

new boat: Catalina 445



Conservative, sturdy rig.

Under sail on the Gold Coast in light winds.



Designed to go places

Caroline Strainig checks out a Catalina that is a departure from the tried and trusted recipe.

Almost invariably I can spot a Catalina from a long way away. Lots of volume, high freeboard and distinctive white paintwork with blue trim. It doesn't really matter what size they are, they are of similar stamp, which is no bad thing because these US-built production boats have a reputation for being good, roomy cruising boats.

However, you might have to do a double-take from a distance before you realise what the 445 is. Designer Gerry Douglas was given free rein to design something a little more sporty and the result is a sleeker yacht with lower freeboard and less beam. While it will still appeal to the cruising-only buyer, many 445 buyers will probably want to do some form of racing. A journalist in the US commented after a test sail: "The 445 buyer probably wants to do some PHRF racing, but it would be a pity if the boat never went cruising because this one has the legs for it."

The new model was released in 2009 in the US and 60 have already sold. The 445 I jumped aboard on the Gold Coast was the first to arrive in Australia, and

Australian Catalina agent Norman Ambrose was quick to tell me that it had already won two US awards in 2010: Best Full-size Cruiser and Best Cruising Monohull.

"This one will be making its debut at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show in May, and we think it's going to get a lot of good feedback. This is a good, all-round cruising boat but a little sportier — ideal for people who want to do things like coastal hop to the Whitsundays and then maybe do the cruising division at Hamilton Island Race Week," Ambrose said.

On deck

Make no mistake about it, this might be a little more streamlined, but it's still a big boat and there's lots of space on deck, with the low-profile cabin top giving you even more easily accessible flat space. One of the things that immediately appealed to me — as always — is Catalina's grey, diamond-shaped non-skid surface. Not only does this give your eyes a rest from the glare of huge expanses of white gelcoat, but it

is secure and comfortable underfoot.

Cockpit features include a walk-through transom with recessed ladder, transom shower, retractable lifelines, twin Edson helm stations, large lazarettes and a gas bottle locker.

Pride of place in the centre of the cockpit goes to the optional teak cockpit table with stowage in the middle of it.

There is plenty of room to sit or lounge around and reasonably deep coamings for back support.

For'ard you have the option of a retractable bowsprit so you can fly a code zero genoa or MPS. The anchor well is deep, split in two, and as standard you get 60m of 10-millimetre chain, a 45lb plough and a Maxwell 1200-watt RC10 10mm windlass with chain gypsy and rope bollard and heavy-duty dual anchor rollers, which are staggered to accommodate two anchors in place. As an option you can upgrade to one of those new "super" anchors like a Sarca.

The test boat had a 12-inch Furuno chartplotter on an adjustable Navpod mounting on the aft side of the cockpit



table so you could see it from either helm, and next to the starboard wheel a VHF repeater from below plus autopilot controls. The starboard wheel had a wind instrument and depth repeater. Radar can be superimposed on the plotter and you can even interface it with your systems below and show a video. There is only one set of engine controls — on the coaming adjacent to the starboard wheel — so you do need to steer from the starboard side if under motor so you have instant control. It may also mean you need someone to port to give you feedback when docking on that side, but this is par for the course on twin-wheeled boats.

The sail plan and sail controls included a Selden 9/10th rig with an in-mast furling as standard with a loose-footed main with vertical battens. Sails are by Catalina and a Dacron composite. Most sail controls come back to jammers adjacent to the cockpit, with an optional electric winch to starboard for the main halyard. The traveller is up on the cabin top out of the reach of little fingers and both traveller lines come back to port so you can adjust it without changing sides.

Headsail sheet winches are Lewmar 65 two-speed self-tailers and cabin top winches Lewmar 46 two-speed self-tailers. One feature I liked about the former was that they are situated

“ Washboards are saloon-door style, but as an optional extra you can purchase a second set of slot-in ones for when you are sailing offshore”

well aft near the helm stations so the helmsman can easily access them. A solid boomvang is a standard feature. Genoa tracks are generous to cater for overlapping headsails.

The test boat had an optional dodger and bimini made locally and you can also add an infill or lunch cover, so you turn the cockpit into a virtual “tent”.

The washboards are saloon-door style, but as an optional extra you can purchase a second set of slot-in ones for when you are sailing offshore so you can leave a couple of boards in to keep out water but still allow some ventilation. There is room for a dinghy for’ard or on the cabin top or an inflatable rubber ducky in the cockpit lazarette, which can also be accessed from the aft cabin.

As always on a Catalina, grab rails abound.

Below

This is still unmistakably Catalina — lots of cream headliner and solid teak



Great non-slip surface.



The 445 might be slightly more streamlined than other Catalinas but there is still plenty of room below.

vener — but there is one feature that seemed relatively new. Catalina has recognised most owners cruise two-up with only the odd guest, and instead of those omnipresent twin double cabins aft, has put one larger double cabin aft and made the other one smaller, designed to be used as a workshop or a double or single berth with single foldable pipe berth above.

The other aft cabin boasts an angled generous double berth and a private entrance to the guest and day head, which is conveniently situated at the foot of the companionway to starboard.

The main saloon has U-shaped dinette to port with a drop-leaf table that reduces to cocktail size and also drops to form a double berth. Facing it to starboard are two armchairs with a drop-leaf table between them. I particularly liked the removable headrests which can be moved anywhere on the boat.

The owner's stateroom forward has Catalina's trademark walk-around double berth with a mattress that folds up and locks in different positions. This means you can raise the aft section to have access to a storage bin and the for'ard section for when you want to sit up and read in bed. From this cabin there is access to the for'ard head, which has a semicircular shower stall.

The galley has a large fridge with two stainless-steel sinks and a rangehood.

Catalina had opted for a forward-facing traditional nav/chart table ("preferred by experienced navigators," Catalina says), which has a moulded-in place for your laptop and stowage for paper charts.

The electrical panel is neatly secreted behind tinted glass but you can still read the volt meter and how much current you are drawing. There are also gauges so you can see how full your holding tanks or water tanks are.

Access to the engine is from under the stairs and to starboard. Two lead-acid 250AH batteries live in the cabin sole in front of the engine and a third in the for'ard cabin sole.

Both heads have macerators and holding tanks (total capacity 204 litres) and total water capacity is a generous 688 litres.

Stowage, ventilation and lighting are good and the saloon windows have sliding privacy screens and insect screens as standard. All interior lights are LEDs, as are the nav lights. The test boat had a Fusion sound system with cabin and Bose cockpit speakers and a flat-screen TV.

Under sail

Sailing in the Gold Coast channels in light winds didn't really give this boat a chance to show what she could do, but she still recorded a respectable six knots on a reach in seven knots of

"The owner's stateroom forward has Catalina's trademark walk-around double berth with a mattress that folds up and locks in different positions"



1. Galley features include a gimbaled stove with oven and twin-bowl sink.
2. The U-shaped dinning settee has a drop-leaf table that lowers to form a double bed.
3. The port aft cabin . . . take your pick, double berth with single folding berth above or workshop?
4. The owner's cabin has an island bed with inner-spring mattress, plenty of stowage and good ventilation.
5. Most sail controls come back to jammers on the cabin top. Washboards are saloon-style, but drop-in traditional-style ones are available for offshore sailing as an optional extra.



wind and when the wind strengthened briefly she reached 8.7 knots. Telltales were easy to see sitting or standing, foot bracing good, and she felt well balanced. The measure of any boat in my book is how willing people are to give up the helm and on the 445 it was keenly sought after and reluctantly relinquished.

Under motor at 2400rpm with the standard 54hp Yanmar with three-blade fixing prop she achieved 8.3 knots. Below noise was reasonable but you probably would opt to head for'ard if you wanted to get some shut-eye while motoring.

Construction

This is pretty standard GRP, with the fibreglass hull cored from the waterline up with balsa. The deck is also balsa-cored apart from where deck gear is mounted. The mast is stepped directly on the compression post top plate.

“This unique arrangement has the benefits of a keel-stepped mast without noise or water intrusion,” Catalina says.

The internal flange hull to deck joint is extremely strong and leak-resistant. Hatches are ocean-rated for security offshore. The company has opted for lead instead of cast-iron for the keels, which might add a little more to the bottom line but gives you higher density and better longevity.

Warranties are five years on hull and deck and 12 months on the rest of the gear and fittings.

Summary

Catalina has thought outside the square a little with the new Catalina 445. Some lovers of the traditional-style Catalinas will still probably prefer others in the range, but those who want a fast cruiser that is a little more performance-orientated that can acquit itself around the cans will love the 445. As Catalina says: “Based on a new hull design with a long waterline and moderate beam and freeboard, the 445 delivers excellent performance.”

With the Aussie dollar now at a very attractive parity with the US greenback, the feedback and sales at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show should be interesting. **ch**



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	13.5m
LH	13.15m
LWL	11.65m
Beam	4.13m
Mast height above waterline	19.4m
Draught	
Fin keel	2.11m
Wing keel	1.52m
Ballast	
Fin keel	3261kg
Wing keel	3719kg
Approx basic weight	
Fin keel	10,659kg
Wing keel	11,113kg
Engine	54hp Yanmar four-cylinder diesel
Water	675L
Fuel	249.8L
Total holding tank capacity	204.04L

Price: Boat as tested with extras \$375,000

Builder Catalina Yachts, California US, www.catalinayachts.com

Australian distributor: Ausail Marine Group, Sanctuary Cove, QLD 4212, ph (07) 5514 8541 and Holmeport Marina, Church Point, NSW, 2105, ph (02) 9979 7217, email catalina@catalina.com.au and www.catalina.com.au



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5.



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- The optional teak cockpit table with stowage in the middle and a compass in the for'ard end is a must-have.
- Lots of usable deck space.
- The nav station has a built-in section for your laptop.