

# PURR-FECT SIZE

The Leopard 40 Powercat is a generous cruising platform easily managed by two people.

By Zuzana Prochazka





**L**eopard Catamarans, the South African builder of power and sail multihulls, has just expanded its line by launching the Leopard 40 PC, a model that's bound to become a favorite with power cruising couples. A from-scratch design, this boat is easily managed by two but still has plenty of space for friends, family, and loads of gear. It offers the deck and living space of a 50-foot monohull but will fit in a much shorter slip. It's generous yet compact, and sophisticated yet simple—all at once.

The design is by naval architects Simonis Voogd, and it's a bit of a marvel. The challenge was to create similar comfort and performance as offered by her two (46- and 53-foot) sisterships but on a much smaller platform. Cats become weight- and trim-sensitive as they get shorter so the designers used computational fluid dynamics (CFD) to develop a well-balanced hull form that could carry loads of cruising gear but still offer a top speed over 20 knots.

### On Deck

Starting forward, the first thing to notice is the tidy ground tackle setup. The windlass, anchor, and pre-rigged bridle are hidden but easy to access so you'll never have to reach deep into spaces where your hands could get caught. Whether attaching the bridle or retrieving the anchor, it's all quite simple and safe. There is also cavernous storage space forward which is good for large, light gear like fenders. Owners will need to resist temptation to fill it with heavy objects that will make the bows ride low in the water.

Two sunbeds are on the foredeck and impressively high stainless steel rails hug the perimeter for easy and safe movement on deck when offshore. The aft cockpit is compact with a forward-facing seat and table. This is a departure from most cat cockpit layouts that are generally faced aft. It's largely due to the oversized engine room hatches which don't allow much furniture to be built out and to the sides. Of course, this means that the engine compartments are exceptionally spacious with access to just about all parts of the engines so you can do regular maintenance without having to twist yourself into an impossible space.

To port are stairs leading from the cockpit to the flybridge which, per the builder, is the largest in this class. It will absolutely be the outdoor gathering spot for everyone aboard. The helm here is to starboard with twin Raymarine multifunction displays, thruster and engine controls, autopilot, and a wide bench seat for two or even three. The backrest flips forward for aft-facing seating when it's time to relax around the U-shaped dinette. An optional summer galley and an additional straight bench are to port, and the whole thing is covered by a hardtop that can also hold a sizable solar panel for added energy autonomy at anchor.



Clockwise from top: The huge flybridge is an entertainment spot with ample seating, a dinette, and an optional summer galley; two guests can relax and sunbathe on the foredeck sunbeds; high stainless steel rails provide safe movement around the perimeter.

As a bonus, there's room aft of the bimini for a couple of chaise lounges, perfect for sun worshipers.

### Accommodations

The Leopard 40 PC is currently only offered in a three-cabin, two-head layout. The entire starboard hull holds a sumptuous owner's suite with a large bed aft, a vanity desk amidships, and an enormous head forward. The desk in the middle may be replaced with extra storage drawers, and additional storage cubbies may be substituted for the optional TV on a bracket above. With more drawer space below the berth, the one thing this boat doesn't lack is a place for everything.

The master head takes up nearly a third of the hull and has a single sink, an immense shower stall, and strangely, the toilet right by the entry door. Losing a foot of the shower and moving the toilet basin a bit forward and away from the door would have been ideal but that may not have worked with the curvature of the hull as it narrows going forward.

The port hull has twin cabins and a very workable Jack-and-Jill head that's shared by both cabins. Because Leopard wisely decided to forgo shoehorning in another head, the

cabins are spacious and have better stowage options.

The main deck is surprisingly feature-rich and very bright due to the large surrounding vertical windows. In the port forward corner, an L-shaped settee wraps around an optional coffee table and faces a single seat and a TV on a swing bracket opposite. Aft is an L-shaped galley with a ceramic cooktop, oven, single sink, and even an optional dishwasher. To starboard is a homestyle side-by-side refrigerator that's bound to please everyone from the chef to the kids. There are also copious stowage options for dishes, cutlery, and provisions. This is a proper kitchen that's just steps away from the dining table in the aft cockpit and the perfect setting for peaceful, intimate breakfasts.

An interior helm occupies the starboard forward corner. Many cats of this size don't feature an inside helm, relying instead on the flybridge control station, but anyone traveling in pouring rain, freezing cold, oppressive heat, or through the night will rejoice about this protected lower helm. A single MFD, engine throttles, and optional thruster or joystick controls make this a small but sophisticated cat with a helm for true voyagers which adventurous owners will appreciate.

## PURR-FECT SIZE (continued)



*Sliding doors separate the main-deck salon and galley (top) from the aft cockpit with forward-facing seating and table (below).*

A wonderful addition is the forward watertight door on the centerline. It leads directly to the sunbeds on the foredeck, and when opened, it cools the whole boat down with a fresh breeze in just minutes. As a bonus, it lets the driver move quickly and directly to the foredeck to help with dock lines.

### Performance

We had ideal testing conditions on Biscayne Bay in Miami. The water was flat, the wind was light, and the boat performed well with her upgraded 370-hp Yanmar diesels with shaft drives. (Standard propulsion includes 250-hp engines.)

The Leopard 40 PC idled at 1,000 rpm where she made good 5.7 knots of speed and 4.8 mpg. She reached a top speed of 22.7 knots at 3,880 rpm, generating .6 mpg. The sweet spot was right around 3,000 rpm where we popped up on plane at 17 knots, delivering .9 mpg. This means the 40 PC is capable of a 350-mile range at cruising speed (depending on wind and sea state).

On plane, our turns were easy but tight with no slipping or digging

in. At idle, the twin engines spun us around in our own

### SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA:** 40'

**Beam:** 21' 8"

**Draft:** 3' 7"

**Displacement:** 30,488 lbs.

**Fuel/Water:** 370/170 U.S. gals.

**Engines:** 2x Yanmar diesels @ 370-hp (as tested)

**Max Speed:** 22.7 knots (as tested)

**Price:** \$789,000 (base); \$1,049,000 (as tested)

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length. You can spec a tunnel thruster in the port bow for enhanced control when docking in a cross breeze. Visibility forward and down the starboard hull is good, and a camera can be added for backing. Using the lower helm for docking has its advantages including being able to quickly step from the wheel out on deck through the forward or aft doors which is great when short or single-handed.

The 40 PC offers numerous big-boat features as options including a generator in the port forward deck locker, a watermaker under the port guest berth, electric heads, upgraded AGM batteries, 16,000 BTU air conditioning, davits with an electric winch, engine upgrades of 320 or 370 horsepower, and a Yanmar JC20 joystick that combines the engine and the thruster for even easier maneuvering.

### Overall Impressions

You could easily bring 20 people aboard and find a seat for everyone so it's likely that owners of the Leopard 40 PC will find themselves the center of the party in any anchorage. But when it's time to cruise or relax, the 40 PC is also perfectly sized for couples who like to travel alone or with small families and occasional guests.

This boat is simultaneously a generous platform and a compact cruiser so kudos to the designers because it's hard to stuff those two disparate characteristics into one package. Anyone shopping for a powercat should put the 40 PC on their short list or look for one to charter such as The Moorings 403 PC. You'll have the vacation as well as the sea trial of a lifetime. ♦