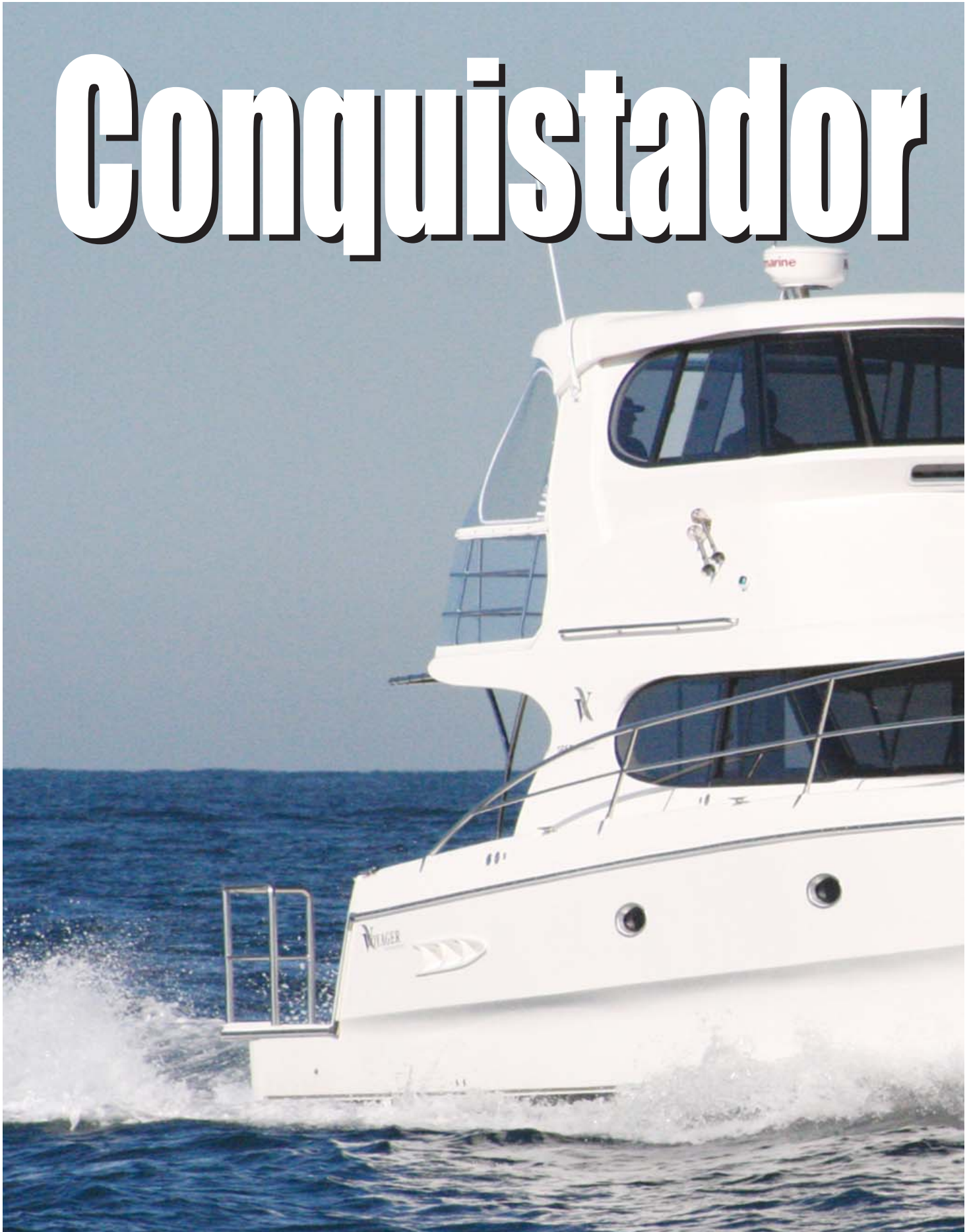


boat review: voyager v1250 conquest

Conquistador



To date the Voyager range of power catamarans have primarily been about well presented user-friendly and practical family cruisers. The recent release of the new evolution VI250 Conquest model however, raises the bar even further.



■ text & photos by
BARRY TYLER

Style in profile and now sporting an optional fully enclosed fly bridge, this new Conquest model is if you like a larger more luxury version of their current V1100 Discovery model. Like the Mexican conqueror Conquistador, it hails a new era in Voyager technology, specification and presentation for rather than simply 'tarting' up the V1100 model Voyager designer and CEO, Derek Appleton, has a completely new hull as well as deck and interior design. "The profile lines are still indisputably Voyager," Appleton explained, "but the enclosed fly bridge configuration required a whole new approach to layout and styling.

"As well, we have opted for a larger aft cockpit so as to enhance the entertainment value, which has seen us step outside the square so to speak and

take the one level of cockpit right aft to beyond the transoms. As such, aft of the transom upright we appeal to the fishermen, swimmers and divers while forward of this feature it is an entertainer's delight. We now boast a significantly larger cockpit area, a full width rear lounge with room for a table if so desired, and of course the now lift-up moulded steps to the enclosed fly bridge level," Appleton added.

While the ever-enthusiastic Appleton expounded on the virtues of the cockpit and profiles he was a lot more non-committal as regards the interior and fly bridge levels. He was prepared to let the boat do the talking, and what a statement it was; from the moment I stepped aboard I was left in no doubt this was not going to be your every-day run of the mill cruiser.

Different Approach to Cockpit Design

The aft end of the V1250 was indeed certainly very different for it offered a new meaning to the word spacious. All at one

level, the gelcoated cockpit floor (teak is an option, if you so desire) actually overhung the transoms on each hull, providing sublime floor area but more importantly affording the designer the luxury of moving the transom upright further aft than traditional. With substantial stainless steel railings around the perimeter it was a perfect platform for the swimmers and fishermen – and the star-gazers seated on the aft-facing lounge on the outside of the transom upright.

The only down-side perhaps of this configuration where the boarding platform and cockpit level are one in the same was the actual height up off the water; the standard and certainly appropriate-height boarding ladder overcame that scenario however!

The Voyager 1250 Conquest was very much at home out in the wild blue yonder.



As I have stated so many times before, everything in a boat is a trade-off and benefits such as ease of boarding at a marina or pontoon, the enormous storage and kill-tank provision and of course the added floor area that accrues from this style of approach to cockpit design - were infinitely more advantageous and credible trade-offs.

Other features within this cockpit were the secreted (large!) BBQ within the transom upright, the full-width forward facing aft lounge, the sinks at each end of the transom upright module, the built-in 150-litre freezer to starboard of the saloon doors, corner steps each side for access to the foredeck, generous overhead protection courtesy of the fly bridge overhang and a solidly mounted shade mesh and stainless steel canopy extension, and the moulded stairs which provide your (external) access to the fly bridge.

Not only were these stairs very user-friendly and safe but cleverly they hinged up also to reveal the perfect storage facility



Sublime space, when the cockpit and boarding feature are all in one - something for everyone here.



for dive bottles, wet gear or table and chairs. With this and the huge lockers in the aft of each hull it was clearly evident no available space anywhere, was wasted.

Enclosed Fly bridge

The fly bridge level was a most expansive area of the boat, and certainly with the enclosed aspect of this particular version, one where you would likely spend most of your daylight hours – whether underway or when moored. A skipper and friend could be seated on the two Navigator helm chairs behind what was a most comprehensive and as well visually ‘impressive’ helm station.

Presented on a rounded vinyl-trimmed carbon fibre display that was both functional as well as ergonomic, features on this helm included Seastar steering, the Raymarine E120 electronics screen with radar, autopilot and VHF, and each side of the E120, the Steyr engine instrumentation.

Seating forward of this helm feature would cater for a veritable army of guests seated around the full-width U-shaped lounge. For dining purposes five adults could be seated at the table at the starboard end of this lounge, but still there was room for at least another six further guests on the remainder of the lounge.

A light bright and airy room, this level was well ventilated by side opening windows and vents along the dodger level below the main front windows. The stainless steel rails around both the walkway and the perimeter of the area behind the skipper were engineering masterpieces that ensured the not insignificant area behind the skipper was safe from mishap.

If it was a colder time of the year the clears on the rear corners and across the



Easy safe access to the flybridge, and the step face even lifted up to reveal wet storage for jackets and other ‘wet’ gear. (top)

The helm station was well presented, well spec’d and above all most comfortable for the longer trips. (middle)

Upwards of a dozen people could be comfortably seated on this fly bridge level. (left)



back of the fly bridge ensured it could also be transformed into a warm and dry room which still capably accommodated up to a dozen people – in comfort. And if you felt like a wee tippie along the way, the bar module to port and adjacent to the top of the stairs included a Corian-topped servery, bottle rack and refrigerator. Indeed a very ambient part of the VI250 Conquest.

A New World

Step inside the Voyager saloon and there was a definite air of refinement about the presentation, in particular the wood finish. Often you hear people describe something as subtle, well in this instance the Conquest was anything but subtle for it was in your face from the moment you walked in the saloon doors. Bold is perhaps a less onerous or suggestive descriptive for in a very nice way everything within this room made a statement.

To starboard was an elevated six-person dining setting. Arguably you wouldn't



While 'busy', the saloon was certainly not space-compromised and nor did it lack for any of the creature comforts.



| Very classy, the well provisioned galley was a 'special feature' within the saloon!

normally get away with an elevation such as this but in a room with the generously high ceiling this example boasted, it was actually quite clever. It not only enhanced all round vision but also provided greater headroom for the accommodation below.

Opposite this dining setting was the aft galley and certainly spectacular was a word that sprung to mind to describe this aspect of the boat. Arguments abound as to the merits of aft, downstairs, forward or forward and lower level galley configurations but me, I prefer an aft galley just exactly like this option. Finished as in the instance of the dining setting in rich semi-gloss Californian Beech, this multi-level galley was an absolute work of art.

The designers quite obviously listen to their clients and in particular female clients, for the galley was very definitely designed with the ultimate user-friendliness and practicality in mind – without excessively compromising volume within the saloon. Features here included 230 litres of separate refrigerator and freezer; a gas 2-

burner hob and oven as well as a microwave oven, generous bench space and importantly equally generous cupboard, drawer and general storage provision.

No, this galley was not secreted in a typically space-inhibiting U-shape that serves no purpose other than to conceal it from the general view of guests in the saloon, but I was more than happy with the presentation of what I consider to be a galley extraordinaire, one of the best layouts and presentations I have seen in a vessel of this size.

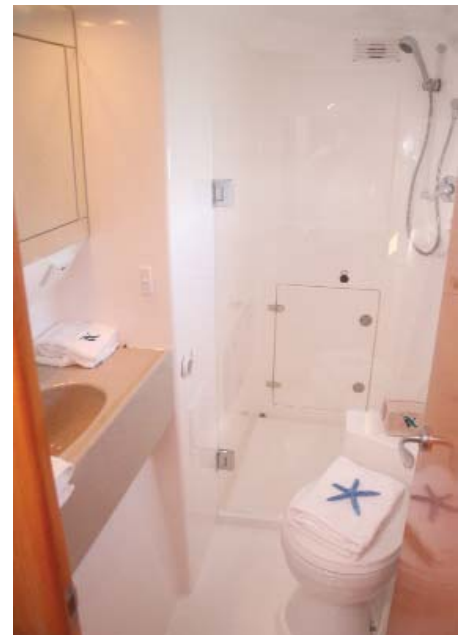
Completing the picture of elegance in the saloon was the chart table with (BEP) circuit-breaker switch-panel cabinet forward of the dining setting, and of course the impressive liquor cabinet which was 'incorporated' into the centre of the front bulkhead.

All in all a light, bright and well presented room with space, headroom, light and ventilation in abundance – and certainly in the context of the saloon within a 40-foot catamaran, well above my expectations in all facets. At night-time especially with the upper and lower mood lights setting the scene, it was yet another most ambient part of the vessel.

All available space is utilised. (below)

The Californian Beech timberwork was crafted to a standard befitting that of a luxury vessel. (bottom)





Accommodation

As in most catamaran designs there are a number of different options available, in this instance the emphasis was very much on an appropriate level of skipper comfort, within the master stateroom. As such, this was a three-cabin configuration, with one bathroom.

The guest accommodation was in the starboard hull, with the 'double' room aft of

the stairway. While not a huge room, the bed was a generous double – and there was still room to close the door when changing. Features in here included a feature wall mirror, good lighting, a wardrobe and side-storage facility, an opening side port-hole, a a fan for ventilation. The décor in here very much continued the up-market high level of presentation theme of the aforementioned areas of the VI250.

A most convivial dining setting – there was room for five to six adults. (top)

The three rather than four-cabin layout opened up space within the master bedroom. (left)

A convenient by-product of the three-cabin option is a separate shower and head – a stand-alone reasonable-sized bathroom. (left)

Luxury – Catamaran-style

The forward accommodation on that (starboard) side consisted of a twin single athwartships and fore and aft bunk configuration. With ample light and ventilation courtesy of an overhead hatch as well as a side port-hole, this cabin in fact was brilliant in design, very roomy, generous sized berths, good wardrobe and storage facilities, neat step access up onto each berth – and extremely well presented. Perfect really for kids who like to spend time away from the adults!

Across on the port side was the master accommodation. Firstly the bathroom, that was aft of the stairway. While essentially a 'luxury' characterisation would surely embody a private ensuite (an optional ensuite layout is available), I was more than happy with what turned out to be a more expansive albeit communal bathroom, just across the walkway from the master bedroom. Especially appreciated was the



The guest cabin is optional twin berth like this, or a slightly smaller albeit still queen-size berth.



Despite it being the aft cabin, the third bedroom was far from claustrophobic. (left)



Now that is what I call a full-length hanging wardrobe. (right)

space around the head – not cramped – and the separate shower cubicle – which you could swing a cat in!

Again the luxury descriptive for the master stateroom must be viewed within the context of a catamaran configuration, and yet again I have to say the designer did a damned good job. The queen-size island berth lay semi-diagonal across the room in what was a most majestic setting. There was good headroom in this room, even when sitting up in bed; there was plenty of lighting and ventilation and again, plenty of storage facility – even down to a huge (lined) walk-in wardrobe.

As in all the rooms there was absolutely no gelcoat showing anywhere, the linings and carpet were all of a high quality, and the generous 'splashings' of wood trimming and features very much enhanced the visual pleasure. There was even a painting above the head of the bed - to complete the picture of contemporary opulence!

Mechanicals

As is the case with most Voyager catamarans, the recommended mode of power was Steyr diesels. "They are a technically advanced engine which provides exceptional performance with miserly fuel consumption figures. I place special emphasis on the key elements of weight, performance and economy and this engine package best fits my criteria," Appleton explained.

One would tend to suggest the hulls were seemingly quite efficient in their shape also, but certainly to glean a top speed of 22kts from twin 3200cc 6-cylinder 190hp Steyr diesel engines, somewhat graphically supported his claims. More to the point, cruising at a relatively brisk 17kts it uses just 45 litres of diesel per hour.

I have to be honest and suggest there aren't too many rigs around, certainly monohull rigs anyway, that can boast anything close to those sorts of figures – perfect for long-range cruising for you cover a lot of ground in 24 hours, at that speed! Interestingly with a fuel capacity of 1400 litres, that equates to a range of roughly 500 nautical miles.

In keeping with the 'economical cruising' philosophy, onboard power is 12V with the usual high-consumption suspects such as microwaves, powered through a Zantax inverter. The three 200Ah Absorbed Power AGM 'house' batteries and two engine 'start' batteries were all charged courtesy of the heavy-duty 90A alternators on the Steyr engines or when in port, courtesy of the shore power through the onboard charger.

That system is quite sufficient within the context of the specification of this particular Voyager example, but certainly if you were to take up the air-conditioning option or include such features as electric cooking, then sensibly you would be adding a genset to the portfolio. Other onboard systems included heavy duty Seastar hydraulic steering, ZF Micro Commander electronic controls, TMC electric macerator heads and Clarion entertainment systems. The drive was conventional shaft drive, through a ZF 45A 2.43:1 gearbox to 4-blade 19"x21"p ZF Faster propellers. Interestingly, these propellers are fully protected by the keels, so beaching doesn't present any concerns.

As stated, the Conquest was what I would describe as a solid performer; a good honest hull that had few vices. Weighing in at just 9,000kg (doesn't include the 1400 litres of diesel and 750 litres of water) the solid fibreglass hull with composite core and foam topsides, deck and fly bridge was a strong and tight ship and really revelled in the less than ideal conditions of our test day.

In fact, at one stage we had the cat virtually right out of the water in the rather gargantuan swell and waves of the Gold Coast Seaway entrance. I waited for the 'bang' as it literally took off – but it handled that situation with ease, landing with a level attitude and certainly with (very) surprisingly minimal fuss or pounding. I wish I would have been able to take a photo!

Conclusion

The bottom line was I needed to go no further to establish this hull indeed had the obligatory handling skills required of a bona fide bluewater cruising hull. It accelerated surprisingly well considering the relatively meagre horsepower, and it rode with a nice level attitude. More to the point, it had the efficiency credentials to boot.

As far as perception went, I felt most comfortable with a 'luxury' tag being applied to this vessel for it was indeed spec'd and presented to a level beyond that of most catamarans available on the market today. Yet, it didn't carry the price tag I expected.

If you subscribe to the theory that a 40ft catamaran is the equivalent size of at least a 50ft monohull, then the price tag of under AU\$1-million is most competitive. It is pertinent to point out too that that price tag was with the optional extra 'Luxury Package' which included amongst other things the enclosed fly bridge, radar, aft awning, underwater lights and drinks cabinet!

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SPECIFICATIONS

Design Name	Voyager V1250 Conquest
Builder	Voyager Catamarans
Designer	Derek Appleton
Year Launched	2008
LOA	13.0m
Beam	5.3m
Draft	0.96m
Displacement	9,000kg
Max Speed	22 kts
Cruise Speed	16 – 19 kts
Fuel Cap	1,400 litres
Water Cap	750 litres
Construction	Solid F'glass, Composite sandwich, and Cored panel
Engines Make	2x190hp Steyr 196 Turbo charged, 6 cyl Diesels
Gearboxes	ZF 45A, 2.43:1
Propellers	ZF Faster 4 blade Ni-Br 19d x 21p
Drive Train	Fully protected direct shaft drives
Inverter	Zantax 1800
Lighting	L.E.D. and Halogens
Anchor Winch/Muir	- horizontal RCM
Anchor	45lb galv. Plough
Steering	Seastar Hydraulic
Controls	ZF Micro Commander Electronic
Wipers	TMC Pantograph
Paint	FGI Gelcoat
Paint (Antifouling)	Altex
Hatches	Lewmar
Windscreens	Alfab
Head	TMC Electric
Veneer/Plywood	Californian Beech
Upholstery	NSW Leather Co
Stainless Steel	Boatfit
Batteries	Absorbed Power - 3 x AGM house, & 2 x AGM start
Entertainment System	Clarion

ELECTRONICS

Autopilot	Raymarine ST6002
GPS/Plotter	Raymarine E120 Colour
Depth Sounder	Raymarine DSM300
Radar	Raymarine 24 mile Radome
VHF	Icom
Software System	Navionics Platinum
Switch Panel	BEP Marine
Base Price	AU\$790,000
Price As Tested	\$960,000