

## « POWER CRUISING »



## Larry Graf's Sea Glider

There's nothing subtle about Larry Graf's new Aspen 26, a super-innovative catamaran. Indeed, the lettering on the transom of the boat docked at Miami's Sea Isle Marina said it all: "Dream creation. Aspen proa. 70% more efficient." I first saw the Aspen at the Seattle Boat Show a month before. Now, in the water, it was time to find out how revolutionary Graf's latest design really is.

A creative, adventuresome type, Graf says he has "a passion for envisioning the next step forward." The Aspen 26 (smaller sibling to a 39-footer that is due to launch later this year) certainly represents that mind-set. After spending 15 years at Glacier Bay Catamarans, Graf took an inventive step with the Aspen 26, which doesn't look like anything you've seen before — unless you've been boating with the natives in the South Pacific. That's because the hull of the Aspen 26 is a modern version of the South Seas proa, where one hull does most of the work while the other is an outrigger for balance and seaworthiness.

Like a proa, the new Aspen 26 has asymmetrical

hulls. The starboard hull has a single Yanmar 110 hp diesel (basically a sailboat engine), set low with an 8-degree shaft angle. The port hull is 35 percent smaller and carries no machinery. The single-engine configuration, meanwhile, means lower initial cost, less fuel consumption and longer range while still producing respectable performance.

As we pulled away from the dock, Graf explained that once the boat gains some way, or more than 3 mph, it handles the same as other boats. Bow and stern thrusters are standard to help with docking. As we headed out in Biscayne Bay and hit cruising speed, Graf told me to look back at the wake — or lack of one — since it was all of maybe 4 or 5 inches; we



could have been on a RIB. "I call this a sea glider," Graf said. "It just glides through the water." Once I drove, I realized this to be true. The boat accelerates smoothly, and we cruised easily at 2,500 rpm and 15.1 knots; wide open was 3,250 rpm at 19.7 knots with Graf, his son Nick and me on board.

The 26 comes in several deck configurations; the base boat is \$89,900. The 39 (above) will be the real cruising boat. With a single Cummins 380 hp diesel, Graf projects the 39 will cruise at 18 knots; dial back to 9 knots and you can cover almost 1,000 nautical miles. That won't get you all the way to the South Seas, but it will be a start. [aspencatamarans.com](http://aspencatamarans.com) — P.A.J.