

A Long Distance



Voyager

■ by JOHN M. SULLIVAN

Since our last report was published in the previous ' edition (#7), it was now time to take delivery of our own new Voyager. It had been almost 9 months since we had decided to purchase the V1040, and I couldn't help drawing a comparison with our wait to a long and anxious pregnancy.

Finally, there she was in all her glory, sitting at the berth at Horizon Shores Marina waiting for us to go aboard for the first time. Ours had taken a little longer to build because we had a few customisations and extras fitted for our dream of cruising around Australia. Not that these boats need to have anything added to go cruising in safety and

comfort, oh no, they have what it takes to go straight up to the Barrier Reef or down to Tassie right off the blocks, it's just that we have been cruising up and down the coast for years and know what we want in a boat for our particular style of cruising.

When we decided to retire and go cruising we had to make a decision to go sail or power. Having chosen power,

mainly because we wanted to have more control over when we could travel and how fast we want to go so we could complete the trip before we died of old age, we then had to choose the right boat. The next decision was easy as we knew the only way we could carry all our gear and enough fuel to span large distances, and to have stability and a high degree of seaworthiness in all weather was to get a catamaran. A mono was not going to cut it. We had been cruising in monos all our lives and had many bad weather experiences, some quite frightening, and with the added expense and constant problem of not being able to carry enough fuel for the long sections, it just had to be a cat.

The next decision was which catamaran? We were governed here a little by cost and by suitable size, as it also had to fit into a standard 12mt marina berth (it keeps cruising costs down). There were about half a dozen possible models in the market place, so we proceeded to weigh up all the pros and cons of each design and seek a water test where we could. Some helpful assessments could be made by talking to owners of such craft. In most cases their honesty and enthusiasm, (or lack of it) became a way of eliminating certain models.

Finally we had it down to two, and at about this time I was having a beer with Bruce Harris. (To those that don't know of Bruce, let me say that he is the "Father" of power catamarans in Australia. When he fitted an old motor to a box that was fastened to two Hobie sailing hulls in the 50's, he would take this "cat" over the old Southport bar to service the shark nets. The locals called him the "Sharkman" so Bruce registered "Sharkcat" and started to make the now famous catamarans). I said to Bruce that I was buying a power cat, and asked him which cat he would buy if he was going to cruise around Australia? He looked at me and said "I would buy a Voyager". Well, that was one of my final two choices and the rest is history, we ordered a Voyager the very next day.

The Voyager comes standard with 600 litres of fuel, and 600 litres of water. The first thing we changed was the fuel



Custom Nav. station. (top)

Beautifully finished saloon. (above)

capacity. Derek Appleton (owner of Voyager Cats) did the sums and came up with a maximum of 1,250 lt. We sacrificed about 200 lt of water in doing this, however this didn't matter as we decided to install a Spectra 300 water maker from Outback Marine which makes around 45 lt an hour. The

installation is so compact and neat that it all fitted on one wall in the port engine bay.

We then thought about the day to day comforts that one takes for granted at home but tend to do without when you go cruising. For example, a washing machine - yes you heard me right. We



Island berth in Master. (above)

asked the team at Voyager to install a mini automatic washing machine by “Lemair” (normally installed in luxury motor vans). Now Annie can wash her dainties and my fishy shorts any time. It uses about 50 lt each wash but with a water maker on board...who cares? What power does it use you may well ask. To power a whole host of 240 volt items on board, most people these days still install a large 4-10kva generator. We decided to be different and install a now tried and proven system using a combination of inverter, solar panels, lots of big “AGM” batteries, plus a 1kva portable backup generator. We have used this system in our last two 30 foot cruisers very successfully.

Voyager fitted 5 x 200 amp hour “AGM” batteries for us and having a thousand amps available opens up a lot of possibilities. The 160 Volvo D3s come standard with 150 amp alternators, and we also had 2 x 130 watt solar panels installed on the flybridge hard top. When

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connected to a 3000 watt Inverter, this system runs a microwave/convection oven, electric kettle, toaster, frypan, hair dryer, washing machine, 2 extra freezers and an air conditioner (not all at once I might mention). It also charges our laptop and mobile phones. To act as a backup during long stopovers, we use a 1000 watt portable 4 stroke generator purely to run the 50 amp 3 stage battery charger should the batteries run down past 50%. So you see, we are not going to rough it.

We have a 21 inch flat screen TV coupled to a digital HD set top box and run a home movie system through it together with karaoke. This is also connected through the Raymarine “E” series Navigation screens so we can enjoy a movie on the flybridge while cruising. Conversely, we can also bring up GPS and sounder data onto the TV so guests can watch our progress from downstairs as well.

Along with a set of Reelax outriggers we added to our fishing experience by fitting underwater lights to attract the squid at night, and an underwater colour camera to watch the rear of the boat and see the big ones swimming up to take the live bait.

For extra sleeping comfort, Voyager designed and built a special “Island” queen size bed for us in the master cabin. This allows each partner to enter and leave the bed without having to climb over each other, and provides a huge comfortable main cabin layout which has its own air conditioner.

The electronics include 48 mile Raymarine radar and “G” series auto pilot. We have a backup communication and navigation system installed in the saloon in a custom “Nav. Station” which also houses our laptop, H.F. radio and email system.

Finally, we opted for the extended swim platform and a safety rail from which we swing up our tender on a set of Weaver davits.

We are confident that we can live on the Voyager for 12 months while cruising around Australia and not have to feel like we are missing out on anything. We have just completed her maiden voyage which took us to the Sydney Boat Show and then a shake down cruise to Moruya and

back up to Southport. We did around 1500 nautical miles averaging 15 - 16 knots, with the 160 Volvos using about 25 l/hr general sightseeing and an average of 36 l/hr all up while cruising offshore. The boat lived up to our expectations in all conditions, and was so comfortable that we didn't want to get off.

On our return, I was asked by Derek if there was anything I would change after the ‘shakedown’, and after giving it some thought, I couldn't come up with a thing, although we did run out of red wine three days too early. Voyager simply got it right for us first time. Everyone on the team took personal pride in their work, and the effort shows in an excellent boat. ❖



Huge swim platform. (top)

Even a washing machine. (above)