

## The Aspen C100 Cruiser

Following the success of his super-fuel-efficient C90 power cat, Larry Graf comes up with an impressive new 32-footer



**LARRY GRAF KNOWS HIS** stuff. He founded Glacier Bay Catamarans in 1986 and grew that Washington State company into North America's largest power cat producer. When he sold out 20 years later, he founded Aspen Catamarans, based in Snohomish, Washington, and he hasn't looked back.

The key to the success of his first offering, the 28-foot Aspen C90 Cruiser, was a striking, extremely slippery and fuel-efficient hull based on a proa design (see review in *PY*, November 2011). Unlike typical power catamarans—in which both hulls are equal in size and shape and both have motors—Graf's design has one hull that is 35 percent thinner than the other and offset in such a way that the boat can be powered with a single engine mounted in the larger hull, yet still track in a straight line. The main advantage, according to Graf, is that it takes about 60 percent less effort

to slide through the water than a traditional monohull, which means less power is required to drive it.

His asymmetrical design has proven itself with some very impressive numbers. However, it's not just fuel efficiency that has made the Aspen such a success. Both the 28- and 32-footers are great looking, sleek designs—from their clipper bows through to their striking reverse transoms and their rich, cobalt blue gelcoat. Both models can be trailered and have identical, functional and very well thought-out interiors (including a king size bed in the bow). Perhaps most importantly, Aspens are light but handle well in all sea conditions. It is as if they slip effortlessly through the water.

**THE CONCEPT** for the Aspen C100 came about as a result of customer requests for a larger cockpit for fishing and entertaining. As such, the new model has an extra four feet of length in the cockpit,

making it well suited for both of those activities. The Aspen's interior has not changed, but the hull has completely new tooling and a new mold. The most significant change was adding two inches of height to the hull. This, combined with the added buoyancy from the increased length, increased the freeboard by four inches and buoyancy by 4,500 pounds, which is pretty impressive on a boat that weighs 8,400 pounds.

At the same time, Graf moved the section of the hull below the chines back four inches to increase the ability of the hulls to shed water outward—essentially serving as larger spray rails. The beam remains the same as the 28 at 10 feet, which means it can be trailered. Larry is a perfectionist and that shows not only in the design of the 32 but in the pretty well faultless fit and finish.

**MORE POWER** Graf needed more horsepower to drive the new hull, so the C90's single 150 Cummins diesel was

swapped out for a 220 hp Volvo D3 in the C100. Previously the motor was tucked under the aft right hand side of the saloon (in the larger starboard hull). The increased length meant that Graf could now place the engine aft of the saloon, which meant a much quieter ride (though the 28 was already very quiet). Additional soundproofing and foam-sealed bulkhead openings reduce noise even more. Graf has thoughtfully designed one of the cockpit hatches so that the engine can easily be removed (it takes about 45 minutes, claims Graf).

One of Graf's innovations has been to "T" into the saltwater cooling line and divert a small portion out of the starboard hull so that owners can easily confirm that the engine is getting plenty of cooling water. Like the 28-footer, the 32-footer also has standard electric bow and stern thrusters.

**THE COCKPIT** While the cockpit on the C90 was perfectly adequate, the added four feet of length is a real bonus. Not only is there more room to move around, there's plenty of valuable storage space in lockers and under the hatches in the sole. For fishers, there are built-in rod holders, a 52-inch long fish well and electrical outlets for downriggers. An optional aft steering station (forward and to starboard) means no one has to leave the ▶

The hardtop has been extended by 18 inches and provides added shelter from both rain and sun.





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- [ 1 ] The king size bed forward is ideal for cruising couples.
- [ 2 ] The dinette will fold down into a saloon berth for guests or the kids.
- [ 3 ] The interior of the 32 is identical to that of the 28.
- [ 4 ] The compact helm station features nice wood trim with easily accessed controls.
- [ 5 ] The C100's extended cockpit is great for entertaining, but also functions as a working fishing platform.

cockpit when the fishing is hot. Portside forward is a handy sink and refrigerator unit. There's also a 94-quart fully insulated Igloo cooler with a snap-on cushion seat tucked in front of the transom. Both raw and freshwater wash down/shower taps are easily accessible, as is the propane locker.

Another feature is the hardtop, which has been extended aft from 24 to 42 inches and provides added shelter from both rain and sun. The extended hardtop made it possible to install two larger, 170-watt solar panels on the cabin top that serve as solar battery boosters. On the day of our sea trial, which was cloudy, the panels were putting out 9.3 amps, which would certainly help out the batteries while on the hook or not connected to shore power.

**UNDERWAY** We sea-trialed the new Aspen (Hull One) out of Anacortes, Washington. Despite being a single-engine catamaran, the 32 is very maneuverable in tight places and it tracks straight in reverse. For those who feel the need, there's always the bow and stern thruster. As we moved into open water, it became immediately apparent that Graf has done a very good job of sound-proofing. Even at speed, there was less noise in the saloon than in most cars. We never had to raise our voices to be heard.

I was really impressed with the dead-straight tracking ability of this vessel, despite only having one engine. Obviously Graf got his asymmetrical engineering spot on. I'd tested the 28 previously and found the same thing with that model: the wheel seldom had to be touched. It was no different in >

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the 32 and something uncommon even in monohulls.


I was looking forward to comparing fuel consumption to the 28 to see if Graf had managed to keep the numbers up with the longer hull and new engine. Well, he came very close, despite the motor being larger and the hull heavier. At 1,800 rpm and eight mph, we were sipping only 1.6 gallons per hour, which translates to five miles per gallon. At 3,000 rpm, we were making 16.2 mph and burning 5.6 gph (2.9 mpg). At wide-open throttle, 4,080 rpm, our speed was 24.5 mph while burning 12 gph (two mpg). I don't know of any other vessel of this size that gets anything near the miles per gallon. This compares to average consumption by a monohull at speed of about one mpg. The sweet spot for low-speed cruising (eight to nine mph) was between 1,800 and 2,000 rpm, while high speed cruising (16.2 mph) felt the best at about 3,000 rpm. Larry has even towed a wakeboarder (his son Nick) behind the 32, a testament to its acceleration and speed.

What surprised me the most was how effortlessly we seemed to speed across the waves while producing minimal wake. If you weren't looking at the speed on the chart plotter, you'd think the boat was poking along at eight or nine mph instead of 15 or 20. The ride was soft and it was very comfortable to move around inside at speed, partially because of the extra stability that comes with two hulls.

In turns, the 32 performed very well with a nice tight turning radius. Vibration was non-existent and the 32 had a real solid feel to it; nothing was creaking or rattling. The only downside, if you could call it that, is the hull is so slippery that even at idle speed we were doing 3.4 mph, which is a little fast for trolling. And while the 220 hp Volvo doesn't come with a trolling valve, Graf is working on a prototype system to increase drag when necessary.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS** To be honest, until I spent time on an Aspen I wasn't a fan of catamarans. However, last summer when we trailered a 28 to Prince Rupert, then cruised up to Alaska—encountering some rough weather along the way—I became a convert. I could definitely see myself owning one of Graf's boats. When it comes to being comfortable on the water, the Aspen pretty well has it all in a very compact package. It is most suit-

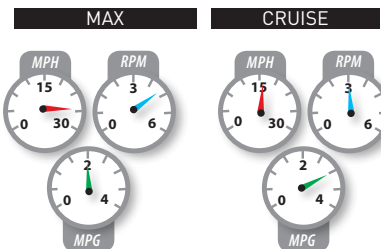
able for a couple (love that king size bow berth). The under-saloon berth is a bit of a struggle for an adult—but just fine for kids—and having to drop the dinette table for the saloon berth means having to stow gear elsewhere.

Realistically though, it's pretty hard to squeeze much more than Graf has done into the interior, and Graf says that the beamy dual hull has significantly more interior room than a comparable monohull. For fuel economy, there's simply nothing better on the market. And when considering handling, tracking and seaworthiness, there is nothing to find fault with. Base price for the Aspen C100 is US\$259,330. 

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## THE STATS



<b>LOA</b>	10.0 m	32' 4"
<b>LOA (with swim platform)</b>	10.5 m	34' 4"
<b>Beam</b>	3.0 m	10'
<b>Draft (1/2 tanks)</b>	0.8 m	31"
<b>Weight (dry)</b>	3,810 kg	8,400 lbs
<b>Fuel (std)</b>	303 L	80 USG
<b>Fuel (optional)</b>	454 L	120 USG
<b>Water</b>	190 L	50 USG
<b>Holding</b>	114 L	30 USG
<b>Power:</b>	Volvo D3 220 hp	

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