

FOUNTAINNE PAFOT37

The first of its kind, could this kitten-sized cat be the gateway to multihull cruising you've been looking for?

Text: **Jack Haines** Photos: **Lester McCarthy**





There are two types of power catamaran: the type that is essentially a sailing catamaran with its mast lopped off, and the type that is built from the keel up to be a power cat. The new Fountaine Pajot MY37 falls into the latter camp, which is generally a good thing. There is nothing wrong with the former breed but for us motorboaters, the thoroughbred power cats generally offer performance that is more akin to their monohull counterparts.

The boat we tested had a pair of Volvo Penta D3 220hp diesels (the largest option available) and was good for a top speed just shy of 20 knots. That's more than enough for a power cat and significantly better than the de-masted sailing cats, which largely cruise at around the 8-knot mark.

The beauty of these dedicated power cats is that they can still do the 8-knot, long-range plod to soak up the journey and use less fuel but you can get a shift on if you need to. The MY37, at 7.5 knots, has a seriously useful range of 755 miles if you want to stretch the boat's cruising legs, but for a short blast around to the next bay you can open it up and make decent progress, even in the rough.

As a rough comparison, the Princess 43 on shafts with a pair of Cummins 550hp engines manages 0.80 mpg and a range of 191 miles at 15 knots whereas the MY37 ekes this out to 1.32 mpg at and 279 miles at the same speed.

As for coping in the rough, we had nasty conditions in a blustery, tide-swept La Rochelle and the MY37 handled them brilliantly. Steep troughs were sliced away with ease and the famed 'magic carpet' catamaran ride was in full evidence. And, even better, there was none of the jerkiness that can sometimes characterise catamaran seakeeping. The 37 just seemed to hover serenely over the top of the water, taking all of the bite out of the fitful chop even at the 20-knot top speed – but the boat is most comfortable fast cruising at 15 knots.

This rough weather prowess and its stability at displacement speeds is the most obvious benefit of opting for two hulls and it still stands out as an excellent reason to buy a cat, regardless of the rest of its performance.

The steering felt unduly heavy on our test boat but that is likely to be sorted out soon enough. The hydraulic setup was still being commissioned at the time of our test and it's only fair to point out that Fountaine Pajot rushed this pre-production boat into the water in order to meet our deadline for this issue.

The yard was still experimenting with props, too, which will hopefully fix the vibration issues (and therefore high sound readings), which the test boat was suffering from. The D3 engines are usually very smooth and with decent soundproofing in the engineroom(s) already, we can only assume the props or shafts are to blame.

FINISHING TOUCHES

This is classic prototype stuff and the sales director confirmed that the yard has numerous changes to make. For example, this boat was specified with a hardtop that hadn't made it on at the time of testing and would markedly change the feeling of the top deck which, at present, feels a little exposed, more like you're on it than in it.

Both helms also looked unnaturally sparse and suffer from a lack of attention to detail. The lower helm, which is actually an €8,000 option and replaces the standard aft-facing U-shaped seating, had a large expanse of white dash but no cupholders, fiddles, lockers or cubbies to store anything. You sit very low at the twin helm bench, which has a bolster but no fore or aft movement, and the whole area could do with more ergonomic adjustment to suit different sized skippers. There are no rocker switches on either helm, save the one switch for the single wiper at the downstairs driving position. This isn't too much of a problem at the lower helm because the switchboard is in a locker nearby, just inside the cockpit doors, but at the upper helm there are no switches for the nav lights, horn, bilge pump or anchor winch – in fact, there are no switches at all, something that needs to be addressed pretty quickly.

Thankfully, when you turn your attention to the interior of the MY37 things begin to pick up. The saloon is bright and contemporary in its fit out and doesn't suffer from the towering, imposing cabinetry that the last Fountaine Pajot I tested had. The mix of light cabinetry

SEE THE VIDEO



mby.com/fp37

It's hard to fathom that the length overall is just 36ft when you stand in the master cabin

and dark flooring with flashes of textiles on the ceiling and around the helm keeps things interesting and the décor is more in line with the higher end feeling of the yard's larger 55.

Then you get to the boat's real trump card, the cabins. It's hard to fathom that the length overall is just 36ft 1in (11m) when you stand in the master cabin, which occupies the entire port hull. You enter amidships via a staircase that can be closed off from the saloon by a neat sliding door and stand in well over 6ft 2in of headroom. The large, walkaround double berth is located at the aft end of the cabin with space beneath it for storing suitcases and bags. The middle of the cabin is a standing vanity area and you keep walking forward to access the bathroom via a slightly odd-shaped walk-in wardrobe. It's an exceptionally spacious master for a 36ft boat and yet, in the other hull you have guests cabins of nearly equally generous proportions.

Our test boat had the three-cabin layout but you can also opt to have two cabins, essentially two of the capacious master cabins, or four cabins with two in each hull both sharing a bathroom – very much the charter spec.

The test boat's layout felt like a good balance of berths versus breathing space, able to sleep six in comfort without overwhelming the entertaining spaces. The most compromised is the forward guest cabin, which tucks up into the point of the bow so the bed can only be accessed from one end, making for a slightly ungainly clamber. But even this smaller cabin has hanging storage and space beneath the berth for suitcases.

The beauty of this layout is that it is also very private as the owners and their guests are housed on totally different sides of the boat.

It's always difficult comparing catamarans to potential monohull rivals; do you assess it against a monohull that is the same length as the cat in question, or one that provides the same amount of living space? If you go length for length, with its generous cabins and privacy, the cat blows the monohulls out of the water. Using a Prestige monohull as a barometer, you really need to opt for a 50-footer to get the cabin sizes and privacy of the 37ft cat. In price terms, the MY37 falls somewhere between the Prestige 420 and 500, the former lacking the third cabin and spaciousness of the cat and the

latter quite a bit more pricey but with very generous socialising areas and a higher quality finish.

The cockpit, decks and foredeck overflow with catamaran spaciousness and as a stable stationary entertainment platform the 37 is marvellous. But strangely that space isn't transferred into the saloon, which feels frustratingly tight for a boat on twin hulls. Part of the problem may be those huge side decks, which eat into the interior space but would still be practical and safe even if they were half the width. Another culprit is the galley, which extends a long way into the central walkway and means that two people can't pass each other without sliding back to back. This shouldn't need to happen on a 37ft catamaran but could almost be forgiven if the galley was bursting with storage space. Unfortunately, it's not. What look like cupboards below the counter actually provide headroom for the cabins down below, meaning the only dedicated galley storage is a top-opening locker above the counter and a small drawer at the forward end. Yes, there is underfloor storage and space beneath the dinette seating but that's too fiddly to store regularly used items such as pots and pans. There currently isn't enough storage in the galley to house the crockery, glassware and cutlery for the six to eight people who could be sleeping on board the boat.

VERDICT

So where does this leave us with the MY37? It's a boat that frustrates with its potential brilliance. The seakeeping, the safety, the practicality of the outdoor spaces, and the sheer size of the three cabins – especially that wonderful master cabin – are exceptional for a craft of this size. And the versatility to either cruise economically over 700 miles without refuelling the tanks, or to bury the throttles and blast around at 20 knots, should not be underestimated.

For a smallish power cat, the 37 is also a pleasing thing to look at and is likely to be improved still further by the addition of the hardtop. The dark hull windows and the champagne hull wrap add some pizzazz, making it look a little like a twin-hulled Prestige. It's also a power cat with sensible proportions that isn't utterly terrifying to guide



The saloon's materials look good but the walkway is too pinched for a catamaran

The bed in the master cabin is comfy and low so it's easy to get in and out of



Slow speed stability is excellent and makes life in the slow lane comfortable





The forward guest cabin is the most compromised but it is at least very bright



The owner's bathroom is quite luxurious...



...but the guest toilet is a little cramped



A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

UPPER HELM

Like the lower helm, it needs more attention to detail. Fiddles, lockers and cupholders would make it more usable but the driving position is sound.



COOL BOX

Not exactly a wet-bar but this drawer fridge is better than nothing and means you don't have to head down to the galley every time you want a cold drink.



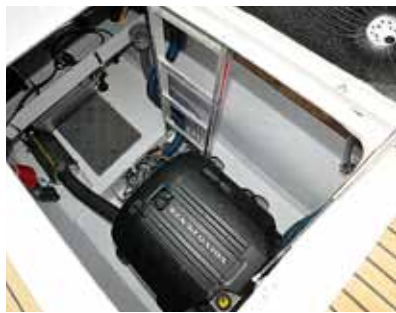
LIFERAFT LOCKER

This locker in the middle of the cockpit is designed to store the liferaft. It's a good place, too, easily accessed and near the transom in an emergency.



ENGINE ROOM

There is one engine in each hull so the dinky D3s positively wallow in space and are very easy to work on. The installation is fine but there were a few rough edges behind the scenes on our test model.



THE RIVALS

Bavaria Powercat 40 Price from TBA

Technically, this is a Nautitech model but Bavaria has bought the brand as a springboard to launch its own range of power cats.



Lagoon 40MY Price from £247,273

One of the aforementioned cats that is a sailing boat without a rig. Sub 10-knot speeds and very much aimed at the charter market.



It's a bit of a squeeze to get around the flybridge table but at least there is plenty of space to dine



The deck hatches aren't flush on the side decks and are therefore a potential trip hazard

THE DATA

BEAM
16ft 8in
(5.0m)



LENGTH OVERALL 36ft 1in (11m)

FUEL CAPACITY
572 imp gal (2,600 litres)
WATER CAPACITY
77 imp gal (350 litres)
DRAUGHT
2.6ft (0.8m)
RCD CATEGORY
B for 8 people
DESIGNERS
Daniel Andrieu
and Fountaine Pajot
DISPLACEMENT
8.9 tonnes

Very clear access to the bow roller and windlass, the chain feeds back to a locker just aft



There's a lot to like here and we shouldn't forget that this isn't the finished article

around a marina, making it a tempting entry into twin-hulled ownership.

The problem for anyone considering a swap from a top-end monohull to the MY37 is the level of finesse and attention to detail of the interior. The helm stations, the galley and even the layout of the saloon don't yet live up to the high standards which monohull owners are used to enjoying. It's no secret that power cats have historically done good business in the charter market, where cabin space and simple, uncomplicated design are valued, and it feels like the 37 has been built with one eye on that. But we also know that Fountaine Pajot can

make a private leisure boat with real polish because we've seen it on the Queensland 55 and we'd like to see more of that finesse applied to the MY37.

There is lots to like here and we shouldn't forget that this prototype is not yet the finished article. None of our concerns are difficult things to fix and there is very little else in this section of the market to rival it. If Fountaine Pajot can iron out the creases then the MY37 could be the springboard into catamaran ownership that many people have been waiting for. **MBY**

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Web: www.multihull.co.uk

THE HELM VIEW

The view out is exceptional thanks to slender mullions and deep curved windows



No rocker switches mean you have to go to the switchboard to perform basic functions like nav lights and pumps

Lots of wasted space here, the dash needs fiddles, cubbies and cupholders to be of more use to the skipper

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Twin Volvo Penta D3 220. 220hp @ 4,000rpm. 5-cylinder, 2.4 litre diesels

MBY TEST FIGURES

	ECO	2,400	2,800	3,000	3,200	FAST	3,400	3,800	MAX
RPM	1,800					3,400	3,800		4,000
SPEED	7.0	8.8	10.3	11.8	13.7	15.3	17.9		19.6
LPH	8.9	21	33.5	38	44	52.5	72		95.5
GPH	2.0	4.6	7.4	8.4	9.7	11.5	15.8		21.0
MPG	3.58	1.90	1.40	1.41	1.42	1.32	1.13		0.93
RANGE	755	402	295	298	299	279	238		197

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)

	ECO	82	85	87	90	FAST	90	94	MAX
Saloon	70					90	94		96
Cockpit	70	82	85	87	90	90	94		96
Helm	64	69	76	77	79	83	84		89

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on real time fuel gauges, your figures may vary considerably. All prices exclude VAT. 40% fuel, 0% water, 3 crew + light no stores and liferaft. 14°C air temp, slight chop, F3 for speed trials.

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from	€294,948 (twin D3 220)
Price as tested	€417,661 (twin D3 220)
Solar panels on hardtop	€4,041
Watermaker (60l/h)	€10,026
Teak cockpit	€8,294
Hardtop	€11,616
Lower helm installation	€7,655
Air-con	€14,323
Generator (6kW)	€13,624
Hydraulic bathing platform	€28,924
Garmin nav pack	€14,000
Heating	€7,222

■ = Options on test boat

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