

Are two hulls better than one? Is fibreglass better than alloy? It pays to keep an open mind as these questions torture many of us when shopping for an offshore gamefishing boat. As John Ford reports, the new alloy Sailfish Canyonmaster may be just the answer you've been searching for.

AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN FORD



THIS CAT LOVES THE WATER!

Without offending the majority of fibreglass monohull aficionados, there is another way to the 'shelf and it does not involve resin or a deadrise. A well-designed cat often has a superior ride over rough water compared to a mono. This is because the cushion of air between the sponsons acts as a shock absorber as the hull comes to rest. Added to this, many hardcore anglers prefer the alloy hull's ease of maintenance and durability in tough service, where a quick hose down at the end of the day is all that's needed to keep the boat in shape. If you add in large deck space that can be easily modified to the owner's requirements, then the case for cats becomes even more compelling.

Advances in alloy monohull design over the past few years have seen many boat owners convert to tinnies. But many have not recognised the developments in twin-hull design. The reality is that cats still have advantages that are hard to replicate in the same length of a conventional single-hull design.



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The 7m Sailfish Canyonmaster offers substantial rough-water performance and size in a rig that is still easily trailerable.

Sailfish owners have long embraced the combination of a cat's ride and the alloy's practicality. The new 7m Canyonmaster continues the tradition of a well-thought-out design and generous deck area for serious offshore fishing. Sailfish are built in Alstonville on the New South Wales North Coast and are synonymous with Sydney dealer Webbe Marine.

NOW MORE SPACIOUS

Gavin Daly and Ashley Faraj have been at the helm of their dedicated multihull dealership for many years. Their knowledge and feedback from customers provides for the ongoing development of new Sailfish models.

When I met them at the ramp on Port Hacking for our test of the new boat, Gavin told me that although the hardtop Shelfrunner released last year has proven popular, he's noticed a demand among younger buyers with small children for a boat with more family space. To that end, the Canyonmaster has been introduced.

The Canyonmaster has an additional metre in length over the Shelfrunner and an extra 500mm in the cuddy cabin and cockpit. Anglers with both family and fishing commitments can now enjoy the overnighting capability for the household and extra space when fishing offshore with the team.

On stepping aboard, the immediate impression is one of space in the cockpit and in the enclosed helm station with its solidly constructed hardtop. As Gavin headed us slowly towards the seaway around the Royal National Park, Ashley and I set about inspecting the boat. I found the headroom in the cabin to be more than sufficient, and with only a narrow walkaround, the helm station extends almost the full width of the hull. The tempered-glass windscreens and side windows allow a panoramic view, with the sliding side windows and an overhead hatch providing a good flow of air.

Both skipper and co-pilot will be comfortable in the sliding and swivelling bucket seats with flip-up bolsters. The driver's seat is fixed on an aluminium structure with a rear-facing seat behind it that lifts to reveal a 300L drained fishbox. The passenger seat has space below for a tacklebox and a slide-out 45L esky. A rear-facing, flip-up dicky seat, for use when travelling or watching lures, can be flipped down to make even more room in the cockpit.



Above: The Canyonmaster's huge cockpit gives ample room to move. You can even walk right out past the end of the motors to steer hooked fish around the transom.

Right: Beside the helm is a lockable sliding door leading to a removable toilet and a broad bed set across the cuddy cabin.





With the helm set well forward in the hull there is still a surprising amount of usable space in the cuddy cabin. This is accessed through a low central opening with a lockable sliding door. To port is a removable chemical toilet, while a 1250mm x 1950mm double berth extends sideways across the cabin, allowing room for two adults or ample space for young children to play in safety. With bunk cushions removed for fishing, the cabin offers a huge storage space for tackle and provisions, and a shelf forward of the bunk has room for all the safety equipment that stays permanently on the boat.

WELL-DESIGNED COCKPIT

The boat has a rated capacity of seven adults. Anglers will like the way its design maximises cockpit area, although it comes at the cost of a larger cabin space. However, this makes sense given that the boat has been designed with a focus on fishing, with occasional cruising with family or friends. There is ample room for a crew of five or six in offshore fishing mode, with enough space for that essential Go-pro camera operator onboard.

The deck is coated in a neat-looking grey, non-skid paint, chip finish that Ashley insisted could be easily cleaned with a hose or the onboard deckwash. Wide coamings have rolled edges and are fitted with three rodholders and a low grabrail each side. Pockets towards the stern can hold gaffs and rods and there are good toeholds at floor level. Fuel hoses running down from the gunwale on each side are covered with shrouds for a much neater look than previous models.

Another improvement over previous trailerable Sailfish models is the new transom layout. This now comprises a walkway between the engines, with a gate at the rear rather than in line with the transom. This allows easy access right to the back of the boat. In this way, fish can be managed well away from the props and for boarding access from the stern.

To the port side of the transom is a decent-sized livebait tank and to starboard is a simple, but extra heavy-duty bait table with a rodholder each side. Batteries are set up above the deck and are hidden behind hatches and easily accessed for service.

NEW HULL SHAPE

Access to the bow is along walkways each side of the cabin. There are also bowrails and handholds on the roof to assist. With a Muir electric drum anchor winch fitted, such trips forward should be rare, especially with the anchor mechanism able to be accessed from within the cabin through a hatch. As well as providing great weather protection, the hardtop houses a seven-slot rocket launcher and is strong enough to secure a liferaft or camping equipment for extended trips.

The Canyonmaster is the first Sailfish with its new Hydroflo Gen 2 hulls. Incorporating wider sponsons and fuller bows, these generate better lift and an even softer rider in swell. On a recent visit to the factory I saw firsthand the high level of engineering that goes into the boats, much of which is hidden from view below deck.

Construction is from marine-grade 5mm bottom and 3mm sideplate aluminium. The foam-filled hulls are strengthened with a sturdy structure of ribs and stringers. All fittings look strong, with neat welds that are ground before painting.

COMFORTABLE HELM

The top of the dash is carpet-lined and a fiddle rail secures smaller items on the move. A well-laid-out instrument panel houses the engine readouts, including trim gauges, leaving space for a centrally located Garmin 5012 touchscreen sounder/GPS, as well as a Fusion sound system and a GME VHF radio. The driving position is comfortable and there is plenty of room to steer from a standing position. However,

“Cats still have advantages that are hard to replicate in a single-hull design.”

SPEC CHECK



SAILFISH CANYONMASTER

PRICED FROM

Priced from: \$131,990

Price as tested: \$139,990

OPTIONS FITTED

Engine upgrade, GPS, sliding windows, and more

GENERAL

Type: catamaran

Material: aluminium 5mm bottom, 3mm sides

Length: 7.3m

Beam: 2.45m

Weight: 2350kg (boat/motor/trailer)

CAPACITIES

People: 6

Rec. hp: 2 x 90 to 135

Max. hp: 2 x 135

Fuel: 2x 175L

ENGINES

Make/model: Honda

Type: 2 x BF 135

Weight: 220kg each

Displacement: 2354cc

Gear ratio: 2.14:1

Propeller: 17-inch stainless steel

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PERFORMANCE

RPM	Speed (knots)	Fuel Consumption (Lt/h) per engine	Comment
1000	2.6	1.5	-
1500	4	3	-
2500	12	7	On the plane
3000	18	10	-
3500	23	13	-
4000	26	17	-
4500	29	21.5	-
5000	34	27	-
5500	39	42	-
6000	41	46	Wide open throttle

the ergonomic seat and a well-placed footrest make driving while seated a natural option.

Engine controls are on a binnacle in front of the driver and are well-placed to be able to operate each engine individually with a bit of practice. Vision all round is excellent and a Pantographic wiper arm – with an option for a washer – clears any spray that finds its way on to the screen.

With calm sea and clear blue skies, boating can be a real joy. By the time we'd made our way into the ocean off Cronulla conditions were idyllic. A slow swell gave us enough sea to experience the Canyonmasters' ride, and as I planted the throttles the boat surged forward with some urgency. I have to say, I enjoy the sound and willingness of the 135hp Honda 4-stroke engines. When fitted as twins, the harmony in the growl really brings out the boy racer.

DRIVING PLEASURE

Over the past few years I have enjoyed driving all of the latest Sailfish models on their release. The Canyonmaster is definitely the pick of the bunch. Not only is it the biggest of their trailerboat models, but it is also extremely well-balanced and a real pleasure to drive. Heading into a slow 1.5m swell at 30kts saw us occasionally clear of the water and landing with only a gentle whoosh from the hulls. Across all directions of sea the boat stayed true to its direction, and the ride over chop was soft, with no shake or resonance from the fittings.

Acceleration right through the range is brisk and top speed at the engines' 6000rpm red line is just over 40kts. Mid-range cruise is an easy 23kts, with an economical fuel use of 26Lt/h from both engines. Handling into turns felt safe and stable, particularly if the outside motor is given more revs to help bring the boat around.

Just for fun, we lifted the starboard engine clear of the water and ran on a single Honda. Reasonably quickly we were up on the plane and running at a decent slow cruise in the low 20kts. This helped back up the claim that the big Canyonmaster could happily operate with a pair of 90hp Hondas to save on purchase price.

A lot goes into the choice of a fishing boat, particularly as we head ever wider from shore in search of big fish. The Canyonmaster has the credentials to get out there and back with a good safety margin and a soft ride. It is a very stable and roomy fishing platform. With the added usable space for the family to cruise or camp overnight, it's well priced at \$139,900 against many similar-sized monohulls. 🚤

HIGHLIGHTS

- Soft ride and good sea handling.
- Stable at rest.
- Enclosed cabin and room for overnighting.
- Economical Honda engines.

CANYON 376 BUILT FOR BATTLE

Fisherman 180



Fisherman 209



Seafarer 226 / 228



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