

BOAT REVIEW

Powerplay 56

Spirited catamaran

A POWERFUL INNOVATOR



Fiji-bound cat cleverly combines innovative custom interior with powerful proven hull shape. Mike Rose checked out this ocean capable powercat.

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Townsville-based designer James Dewing has been creating innovative, good-looking, ocean-capable catamarans for the past 15 years. In that time, a dozen of his distinctive Powerplay cats have been launched. They range from 12-20 metres and are currently cruising happily in the various waters around Australia, the US and the Caribbean.

Initially built in Australia, where they won a number of export awards, they now take shape in a special OEM factory in Lanhe Town, in the Panyu area of Guangzhou, China.

"This allows us to streamline production and offer fully customised, cost effective interiors with the clients involved at every step along the way," he says.

James' latest creation was in Auckland in early October, undergoing sea trials and final commissioning before heading off to its new home in Fiji. Ayahausea (pronounced I-O-Wash Ka) and named after a spiritual vine from the Amazon, is a distinctive-looking Powerplay 56 with triple oval portholes in each hull and pronounced spray chines, picked out in white under the hull's blue topsides.

A full displacement catamaran, it has been designed, says James, for soft riding with little or no pounding and enough buoyancy to avoid hobby-horsing.

Power is provided by twin 435hp IPS 600s. These give a top speed of 28 knots (lightship) but, more importantly, allow Ayahausea to cruise fully laden at 20 knots in good conditions and at a more-than-respectable 15 knots in two-metre seas.

"Speed and comfort are important parts



For those keen to swim, snorkel or dive there are the twin boarding platforms.

of the design," says James. "Our motto is 'Further, faster with power to play'." With a massive 6500-litre fuel tank, Ayahausea can, in favourable passagemaking conditions, safely cruise to Fiji at 20 knots, with a good reserve, burning 75-80 litres per hour.

DISTINCTIVE INTERIOR

Ayahausea's owner wanted a forward-facing stateroom, complete with super king bed, on the main level, a somewhat unusual request given that accommodation in catamarans is traditionally placed in the hulls with main deck given over to the saloon, galley and entertainment areas.

James's "Not a problem" attitude sprung into action. He simply moved the flybridge stairs further aft. He then compensated for the smaller saloon space by opening up the

aft bulkheads separating the saloon from the upper cockpit area, the latter housing two large settees and barbecue and sink pods. Apart from a centre support, on the line where the galley meets the saloon, the entire aft area can therefore be opened right up, creating a very bright, breezy feel; potentially more so than if the saloon had been traditionally carried all the way forward.

Partly that is due to the décor. Light coloured white oak panelling alongside white Corian bench tops are nicely offset by Amtico walnut floors and the metal gleam of the appliances. A blue-green splashboard on the port side of the galley and the black induction cooktop inset into the bench provide complementary contrasts.

Befittingly for a boat likely to spend some time passagemaking, the galley is of the



On the mezzanine section of the cockpit is, a long, slightly forward-facing curved settee.



With the rear bulkhead doors open, the cockpit and saloon transform into one huge space.

sea-going kind: U-shaped and able to be worked in a seaway. That's not to say it's Spartan, it's not. There are twin sinks, a dishwasher, microwave and a large household fridge/freezer.

Thanks, when open, to the complete lack of an aft bulkhead or saloon doors between the saloon and the exterior area, the relatively smallness of the former is not an issue. In reality, it is more of a dinette than a saloon with a L-shaped settee served by an innovative free-standing table. Timber-topped with stainless steel legs and impressive grip feet, it is both a firm, stable structure and one that is incredibly light and easy to move if required.

For quiet nights (or perhaps when there is a major sporting event), there is a moderate-sized TV screen, otherwise tastefully concealed behind a roll-top door.

Thanks to this slightly unusual arrangement, the Powerplay 56's owner has his main deck stateroom. A spacious affair, it features a centrally-positioned, and forward-facing super king bed, an ensuite, loads of stowage space and a number of opening hatches to complement the air conditioning system. There is also a small, two-person settee to starboard and a long bench seat high up on the port side. The starboard hull contains a two-berth "kids' cabin", with a further two berths in a foc'sle "cubbyhole" and a toilet-shower that serves both the cabins and acts as a day head. The port hull is home to the main guest cabin, complete with queen-sized island berth; a captain's cabin, with double berth against the bulkhead; a head/shower serving both; and the ship's laundry.

LARGE FLYBRIDGE

Positioning the flybridge stairs where the middle of the saloon would traditionally be means these arrive at the front of the bridge, the stairwell occupying about two-thirds of this space. The arrangement has allowed James to position an aft-facing L-shaped settee on starboard, creating what will no doubt become a favourite viewing spot both underway and at rest.

The helm station sits immediately aft of the stairwell and commands great 360-degree views. This is thanks to a combination of the windscreen's large curved glass panels and minimalist alloy mullions, and the open sides and back of the bridge. These latter are protected by clears in inclement weather and there are also opening side windows to complement the air conditioning system on hot, windless days.

Instead of a conventional captain's chair or two, Ayahausea's owner has selected a far more sociable three-person bench seat, complete with full width lower back bolster. This arrangement has the advantage of creating another handy stowage area underneath, which in this case is partly occupied by a flybridge fridge.

The bridge is a predominately white affair, offset by the grey of the upholstery and the black fascia on the handsome dash. For a vessel of this size, the dash is a surprisingly uncomplicated affair. This, I suspect, is thanks largely to the clever integration between the Volvo Penta engine controls and the two Raymarine HybridTouch MFDs. The IPS control levers and toggle switch occupy the starboard side of the helm while twin banks of DC rocker switches sit over on port. There is also, as there is throughout the boat, a handy panel containing both a 240v and a USB outlet.

Because modern flybridges obviously double as major entertainment centres, there is plenty of additional seating and lounging areas with a U-shaped settee and table aft to port and free-standing deck chairs on starboard. There is also another stowage module, complete with sink and ideal for use as a wet bar, alongside the helm station.

DECK LIVING

To my mind, one of the most attractive aspects of the Powerplay design is the multitude of separate living areas. On an extended cruise, one can need time away from even our nearest and dearest and James has clearly recognised this and catered for it.

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In addition to the saloon and flybridge, there are great spots to either socialise or get away for a bit at both ends of the vessel. Aft, it is on that upper or mezzanine section of the cockpit adjacent to the saloon and galley. Here, a long, slightly forward-facing curved settee is complemented by a smaller aft-facing one (which cleverly conceals a dive compressor) and flanked by "two pods". Moulded GRP units with protective pod-like covers, these contain (on port) a hooded gas barbecue and (on starboard) a sink and a docking joystick, the latter also handy if backing up on a gamefish. Behind these is the ship's 3.6m tender, safely out of the way on its own davits.

For those keen to swim, snorkel or dive there are the twin boarding platforms (the starboard one has the re-boarding ladder).

While the foredeck on any catamaran is always a special place, James has taken this approach to a whole new level. In addition to the lounging nets on either side of the centreline, he has installed a heated Jacuzzi, plumbed for both salt and fresh water. One can easily imagine spending a pleasant evening relaxing in the Jacuzzi before diving off the bow to cool down. The other special bow deck feature is an incredibly light carbon fibre and foam drop-down ladder, designed to provide easy access when grounding bow-on at the beach.

COVERING GROUND

"Further, faster with power to play": it is clear that covering ground quickly, comfortably and efficiently is at the heart of the Powerplay design. As an example, one of Ayahausea's predecessors travelled the not-inconsiderable distance between the company's homeport of Townsville and the Queensland capital, at cruising revs, on a single tank of diesel. Other models regularly fast cruise around the US and Caribbean without needing to constantly pull in and refuel.

Ayahausea is no exception. As the accompanying table shows, she can cover more than 1500 nautical miles, at a ground-swallowing 21.5 knots, on a single tank — and that is while working the IPS drives at 2800rpm.

Drop back to a more conservative 1600rpm and the catamaran will still be ocean cruising at a very respectable 9.2 knots — and that single tank will last almost 3000 nautical miles.

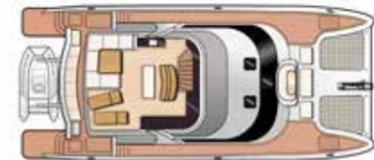
And that means, for those who like their cruising and passagemaking to be fast, cost-effective, comfortable and on their own terms, a highly customised Powerplay catamaran would have to be a very attractive proposition.



Befittingly for a boat likely to spend some time passage making, the galley is of the sea-going kind



The helm station sits immediately aft of the stairwell and commands great 360-degree views.



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POWERPLAY 56

Boat Design Name Powerplay 56
Boat Name Ayahausea
Year Launched 2016
Designer James Dewing
Builder Powerplay
LOA 17.3m
LOH 17.0m
Beam 7.5m
Draft 1.2m
Displacement (dry) 20500 KG
Max Speed 28 knots
Construction Composite FRP
Fuel Capacity 6500 litres
Water Capacity 2400 litres
Engines Make/HP Volvo IPS 600
Generator Panda 15000i

Watermaker Stella 160
Anchor Winch Muir 3500 Cougar
Lighting Hella LED
Paint (Topsides) Alllexseal
Hatches Maxwell
MFD Raymarine Twin e128 Hybrid touch screen
Sonar Raymarine 1KW Sonar and Downvision
Entertainment Sys Fusion AV - 750
Base Price of Boat POA
Contact Powerplay Catamarans, James Dewing, Ph +86 1868 0535 201 james@powerplaycatamarans.com.au
www.powerplaycatamarans.com

Performance Figures

RPM	L/h	Knots	L/Nm	Range (NM)
600	2.86	4.5	0.64	10227.27
1000	8.27	6.6	1.25	5187.42
1200	10	7.8	1.28	5070.00
1400	12.6	8.6	1.47	4436.51
1600	20	9.2	2.17	2990.00
1800	32	9.8	3.27	1990.63
2000	42	10.8	3.89	1671.43
2200	54	12.6	4.29	1516.67
2400	65	15	4.33	1500.00
2600	76	18.3	4.15	1565.13
2800	88	21.5	4.29	1588.07
3000	106	23.8	4.45	1459.43
3200	132	26.2	5.04	1290.15
3400	167	28	5.96	1089.82