an optional washer/dryer.

The four-cabin, or charter version, has two ensuite cabins in each hull as well as an optional crew bunk and head in the farthest forward area of each hull (accessible from foredeck hatches) for boats that have a permanent captain.

So Much Space

It’s the evolution of the hull design that allows for such spacious cabins. The Leopard 53’s hull shape maintains a narrow entry at the bow and through extensive testing, the tunnel design around the propellers also aids in trim, which results in better speed and fuel efficiency, but it’s the big-volume stepped hulls above the waterline that make greater interior space possible. One huge adjustment is the repositioning of the Yanmar engines farther aft in their own soundproof engine room. The cabins are roomy and quiet.

Another design adjustment is replacing the seating area forward of the salon, a staple on newer Leopard sailing catamarans. The foredeck is still accessible by the centerline door, but by removing the seating area, the salon was expanded, and there’s more headroom in the forward cabins. The bow is the perfect spot for sunning, or watching the sunset, or lying back to gaze at the stars on the large sunpads. There’s extra storage now and easy access to the anchor.





The aft deck with the optional hydraulic swim platform provides easy access to water activities.

The salon is an open layout that includes the galley and an optional interior helm that sits forward to starboard and duplicates the flybridge helm station. Digital switching across two Raymarine Axiom displays allows full control and monitoring of the boat's navigation software and power and house systems management. An L-shaped lounge to port with folding salon table and a settee to starboard behind the helm offer comfortable seating, and the large windows surround the interior for natural lighting and 360-degree views. A retractable sliding glass door opens to the aft deck and creates an incredible indoor/outdoor entertainment area.

The U-shaped galley is amidships and becomes the centerpiece of this entertainment area. The wide Staron countertops meet at the central four-burner stove with a microwave hood above. There is ample storage, and the optional undercounter freezer and dishwasher make this galley complete—that includes the domestic-size refrigerator/

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 53' 1"

Beam: 25' 2"

Draft: 3' 2"

Displacement: 41,070 lbs.

Fuel/Water: 562/185 U.S. gals.

Power: 2x Yanmar @ 370-hp

Cruise/Max Speed

(light ship conditions):

17.5/25 knots

Range: 463 nm at cruise

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freezer to port alongside the sink and additional counter space.

The covered aft deck features a walkaround L-shaped settee with storage underneath, dining table, and a sunbed. Each hull has swim steps, and an optional hydraulic swim platform is perfect for launching water toys or just sitting on the edge dangling your

feet in the water. You can also use it to carry the dinghy.

Access to the engine rooms are from hatches in the aft main deck floor. There is plenty of space to maintain the engines and accommodate additional equipment, such as genset, watermaker, batteries, chargers, inverters, and a chiller unit. The design innovation of the hull and superstructure have dynamically reduced resistance from wind and sea, and with the Yanmar 370-hp engines, the yacht can achieve a 24-knot max speed in bumpy seas and operate with up to 50 percent more fuel efficiency than its monohull motoryacht counterparts.

Flybridge Amenities

The real hangout for entertainment, though, is the flybridge. Besides the full helm station to starboard with two Raymarine Axiom 16-inch displays and an expansive, U-shape seating area with a teak table to port, a wet bar with sink, along with the optional barbecue, icemaker, and fridge mean you can stay up top without running down to the galley. The entire space is protected by a huge bimini hardtop, but it allows a double aft-facing sunpad and the aft deck area to appease sun worshipers. Best of all, the 360-degree bird's-eye view gives you a true, open-air feeling.

The Best of Both Worlds

"The Leopard 53 Powercat is not just a replacement of the previous model, but an evolutionary change in the Leopard powercat range," said Franck Bauguil, Leopard's vice president of Yacht Sales & Product Development, before the 2020 Miami show.

As we motored back into Port Everglades, Baker added, "What we're trying to say is the Leopard 53 has the allure of a motoryacht with the efficiency of a catamaran." I'd say their plan was a success. 🐡