

Powered catamarans have many attractions for both the bluewater cruiser and day sailor alike, who can enjoy the space, stability and fuel efficiency. The ILIAD 70 is a fine example of the class, as Kevin Green discovers.

The debut of the ILIAD marque in 2019 by Australian company Multihull Solutions has brought to market a remarkable new line of powered catamarans. The ILIAD 70, first seen at the 2019 Sydney International Boat Show, followed the ILIAD 50's arrival at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show. According to company CEO Mark Elkington, who was heavily involved in the conception and design, these two models will also be joined by an 80.

"I explored about thirty yards around the world for an offshore, passagemaker style of vessel that was tough enough to be beached if necessary," Elkington says.



"But most were using IPS engines or couldn't handle the customisation brief that we felt was needed in this growth market segment. Our choice was either to forget about this market opportunity or put a team together and build something ourselves."

The popularity of explorer-style yachts has never been higher, and the fuel efficiency that is a key feature for passagemakers is one area where catamarans, with their low-drag hulls, can become attractive.

The semi-displacement ILIADs are capable of double-digit cruising speeds while offering vast ranges: "Our design team had to ensure these boats could do 18–20 knots fully loaded with cruising gear and a passagemaking speed of 8–10 knots to achieve a 2,000-mile minimum range," Elkington enthuses.

The key to this is a wide array of engine choices, all shaft-drive. But, as Elkington explains, this is not just another powercat.

"The ILIAD complements our Fountaine Pajot range, which are IPS-

driven boats, ideal for coastal cruising. It's a very different market from the ILIAD buyer, where we start at 50 feet, because you need that size to have all the equipment that a true passagemaking boat requires."



That philosophy is clearly what attracted the owners of the first ILIAD 70. Ty, who owns a successful computer company in Brisbane, and partner Georgina, began their cat journey on a Fountaine Pajot Saba 50, which they sailed around the Mediterranean after taking delivery in France. They were first in the queue when the ILIAD range was announced.

"We'd looked at hundreds of catamarans all over the world, so we knew the ILIAD 70 was ideal for us," Ty enthuses.

They also visited the yard in China several times during the build:

"Because it was the first ILIAD 70, we were involved in a lot of decisions and, of course, expressed our preferences for some materials used and so on," Ty says, and the size was also a clear winner for the couple.

At a glance:

Overall length – 21.08 m

Beam – 9.15 m

Displacement – 60 t

Maximum speed – 23 kn

The squared-off hull and superstructure certainly create vast space throughout the 70's three levels. What you get, essentially, is a superyacht catamaran with a ballroom-size saloon and accommodation for ten in five cabins, plus ensuite crew quarters in the port forepeak. Throughout the main deck interior, tall windows ensure plenty of natural

light and views. The saloon layout has the galley aft to port with lounge opposite, and flows seamlessly out to the deck where diners sit at a 12-person teak table under the flybridge extension. A cockpit wet bar and grill complements the sizeable galley that offers a five-burner gas stove with electric oven underneath and microwave overhead.

Stylish finishes include lacquered doors and precise joinery with various cubby holes to maximise storage. Corian worktops house two deep stainless-sinks near a small dishwasher. Large cupboards overhead and under the worktops are ideal for victualling long-term, while a tall, double-door fridge will hold a lot of perishables; there's further fridge space in the hull. A small complaint, is a lack of fiddles as extra security to prevent crockery rolling onto the parquet flooring when on passage. The lounge couches are sumptuously upholstered in cream Ultraleather and include a chaise longue and a galley bench, which also supports a large flatscreen television.

To starboard, a separate cubby with desk.



Walking around the loft-style saloon reveals the level of customisation available such as custom furniture and unusual materials.

“Ty and Georgina asked for a level of finish that included us cutting raw stone for sinks and several other custom design features, but this is what we can offer,” says Elkington.

Climbing up to the port-side console, the helm has clear views over the foredeck and there's also a small lounge for guests. There are electronic throttles and thrusters (one for each bow), an autopilot and Quick

windlass controls, with twin Raymarine screens providing the displays. FLIR cameras give the helm selectable views both inside and out, and the main electrical board is conveniently located underneath this elevated area.



Generous living space is the essence of large cats but using the full 9.15-metre beam by creating a deck-level owner's suite gives the ILIAD 70 an outstanding feature in which a forward-facing queen bed enjoys panoramic views through the tall windows. There's under-bed storage and more in the aft bulkhead.

Two sliding doors can seal the area off but when open, there are sightlines through the boat as well as airflow, which is essential for tropical cruising.

The master's ensuite is in the starboard hull, accessed via a long, steep stair that reminds you just how tall the ILIAD 70 is. The ensuite includes a separate shower, electric head and plentiful space. For guests, the hulls offer four double cabins plus a crew berth.



Accessed from the middle of the saloon on either side, there are two symmetrical aft cabins with athwartships queen beds and spacious aft ensuites, although the ensuites don't have opening hatches. On this 70 the starboard forward cabin offers two single beds and a forward ensuite. There is also handy bench space down here and a lazarette complete with washing machine. The port hull's forward cabin reveals a small double bed with ensuite alongside, and a desk.

The additional double Vitrifrigo fridge drawers and storage are found in the corridor here and all the cabins offer tall wardrobes that are ideal for longer cruising, although they have rather weak magnetic catches – a minor nitpick in what is otherwise exemplary accommodation with an outstanding finish.

The spacious flybridge offers plenty of space, not only for guests but also for housing the crane-launched tender – a popular choice for bluewater cruising, although on shorter trips or when the tender is in regular use, the hydraulic swim platform offers another option.

Some may prefer a spa pool or bar up top instead, and this is one of many customisable features. As it stands, the flybridge is dominated by the central lounge with sun beds, wet bar and barbecue, and seating for 12 protected by the hard top. The skipper can also enjoy this area from the starboard helm, where the controls copy the internal helm. Wide stairs lead down to the Flexiteek deck where wide side decks with deep bulwarks lead to the bows.



Up front, I stretch out on the foredeck sun bed before sitting upright on the sunken flooring to take notes. There are storage lockers for fenders and ancillary gear, and a Quick windlass. Other key deck gear includes aft capstans and sizeable cleats all round.

The infused hull meets CE category A and has solid keels to allow beaching. There are watertight bulkheads in the engine room, the central hull and in the bows. Elkington explains, "It's a full vinylester hull below and above the waterline with monolithic solid glass around the keel line and key parts."

Engine room access is down ladders via two large hatches on the aft decks. This first 70 is fitted with Volvo Penta D11-725s that prove quiet on our trials. There's ample space to access service points, including the Racor fuel filters and, in the starboard hull, the 22 kVA generator that runs a dive compressor and watermaker. Other quality electrics include Victron charger/converters and a bank of eight AGM gel house batteries. The electrical panel is high on the bulkhead and there's a fire suppression system that's also supported by FLIR camera monitoring.

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Our time is limited as Ty and Georgina are arriving for their maiden voyage but I manage a brief sojourn on Sydney Harbour with skipper Leon Bowles, with whom I'd sailed the ILIAD 50. He tells me, "She's a much bigger boat but her weight keeps things under control; she handles just fine."

Leaving the quay is easy with the bow thruster and one engine. Accelerating clear of the no-wash zone, we sedately motor under Sydney Harbour Bridge with only a faint murmur from the Volvos as we cruise at 8 knots. Snug behind the tall console and aided by clear plastic spray screens, the alfresco steering is enjoyable.



We accelerate with a roar from the Volvos and quickly hit our fast cruising speed of 17 knots.

Trying the interior helm proves a perfect excuse to escape the apparent wind as we approach Sydney Heads. Perched high on the single helm seat, visibility is good all round and the FLIR camera system helps cover any blind spots. With the throttles hard down we reach an impressive 22.4 knots and I also note that the vases on the galley bench don't budge an inch.

It's clear the ILIAD 70 is a very capable cruiser and this is confirmed by Ty when we talk in 2021: "The capabilities we have aboard allow us to stay offshore for long periods thanks to the watermaker and multiple power sources such as the generator and an extensive solar array," he explains.

"Also, the ILIAD can do 20 knots, which has allowed us to dodge weather, and the long-range tank capabilities mean we can go to the northern reefs without fuel worries."

His only major addition has been a Dockmate black box control system to allow joystick docking and control of the anchor. A pretty solid testament after two years of ownership.

