



ASPEN C100

HEIR TO AN AWARD-WINNING TRADITION AND DESIGN

Is the Aspen C100 32-foot power catamaran a new boat or merely the Aspen C90 28-footer with a 4-foot hull extension? That depends. Generally, a builder that builds new tooling — plugs and molds — can legitimately call the output of the new molds a new boat. By that definition, the Aspen C100 is a new boat. However, a 32-foot catamaran generally is beamier than a 28-foot cat, but Aspen's 32-footer carries the same beam as the 28-footer.

When Aspen founder Larry Graf developed the C90, it was highly innovative. In fact, it won a coveted Innovation Award at the 2011 Miami International Boat Show, one of the largest boat shows in the world. In the two years since then, 21 of the capable, fuel-efficient, family cruising proas have been sold.

Given such success, it wasn't long before Graf was under pressure from avid fishermen to develop a boat with a larger cockpit but the same beam as the C90, so the boat would remain trailerable. He finally decided to develop the 32-footer, and 92 days later it was boat-show ready — on display at the 2013 Seattle and Vancouver shows. During that three-month period, Aspen built completely new tooling, including new plugs and hull and deck molds. Since

the C100's introduction (and as of our test date), Aspen has taken deposits on 11 boats.

BIGGER BY DESIGN

The extra 4 feet of length satisfied the needs not only of the fishermen and boaters looking for more outdoor entertainment space, it also resulted in a much quieter interior when the vessel is underway. The engine space in the 28-footer intruded into the deckhouse. The extra cockpit length enabled Graf to move the engine aft, so now there is a complete soundproof bulkhead between the engine space and the deckhouse. At the same time, all the engine service points can be reached easily through the new cockpit hatch. In fact, the engine's position in the C100 is such that it can be removed in less than an hour.

Other advantages have come about because of the longer hull. It has created 4,500 pounds of additional buoyancy, which allows Aspen to offer optional fuel tanks. It has, when combined with an additional 2 inches of hull depth, allowed the vessel to float 4 inches higher in the water, which improves the ride when running head-long into the sea. It also gives the boat a much larger "presence" at the dock.

Graf took the opportunity to tweak the hull shape a bit, too, so the larger spray rail does a better job of deflecting water, keeping the boat drier when it's pounding into a head sea.

The brilliant engineering features that went into the award-winning original Aspen have carried forward. To put things into perspective, Aspens, being proas, have the traditional two hulls of a catamaran. That, however, is where the tradition stops. Hulls on a proa are not the same as each other. In Aspen's case, the port hull is about 35 percent smaller in volume and beam, which means the drag created by the larger starboard hull wants to pull the vessel to starboard. But, Aspens have



On the Aspen C100, the deckhouse roof has been extended 18 inches to provide better coverage for the cockpit, which created room for two 170-watt solar panels. The interior is much like the C90, with the helm and galley to port and the dinette and companion seat to starboard, but the engine power has been boosted to 220 hp.

fish. The cockpit features a sink and a refrigerator, and fitted along the inside of the transom is a 94-quart cooler complete with a snap-on seat cushion. Two washdown faucets, one fresh and one salt water, and a properly vented propane locker also fit comfortably.

Aspen has been improving its boats with each build, and while the interior of the 32-footer is configured the same as the 28-footer, subtle improvements have been made in the deckhouse. The deckhouse overhead has been extended 18 inches aft, providing extra protection for the cockpit. The extra length allowed Graf to mount two 170-watt solar panels to the roof. Even on a cloudy day, the panels pump 9.3 amps of power into the charging system, making the C100 even “greener” and more self-sufficient electrically.

The galley and helm station are along the port side, like in the C90, and the settee and companion seat are to starboard. Access to belowdecks — a head with a shower and a master stateroom with a king-size bed — is via a stairwell forward of the companion seat. Fit and finish are good, and visibility all around is excellent with full window glass along both sides of the deckhouse. There is plenty of natural light, so the deckhouse is bright

only one engine, on the starboard hull, so the thrust of the single prop at the starboard corner of the hull, wants to make the boat turn to port.

If the hulls are not engineered properly, constant rudder corrections are required, and the boat will not track in a straight line with the helm centered. All the Aspens I have tested track in a straight line with no helm action necessary, and the new 32 is no exception. At one point during our test, we centered the helm and ran for more than a quarter mile, hands off, before we

got bored and moved on to another maneuver. During that quarter mile, the cat tracked as straight as an arrow. An autopilot on this boat would have an easy time, not having to make continuous corrections on straight-line legs of any long cruise.

The bigger cockpit has enabled Aspen to increase usable storage and social space. Anglers will like the built-in rod holders, a 52-inch livewell and plenty of electrical outlets for downriggers. An optional cockpit steering station makes it easy to track



and cheery, even on dull days. Counter space is plentiful, and the dinette table is positioned immediately across from the galley, so a gourmet chef will have enough flat surface area.

PERFORMANCE

The original C90 required a 150 hp engine to perform to its design specifications. The C100 is heavier and requires more horsepower. Aspen chose Volvo's five-cylinder, 146-cubic-inch (2.2L) engine as the powerplant. The 664-pound engine produces 220 hp. The common-rail fuel-injection system and electronic controls make this engine ideal for the boat, and it meets U.S. EPA Tier 3 emission standards.

While all the design and construction information is interesting and useful, the real test of any newly designed boat what it can do on the water. We flashed up the engine, which started instantly without clat-

TESTER'S OPINION:

The new Aspen C100 improves on what was already an innovative, award-winning design.

ter or smoke and quickly settled into a reassuring purr. We slowly picked our way through the marina to open water. At 1000 rpm, the engine pushed the boat at about 5 mph and burned about 0.5 gph.

Once we were clear of the marina, we upped the engine speed to 2000 revs, and our speed climbed to about 9.5 mph and fuel burn was 2.3 gph. This was a little more than 4 mpg. Upping

the engine speed to 3000 rpm yielded 18 mph and 5.7 gph. Wide-open throttle, almost 4000 rpm, gave us just a hair less than 25 mph with a fuel burn of 12 gph. All speeds were measured by an independent GPS, and fuel-consumption figures were generated by the engine's onboard fuel computer.

It is clear the Aspen C100 is very fuel efficient. Even at 25 mph, we got more than 2 mpg. At a comfortable 18 mph cruise, the engine achieved 3.1 mpg. If a boater wanted to cruise at just under 10 mph, mileage would be about 4.07 mpg. Volvo technical information confirms these fuel-burn rates.

While acceleration is not something most testers of cruising boats are concerned with, I was impressed with the rapid acceleration of our test boat. A bit of research confirmed that the 32-footer's acceleration was faster than Aspen's 28-footer with a 150 hp main engine. The five-cylinder design of the Volvo allows maximum engine torque from about 2000 rpm to almost 3200, which is a major factor in the C100's excellent acceleration. During our tests, the Aspen performed well at all speeds, carved sharp turns like an Olympic slalom skier and made a 2-foot chop seem like it wasn't there.

Another improvement to the C100 over the C90 is its quietude. During our test, with Graf at the helm, I sat at the dinette table, as close to the engine as you can get. We were able to hold a conversation without raising our voices. My decibel meter, an industrial-grade instrument, showed 65 decibels at idle. Noise inside a library will usually measure 60 deci-

➔ SPEC BOX

LOA	32 ft., 4 in.
LOA (SWIM STEP)	34 ft., 4 in.
BEAM	10 ft.
DRAFT (HALF TANKS)	31 in.
WEIGHT (DRY)	8,400 lbs.
FUEL (STD)	80 gals.
FUEL (OPT)	120 gals.
WATER	50 gals.
POWER (STANDARD)	Volvo D3, 220 hp
PRICE (BASE)	\$259,330

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Volvo D3, 220 hp engine, bow and stern thrusters w/joystick control, 6-gal. water heater, 2 Bentley captain's chairs, teak-and-holly cabin sole, Seaward propane stove/oven, NovaKool refrigerator, 30-gal. holding tank and more.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Upgraded Garmin electronics, thruster remote control, Walls diesel heater, 2.5 kw generator, air conditioning w/reverse-cycle heat, 8-ft. Zodiac w/Weaver davit, Lewmar windlass, hardtop extension, leather dinette and more.

BUILDER & DEALER

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bel, and normal conversation is 70 decibels. The interior of the vessel was so hushed that even at WOT it was quieter than the interior of my Nissan Pathfinder on the highway.

The new Aspen C100 improves on what was already an innovative, award-winning design. The glass work for the hulls and decks is produced by Nordic Tugs, arguably one of the best glass shops in the country. The fuel efficiency of the design is second to none, and the ride is more comfortable than any monohull of the same size. The Aspen styling is modern and up to date, and the use of solar panels and low-draw lighting helps keep the batteries topped up and reduces generator running hours.

While it is an accepted fact that all boats are, at least to a certain extent, a compromise, with this Aspen that compromise will likely be much less than expected. 🍷