

TOPCat

According to Rick Huckstepp, the Glacier Bay 2670 Isle Runner will keep you on the water long after the chop has sent most boats back to the dock.

The last three months of northerly winds along south east Queensland's coastline has seen some pretty mean chop and swell running on all but a few days, keeping many boats pontoon-side or on their trailers.

Testing boats in these more-than-testing conditions certainly highlights issues in design flaws and build quality and, while some boats struggle to make the grade, others come away with impeccable marks.



The range of Glacier Bay Catamarans is one that sits in the upper echelon of quality boats by master builders and can only be rated at the highest possible score.

They hail from Monroe, Washington, which is the work base of Larry Graf, the founder and designer of Glacier Bay Catamarans.

Graf has a background steeped in innovation and holds quite a number of patents in the marine, automotive, and health equipment industries. He is a design engineer and inventor with a passion for boats that goes back through his family history, and this zeal is exhibited in every aspect in his range of boats.

These boats feature design differences that set them well apart from all catamarans. The painstaking three years of research and development before working on the first pre-production model certainly resulted in concepts that are market breaking without being overtly radical.

Graf's goal was to build a boat that could take all the punishment metered out to it by professional mariners in harsh environments.

The last thing Graf wanted was any warranty issues, so he built it right and built it strong from the very beginning.

We looked at the 2670 Isle Runner and were more than happy to hear of a 30ft version on its way to our shores.

Interestingly, having it sit on a trailer allowed us to pour over the innovative design features that Graf has built into his boats.

Viewed bow on, the pontoons feature very deep fore-feet at the keel line. So deep, in fact, that this boat is a high speed semi displacement hull where the leading edge of that keel line is rarely above the water.

It's designed this way to slice water rather than bounce over it, and this it does it well.

The parted water runs along a pontoon that tapers upwards from the bottom and in from the sides as it gets to the stern.

This creates a minimal wash and a large reduction in water drag, resulting in exceptional economy at all speeds. In effect, the deepest part of each pontoon is in the forward third of its length.



This tapered design is not a lot different than the concept used on aircraft wings, which are engineered for the least amount of drag.

We noticed a very clean wash coming off the transom, and the boat's ability to run head-on into big chop at five to eight knots with comfort will add to any game plan.

Also noticeable was the lack of hole shot, with this hull sliding along and through the surface rather than getting bogged down with engines guzzling fuel before getting on top and picking up speed and economy.

This result augers well for extended economical rough sea travel and trolling for high speed pelagics in such conditions. But extensive design innovation doesn't stop there.

The pontoons on this and the larger models are laid up with seven thwart bulkheads running from one side, across the top of the tunnel to the other side. The forefoot sections of each pontoon feature 10 layers of mat rovings glassed in place to create a collision system to prevent holing, with the number of layers aft reduced to seven.

Externally, the chines are moulded in stages up either side of the hull. This allows the boat to settle in its suspension with only one chine on each side of a pontoon punching the water at any time, followed by the other on the other side of the same pontoon.

This staging of suspension creates a gentle downward travel when powering through big seas and heavy, sharp chop. A 40 per cent wider and deeper tunnel than the average cat allows that suspension to travel further, while the width allows more air, spray and water to further cushion the ride.

At the bottom of each pontoon a flat tracking pad sits about 40mm proud of the main body. According to Graf, this allows the boat to quickly find a point of reference, thereby producing a smooth recovery coming off waves and chop, rather than see-sawing up and down, forwards and aft, which is common with sharper-entry pontoons.

IN THE DETAIL

Graf's attention to the most minute detail in design and quality is meticulous. In-factory installation of pull cords in tubes through the deck, the surrounds of which is foam filled for positive buoyancy, allow for quick and easy installation of electronics wiring at the original or post fit-out.

A crowned deck will be appreciated by those using a Glacier Bay as a work boat. Blood and rubbish is easily hosed down the side gutters and out through four scuppers, allowing the cockpit deck to dry quickly.

A module behind the helm seat held 144lt of water for a livebait tank that featured a viewing window in its aft wall. This bait tank can be optioned for a galley and the lounge on the opposite line may be optioned for a dinette, sacrificing some ice box space.

All is not lost in the cold drinks department, though, as these hulls have insulation on all of their under-deck kill tanks, making for simple and easy stowage of food and beverages.

The ice boxes that are installed have their hatch rebates sloping down toward the floor slightly so water is automatically drained and not retained.

All hatches are suspended with high quality stainless steel gas-filled struts for longevity of life. How good's that!

The cuddy cabin on this boat is offset, offering a wider footway down the starboard side to access the bow, than that on the portside.

This in effect allows more beam in the helm area to move around in.

All seating cushions at the helm have ventilated mesh backs for easy drying, which have been manufactured using a very high UV resistant vinyl.

Graf has even used a military spec fade-resistant, extra-strong thread in the seating embroidery.

Access to the cabin is through a large hatch, while a passage on the portside leads direct to a head. The bed sits atop the inside of the tunnel and the walkway is along the inner pontoon, offering a surprising amount of head room.

On the starboard side of the companion way, a queen-size bed offers plenty of sleeping space and places to put rods and other gear.

The opulence of this bed was questioned and Graf revealed he had manufactured the mattresses with higher density foam edges so that there was no sag, giving occupants an edge to lay against when the boat is on the water, moving with the waves.

SMOOTH RIDE

This boat arrived on its own trailer that is typically Graf in the way it was designed. It featured hub oilers rather than greasers, which make it stand out from the rest immediately.

The front draw bar features a full-size ladder with grabrails manufactured as part of the trailer structure to allow entry to and from the boat while at the ramp or at home.

We took the 2670 out through the Seaway at the Gold Coast in a mixture of 1.5 to two-metre swell and chop.



Running at an angle across the approaching waves, the lack of any 'chine walking' was noticeable, therefore one wasn't thrown around while walking around the cockpit.

Also evident was the fact that even approaching conditions such as this, one could leave the helm and join two other adults on one side of the cockpit, and the boat will continue in a straight line without veering off course. Marlin anglers will love this trait!

Install an auto pilot and you would have one mean offshore fishing machine.

The lack of spray being pushed forward away from the tunnel was noticeable. Most of it was consumed down the void of the tunnel and even 20kt winds on the forequarters failed to generate any annoying spray over the windscreen or face.

There was no broaching as it ran with the sea, but rather a typical slow lean into the one quarter as the bottom of the trough was negotiated, after which it rose quickly over the next wave.

And softness of ride? Perfect. As good as you could get in any boat of this size.

So many good attributes in any one boat are hard to find, but they are here in the Glacier Bay.

The attention to detail has to be admired, and this boat oozes practicality.

If this is a junior version of a 30-footer offering similar attributes, just bring it on!

MORE BOAT FOR YOUR BUCK

On the day, we also tested the Glacier Bay 2270, which presented every bit as well as its big brother. It too could handle big sea situations and is more easily towed on a trailer.

There are 15 models of Glacier Bay Catamarans available in the USA and the two we tested really are at the pinnacle among other boats available in this country.

They typify the old saying 'you get a lot of boat for your money'.



Glacier Bay 2670 Isle Runner
Price as Tested: \$206,772
OPTIONS FITTED
Stern seat assembly, bait tank cushion, extended swim platform, and carpet set
PRICED FROM: \$203,090
GENERAL
Material: Fibreglass
Type: Catamaran
Length overall: 8.02m
Beam: 2.69m
Draft with engines up: 0.46m
Dry hull weight: 2181kg
CAPACITIES

Fuel: 810lt
Water: 99lt
Waste: 67.5lt
Passengers: Eight
Towed weight w/ trailer: 3.81 tonnes
Rec. max/hp: 2 x 150
ENGINE
Make/model: Suzuki DF 150
Type: Four-stroke EFI
Rated HP: 150 x 2
Displacement: 2867cc each
Weight: 211kg
Gearbox ratio: 2.50:1
Propeller: 15-inch
SUPPLIED BY: Mustang Marine Queensland 247 Bayview Street Runaway Bay, Qld 4216 Telephone (07) 5577 2666 Facsimile (07) 5577 4555 Email: sales@mustangmarine.com.au Website: www.mustangmarine.com.au

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