

Glacier Bay 2270 Isle Runner



Every once in a while a new boat comes along that is completely different from all the boats that have gone before it. Such is the case with the new American built Glacier Bay Cats now available in Australia. They bring with them a completely new attitude to the design and construction of power cats as we've known them. In this special report, Editor Peter Webster throws away the old benchmarks and looks at something old - and something completely new.



After what seems to be the best part of a lifetime working in and out of Australia's substantial fleet of power cats, we approached this Glacier Bay test with no little trepidation.

Elsewhere in this magazine we have a special report where we try and answer the perennial question about whether a cat is better value than a mono, and we examine the two most commonly asked questions. That concerns the issues of whether power cats do have a softer ride than monos, and the second part of the debate, whether they are more stable at rest or underway than their monohull counterparts of similar size.

Here though, we're looking at the very latest in thinking from Glacier Bay Catamarans, a company started back in 1987 by its charismatic founder Larry Graf. For nearly 20 years, Graf and his team at their sophisticated plant in Seattle, USA, have been working to develop a wide range of power catamarans that now runs from this 2270 model through to their newly released 3470 twin diesel flybridge cruiser which recently debuted at

the Miami Boat Show. Glacier Bay cats are different to most cats in Australia because Australian power cats, by and large, basically use two small planing hulls, one on each side of the boat, that in operation are closer to a conventional planing boat (albeit with two hulls joined in the middle) compared to the Glacier Bay (and interestingly enough, Australia's Dominator Cats) which are in fact more closely linked to the design of asymmetric hulls and are closer to true displacement shapes.

It's not our intention here to get knee-deep in mumbo jumbo about hull shapes. Suffice to say that many years ago most Australian power cat builders decided that true displacement hulls such as those found in the Glacier Bay range, were not as good as the planing type hulls the Australian boat builders developed from the early 1970's.

Most Australian cat manufacturers felt that the finely drawn, not to say skinny displacement hulls, whilst offering an incredibly soft ride, were too sensitive to trim and lateral movement, resulting in most Australian manufacturers



opting to develop what is tantamount to the hard chine planing hull on each side of the powered catamaran.

Who is right? According to Glacier Bay, their fine, incredibly sharp displacement hulls are the only way to fly, because they offer numerous advantages - the most powerful of which is an incredibly soft ride in choppy water.

The downside is that because they offer such a soft ride in choppy water, they do tend to be a bit more wandery than most Australians like at the helm, and are much more sensitive to trim through the twin outboard motors.

With all this in mind, and having studied the Glacier Bays at first hand here at Runaway Bay over a couple of months since they arrived, we were very keen to try them out on our own, going through our usual test parameters.

Design

As noted, and as you can see in the attached photo, Glacier Bays have the most amazingly fine or sharp hulls I think that are in production today. They are truly a work of art from a fibreglass manufacturing

point of view as all of the bow sections of the boat have to be literally hand built.

This is where the Glacier Bay's northwest American coastline heritage becomes very evident - these boats are actually made to *bounce* if they hit logs or other imponderables such as icebergs and semi-submerged objects (logs) in the wild northwest country of Alaska.

Over the years, Graf and his team have developed an exceptional reputation for the quality of their product, primarily because Graf, a highly qualified engineer, is passionate about the importance of doing a job correctly the first time. It's a discipline he's obviously drilled into his 250 strong team, because the fit out and finishing standard on these Glacier Bay cats is absolutely world class, and a long way ahead of comparable Australian built boats - cats or monos.

But in design terms, they are typical cats - high sided, narrow hulled, with a moderate tunnel and a nacelle down the throat of the cat.

Curiously, they haven't picked up on the one thing the South African's gave