

# Voyager V625



# SPORTS FISH

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BARRY TYLER

Voyager Catamarans have developed an envied reputation for building good quality, family orientated cruisers, and to help boaters to ultimately own one of those cruisers they have now developed a smaller Voyager V625 model which capably transcends the boundary between a trailerboat and a cruiser.

Any new model that appears on the scene is sure to get the juices flowing in anticipation of what one might find but I have to say this new model from Voyager Catamarans took on a whole new level of interest, simply because it was a model completely from left field, out in uncharted waters, for until now the Horizon Shores, South east Queensland-based manufacturer has only ever concentrated on the cruiser market.

Adding to that anticipation also was the claim by Voyager Catamarans CEO, Derek Appleton, that this boat was

completely new, from the trailer up. Now there was a break with tradition, cast your mind back to when we were last offered a genuinely completely new catamaran design. Can you remember when? I certainly can't for every new model we have had over the last few years has either been a reincarnation of an earlier model, a 'cut and shut' of a larger or smaller model or heaven forbid from the less scrupulous manufacturers, a 'flop' off a hull from a bygone era, maybe from a manufacturer who for obvious reasons had failed in their enterprise.

Here however was an example where Appleton had done his homework, talked



The all-new Voyager V625, a refreshing new approach to catamaran design. (main pic left)

A very balanced profile shape will endear itself to those in search of a genuine all-rounder. (above)

the rank and file 'norm' a little with this underhull and tunnel design thinking," Appleton explained, "but as much as that we also set out to design a user-friendly platform that would be attractive to a number of sectors of the market. We have I think, some very good ideas incorporated into this package and it is important to point out that every idea, every feature large or small is fitted for a specific reason.

"No feature is added just for cosmetic effect, no feature is added or deleted in the interests solely of cost; everything is designed to be user-friendly almost to the extreme. Some people at the boat shows we have exhibited at thus far have asked why we bothered to go to so much trouble with a particular aspect of out boats; quite simply, its because we deliberately set out to offer the best-value boat in its class, with the best all-round 'feature' package," Appleton further explained.

As if to reinforce the effort Appleton had gone to with this new V625 range, he even went as far as supplying two alternatives of this model for us to test, the first Sportsfish model he produced, and, this very recently launched model, what I am going to affectionately call the

'family' version. You guessed it, so new is the model that Appleton has not as yet come up with an appropriate label for this model, "We were so busy getting this model to the water that naming it was really the last thing we needed to worry about!" quipped Appleton.

### **Classy Boat**

Perhaps the first really noticeable aspect of the V625 was the realisation this was a very classy looking boat, which again is somewhat of a break with tradition with sadly all too many trailerable cats. The lines were completely balanced and in proportion as regards hull to cabin top. Another pleasing aspect was the level of finish; I guess when you build for a very competitive cruiser market, this tends to evolve by default with a manufacturer like Voyager.

An even closer perusal also revealed the extent of the features package, with many items standard on these two boats, that are extras in other instances of boats in this 'serious bluewater' class of trailerable vessel. Items such as the bowrail, grab-rails galore, glass windscreen, Lewmar deck hatch, pedestal seats, hydraulic steering and 360 litres of fuel capacity – fall into that category.

to a lot of people who already owned catamaran models they were dissatisfied with, then sat down and designed what the market really needed in the way of layout and convenience features. To this he then added a quite unique but certainly not overly radical underhull design which he believed would work in a trailerboat version of the twin-hull concept.

The rest is history. He certainly didn't rush things, this was very much a pre-planned incremental step in his range and following two years of research, testing, plug work then ultimately mould tooling, he was ready to take his design to market. "Certainly we did step outside



It was an interesting comparison, between the 'Family' and the 'Sportsfish' versions. (top)

Safety was paramount, even though you would seldom ever venture onto the foredeck. (above left)

The central boarding platform was a welcome addition on the 'family' model. (above centre)

The Sportsfish model offered a decidedly uncluttered rear end. (above right)

From there one can dress their boat up accordingly. Our fishing version for instance featured the folding (great for garaging) rod-holder, Targa arch, bimini and clears package built to this owners specification, recessed EPIRB, a plumbed live-well, two underfloor fish bins, deck-wash, transom shower, rear fold-down corner seats, generous 'toe-under' side-pocket storage, integral tackle box, fold-

down aft cleats (to hang the drogue off) and of course the mandatory bait station which mounted either atop the portside coaming top or on top between the two transom uprights. If as a fisherman you needed more than that inventory, then I would venture to suggest you are most hard to please!

For the family, our second boat was very much the entertainer; in terms of a



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There were obvious differences, between the two cockpit options. (below left and right)

This was the absolute epitome of a genuine working cockpit. (bottom left)

Certainly a different approach to a catamaran hull shape, below the water level. (bottom right)



trailerboat. Naturally you can mix and match with features for both models, but in this instance the V625 'family' version was dressed up with a lined cabin and also a bunk infill which when in place, provided a full-width king-size berth that would house mum, dad and at least one child – comfortably. Also within this cabin, in under the portside berth (when the infill isn't in place), I discovered an electric head and in the compartment ahead of it, it's associated holding tank and pumps. That was impressive, in a boat this size. In under the berth opposite I found a generous storage void complete with the 60-litre freshwater tank.

### The Entertainer

The cockpits (of these two renditions) understandably were quite different; this was where the entertainer aspect really kicked in. The floor of the family version was carpeted, and two easily removable longitudinal bench-style lounges were either side of a small central cockpit table. Whereas the Sportsfish version offered overhead protection for the skipper and passenger only, in the case of the 'family' version I was pleased to see a hard-top

had been fitted, along with a canopy structure which extended virtually to the aft extremity of the cockpit. An integral facet of this overhead assembly also, was a set of side and aft 'camper' canvas and clears which completely enveloped and sealed off the cockpit, from the elements.

The two helm options were basically the same, but different in approach. By that I mean the actual layout of dash sheltered in behind the stylish Taylormade glass windscreen, was the same in both instances; both featured a foot-rail, Honda remotes off to the side, Lowrance HDS-10 GPS/plotter/sounder; Cobra VHF, Fusion iPod stereo, BEP switch panel, Honda instrumentation and Seastar hydraulic steering – all nicely presented on a three-level 'forward-angled' dash. Interestingly, I say Seastar steering but in actual fact it was a combo of Seastar helm and twin Hydrive rams – a preference of local engineering company, Marine Controls, who consider the Hydrive rams to be more capable and robust in a catamaran situation. There you go!

That aside, there were two other 'family-influencing' additions to our

dressed up V625 version, one being the difference in helm seating. The fishing version had the stainless steel hoop bases (which nicely accepted a large Esky in under the seat bottom) that supported the Barton Marine swivelling and fore and aft adjusting chairs, while in the family version the more upmarket 'bucket' seat examples were supported on box-style bases which offered further storage provision as well as support of course, for the actual seat.

The other most user-friendly feature was the addition of a boarding platform between the two transom uprights. A moulded assembly which cleverly can be added to the flat full-beam Sportsfish engine well, I learned first hand while stepping ashore to take some photos of the two boats together – just how good this particular feature was. Its extension to just aft of the outboards, the safety rails and the fold-down swim ladder, ensured it was a very safe and hassle-free exercise – stepping knee-deep onto the shoreline. A brilliant feature, on a trailerboat!



Voyager Catamarans have very definitely listened and acted, on advice they received from serious fishermen. (top)

The use-options for these huge portside and starboard cavities were limitless. (above)

### Power to Burn

Built of GRP composites and foam cores, the liner and hull moulds are glassed together and foam filled to produce what was a very strong and rigid hull assembly. And surprisingly light too, for the seven metre (overall) V625 in the Sportsfish guise weighed in at just 1100kg boat only; or from a 'trailer' perspective, 2100kg as a boat motor and trailer package. As such, the pair of 90hp 1496cc, inline 4-cylinder, SOHC, BF90 4-stroke outboards fitted in both 'Sportsfish' and 'family' instances, the

owners choice in both cases (Voyager has no allegiances to any particular outboard manufacturer) – were more than enough power.

Running a 3-blade 13¼"D by 17"P Solas stainless steel propeller and wound out to a maximum 6100rpm, a two-way run up and back on the Horizon Shores waterway returned an average top speed of 34.9kts – lets call it 35kts. Sure perhaps you might squeeze three or four knots more out of it with a pair of 115hp engines, but in my mind the additional cost could be better spent elsewhere on the boat.

At this top speed, there was certainly plenty to like about the handling characteristics of this V625 hull, especially considering we were in a meandering almost river-like situation where winds were seemingly coming from all quarters. The hull was predictable, accurate when turning tight corners and most impressive at full speed in the cross-winds and seas I encountered that day, in and round the infamous JumpinPin area.

It was a delight in fact at full speed for it responded well to trim but interestingly not so much with a bow up attitude but moreso with the whole boat seemingly rising to the occasion, at a level attitude. I expected it to be little 'skittery' at this speed, in the three-quarter harbour chop I was running in, but it stuck to its task admirably. Turning was quite a revelation also; it leaned out only very slightly, so there was no hint of the cavitation phenomenon I must say I was expecting when trimmed out to the degree we were, in the tighter turns.

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## The Little Things

As good as the above were, there was other perhaps less obvious aspects worthy of a mention, which for me really set this hull apart from others. The stability factor was impressive underway, but at rest it was even better again; the fisherman and indeed mum and the kids, would love that characteristic. Another 'plus' was the dry ride; there was only very minimal spray, not water, on the windscreen, which surprised me in those conditions.

Courtesy of the underfloor foam buoyancy, the ride was nice and quiet but rather intriguingly for some obscure reason (could even have been the 'family' hardtop and canopy assembly 'enveloping' the engine noise) the ride appeared quieter in the more open Sportsfish version, than in the family version. And while I lamented the fact Honda didn't see the need to supply a duplicate trim-button system which allowed the engines to be trimmed as one rather than individually, the trade-off was the fact you could trim the angle of the boat on the engine trims, rather than having to fit trim tabs.

The other 'biggie' for me, and it sort of reinforces the theory that two engines are better than one; I tilted one engine right up out of the water, applied the throttles of the other engine and the V625 rose to the plane quite effortlessly and in the end, reached a healthy and more importantly if you have a long way to go, acceptable speed of in excess of 20kts.

Following my most enlightening test, loading the boat onto the trailer was just as effortless; in keeping really with the overall user-friendly approach of this vessel, for the tandem-axle Oceanic skid trailer purpose designed to accept this V625 hull, nicely guided the hull right up to the winch post. Now was my chance to take a closer look at the underhull shape, to find out precisely why this hull worked so damned well.

## Conglomeration of Good Features

Quite honestly, it wasn't rocket science that I discovered, in short it was a conglomeration of a number of basic features that have worked well in the past, for other manufacturers be it



monohull or catamaran. One often hears people suggesting the designer just 'jagged it' and granted there might be a modicum of truth in that statement, where this underhull shape is concerned, but basically Appleton seemingly has stuck with tried and proven features that he believes work. He didn't re-invent the wheel, just used all the spokes!

In the past, sadly all too often catamaran underhull shapes in trailerboat models have been very hit and miss, with basically a rounded or heaven forbid a flat area employed simply to join the inside of the hull up with the outside. In the case of the V625 however, a combination of reverse chines on the inside and outside of the hull, a ski plank for lift, and double chines at the bow which maximise frontal lift – are the purposeful performance 'edge' this hull enjoys.

There was good visibility when seated or standing at the user-friendly helm station. (top)

No space or void was wasted, on the Voyager V625. (above left)

The two different helm layouts. Note the neat fabric door on the 'family' version. (above right)



left from top:

A sleep-out for two, or add the in-fill and you have a huge double or even triple, berth.

The head, holding tank and pumps were to portside, under the berth squab.

The 60 litre water supply, plus additional storage, was in under the starboard side berth.



The other big break with tradition was in the tunnel deck shape of the V625. Have a close look at most of the smaller trailerable catamaran designs around and you will invariably find a virtually upright tunnel deck, which at the end of the day

is like a hand-brake when you dive into a big wave. It's a trade-off, interior space for a cabin, as against a flatter tunnel deck which will ease into and ride over a wave, rather than meeting it head on!

In the case of the Voyager however, this deck is a hell of a lot flatter; Appleton has gone to great lengths to come up with a design which offers both – space, and a flatter tunnel deck. His hull 'lift' at the bow comes courtesy not of a steep tunnel deck, but an aggressive tunnel shape of a central nacelle or V-pod, and appendages outside that which create pressure and deliver lift. What's more, this tunnel shape extends the full length of the hull, so you actually have clearance at the transom – yet another 'novelty' seldom seen in a trailerable catamaran!

## Conclusion

Things to like about this boat, everything really! It was a solid boat, built and presented well, that handled and performed above expectations. Add to that the plethora of features, some large, some small, that made this boat a pleasure to be aboard – whether you are a 'fisho' or a 'family' boater – and you have the perfect all-rounder mini-cruiser that can be parked in your own garage.

What I especially liked about this boat were the little things that you often take for granted, until you come up against them when you are at sea. The Targa arch for instance, was mounted to the outside of the cabin coamings, so the side clears could be accurately attached to the coamings, to prevent leaks. The raised gutters on the port and starboard cockpit coaming tops were another plus, preventing water from running down those coaming tops and straight into the cockpit.

I also liked the way the engines tilted right up and out of the water, perfect in a canal situation where the boat is moored on an inflatable floating pontoon. Cleverly the fuel vents were recessed so there was no chance whatsoever of water or spray finding its way into the fuel tank, via the breather. When you consider the handling package, plus features such as the above, this bluewater mini cruiser was certainly good value for money at \$112,000.

## SPECIFICATIONS

Boat Design Name	Voyager V625 Sportsfish
Builder	Voyager Catamarans
Country of Origin	Australia
Designer	Derek Appleton
Interior Designer	Derek Appleton
Year Launched	2011
LOA	7.0m
LOH	6.1m
LWL	5.7m
Beam	2.35m
Draft	0.4m (0.7m with outboard down)
Displacement	1100kg
BMT Package Weight	2100kg
Max Speed	34.9kts
Cruise Speed	24.9 knots @4500rpm
Fuel Cap	2 x 180 litres
Water Cap	60 litre
Construction	GRP Composites & Foam
Classification	Australian Builders Plate
Engines	2 x 90hp Honda VTEC
Propellers	2 x 13 1/4"D x 17"P 3-blade Solas S/S
Batteries	2 x Bosch 700 CCA
Interior Lighting	LED
Anchor Winch:	Muir Electric Free-fall Drum
Anchors	15lb Sarca
Steering	Seastar/Hydrive
Remote Engine Controls	Honda
Hull Finish	Gelcoat
Stainless Steel Fabrication	Jansson Marine Stainless
Windscreen	TaylorMade
Deck Hatches	Lewmar
Head	TMC Electric
Upholstery	East Coast Trimming
Helm Chair(s)	Barton Upholstery
Entertainment	Fusion Stereo
Trailer	Oceanic 'Voyager' Tandem-axle with Sensabrake, Atlantic Winch and Hull skids

## Electronics

GPS/Plotter/Sounder	Lowrance HDS-T0
VHF	Cobra
Engine Instruments	Honda
Software System	Navionics
Switch Panel	BEP Marine

Base Price	\$78,690
Price As Tested	\$112,000

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## PERFORMANCE

Revs (rpm)	Speed (kts)	Speed (mph)	LPH (lph)
1000 rpm	4.4	5.1	3.8
1500 rpm	5.2	6.0	4.6
2000 rpm	6.8	7.8	9.0
2500 rpm	8.2	9.4	12.8
3000 rpm	11.7	13.5	18.2
3500 rpm	16.4	18.9	19.0
4000 rpm	21.2	24.4	24.2
4500 rpm	24.9	28.7	32.6
5000 rpm	28.4	32.7	45.4
5500 rpm	31.5	36.2	59.8
6100 rpm	34.9	40.2	76.4

(average each-way speeds recorded on a Lowrance GlobalNav 12 hand-held GPS)

# VOYAGER

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