



# Fine at the line



**FOUNTAINE PAJOT'S CUMBERLAND 44 TRAWLER CATAMARAN SAW action in the Louis Vuitton and 32nd America's Cup as the green-and-white liveried committee boat, Nefertiti, around which Emirates Team New Zealand and the other syndicates entered the start box, having drawn the starboard flag.**

Although the French builder launched the model in 2005, only a few have made their way Down Under. With none available to trial in New Zealand, we accepted the offer of Australian agent EC Marine to review one at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show in late May. EC Marine director Mark Elkington

says the 6.55m beam of the Cumberland 44 excludes it from many Australian marinas, but despite this he's sold three this year. "It has taken some time to get it into the market, but we are very, very pleased with the response it's received," he says. He has good reason to be pleased: Fountaine Pajot reports it has sold 31 Cumberland 44 world-

wide as of May 31, 2007 – that means Australian sales represent about 10 percent. Although the America's Cup angle has been a boon to the boat's profile, the Cumberland 44 stands on its own as a high-performance offshore passage-maker that carries a reasonable price tag without sacrificing comfort and quality craftsmanship. It's clearly a mass-production boat: a casual glimpse around the flybridge and interior reveals the sort of prefabricated components that might dissuade buyers seeking the top of the market – but that's not Fountaine Pajot's game. Good value, on the other hand, is abundant in most aspects, as we noticed upon stepping aboard to a warm greeting from

Elkington and his colleague Mike Tudorowski, a towering Briton who works at Freedom Marine, a Fountaine Pajot agency in Perth, Western Australia. Also along for the ride were my wife, Katelyn, and Greydon Mead and Heather Robertson, a Western Australian couple interested in buying a Fountaine Pajot sailing cat. Like other Fountaine Pajot models, the Cumberland has limited interior layout options but that translates into a lower price tag for the end user. We were aboard the Maestro model, which has an owner's suite to port and two guest cabins, each with private ensuite, to starboard. The Quatuor model features four double cabins and four bathrooms. Power was provided by two Volvo D6

310hp diesels, which did a heckuva job moving the semi-displacement-style cat along in the open sea. Standard power is twin 225hp diesels but you'd be well served splurging on the extra grunt. Elkington says bigger engines can be fitted, but testing has revealed few performance benefits from increased power. "Like most trawlers, the objective isn't speed; it's range," he says. A fuel capacity of 1600L and lightweight but stiff, resin-infused composite construction will aid the boat's range, as will its well-balanced performance. The flybridge has been left austere to minimise vertical weight to improve the 44's stability and righting moment. Weight has also been kept well back to reduce the risk of

broaching and pitch-poling. Elkington says another design priority was maximising the vertical clearance between water and deck without compromising on interior headroom. On an ocean-going, semi-displacement-style trawler catamaran, he explains, a good clearance boosts efficiency as it reduces wave friction on the deck's underside, allowing the engines and hulls to maintain a consistent speed. But some builders cram in as much interior volume as possible by lowering the deck, which can lead to horror at the pump. **FLYBRIDGE AND PERFORMANCE** The Cumberland 44 we trialled was fea-

tured at Fountaine Pajot's Sanctuary Cove presence and was the venue for a party for owners and invited guests on the Saturday night of the show. But come Monday, it was time to get serious. We piled into the flybridge and began the slow procession down the Coomera River, through the Gold Coast Broadwater and into the open sea at Southport. We were barely into the Broadwater when an alarm pierced the air: fuel was perilously low. Luckily we were only a few minutes away from the marina at Runaway Bay. What could have been big trouble in a monohull was merely a minor inconvenience as Elkington shut down one engine to save fuel. We were still able to

STORY AND INTERIOR PHOTOS BY BRIAN HARTZ



maintain 10 knots at 1800rpm en route to the marina. There, Elkington backed the big cat alongside the fuel jetty – it was a tricky manoeuvre but he fired up the other engine, which provided the necessary precision steering. With the engines so far apart, the boat is easily ‘walked’ from side to side and spun around in tight spots, even without bow thrusters.

The tanks were filled about halfway and then we were off to Southport and the Tasman Sea, hitting a top speed of 21.8 knots at 3100rpm on the GPS. Although the Cumberland 44’s top speed is quoted as 27 knots, we took it easy because the Broadwater was chock-a-block with boat traffic in the aftermath of the show.

The flybridge and interior helm are well served by Raymarine and Furuno electronics, with a Dralon protective cover for the flybridge helm’s instruments. The main plotter screen is at the weather helm but most functions are duplicated up top. The stainless steel wheel is equipped with hydraulic steer-

ing and large enough to be easy to use, sitting or standing.

The helm seat has room for three people and is complemented by a four-seat, curved settee to port and a six-seat, U-shaped settee to aft, the latter surrounding a dinette table. Although there’s plenty of it, I found it hard to get excited about the seating, mainly because the quality of the backrests and seat cushions betrayed a sense of corner cutting. The cushions are secured by button snaps that were difficult to re-fasten when they came undone – similar to what you might find on a small production trailerboat.

There’s room at the back of the flybridge for a sunpad or beach chair. The flybridge also features a portside moulded unit containing a sink, chilly bin and waste receptacle. A pivoting Altuglas hatch provides a watertight seal between the flybridge and cockpit, and it’s strong enough to walk on when closed, as Tudorowski demonstrated.

We slowed to 15 knots as serious wave

activity greeted us at Southport, our exit from the calmness of the Broadwater. The wind was gusting up to 20 knots and there was a decent swell, perhaps up to two metres – not extreme conditions, but enough to give the big cat a decent workout and my wife, a newcomer to the open sea, a panic attack. At the time of writing, she’s almost fully recovered.

The 44’s steady performance in the rough is impressive. The hulls ploughed through running chop with ease and didn’t become overwhelmed or even inefficient in a following sea. It maintains a level attitude bow to stern and across the beam. Up on the flybridge, spray was minimal although we got tossed around as you’d expect. Down below it’s a different story as the boat’s width and excellent weight distribution minimise rolling and pitching. Considering the varying sea states off the coast of Valencia and the spectator boat wash at the race course, it’s easy to see why the Cumberland was picked to be the start boat.

We slowed to 15 knots as serious wave

### COCKPIT AND INTERIOR

It would be wrong to say the Cumberland 44’s flybridge is a disappointment in style, quality and finish, but the saloon and accommodation are a definite step up in all those categories. The cockpit gets a quick mention as a pleasant place to stand around and socialise, but the five-seat bench keeps everyone on one side of the table, which isn’t ideal. For best results, add portable outdoor furniture.

However, the cockpit is well spec’d with useful amenities, such as a portside sink with hot and cold freshwater, an icebox, a locker under the flybridge staircase for gas bottle storage, a liferaft locker and three watertight, high-powered, halogen overhead lights. Two holds – for a generator, air conditioning unit, water maker and general storage – are accessible through hatches in the cockpit sole.

The classy saloon is a triumph. It boasts an attractive blend of sycamore woodwork, parquet-style wood flooring and plush navy blue upholstery. Fountaine



Pajot hasn’t tried to force too many fixed furnishings into the saloon, either, giving it a refreshing openness. The starboard dinette table is surrounded by a six-seat curved bench and is raised about half a foot off the floor to improve views out the saloon’s wide picture windows. The high-quality wooden window blinds are heavy and substantial but still easy to operate.

The word ‘comprehensive’ best sums up the galley. It has a full-size, 260L, 12V fridge and freezer for long voyages; a 20L, 12V microwave; a four-burner gas stove; two 300mm stainless steel sinks; and 10 drawers and cabinets for storage. It even does the little things well, such as a stainless steel dish-drying rack and a discrete top-loading rubbish bin.

Oddly, there’s no fixed TV in the saloon, but the owner of the trial boat has opted for a portable screen that sits to starboard of the dinette table. I thought a dedicated flush-mounted TV would be a standard feature, if not in the owner’s cabin then at least in the saloon, but put that down to Fountaine Pajot’s focus on the big picture of affordable offshore cruising.

The interior helm station features a huge cushioned seat with room for two, plus a two-seater to port so the skipper can enjoy plenty of company. Standing

is the preferred helm position because visibility isn’t nearly as good as on the flybridge, where you are four metres above sea level with a panoramic view. With rain pelting down during the trek back through the Broadwater and up the Coomera River to Sanctuary Cove, we retreated to the saloon and Elkington steered the boat from the interior helm station. Traffic remained heavy, and we witnessed a few near-collisions as new and seemingly uneducated boaters were taking a spin in their new toys.

Surmising that ignorance would be bliss, or at least less nerve-wracking than watching Elkington pick his way through the river’s fleet of Boating 101 flunkies, I ducked down for a peek at the accommodation. To starboard, the guest cabins are more than sufficiently appointed. Each has an ensuite and roomy double bed, but they aren’t mirror images. The forward cabin’s bed runs perpendicular to the beam, facing aft, and there are deep shelves, two large lockers, a small cushioned bench and a huge storage area below the bed. The bed in the aft guest cabin is oriented athwartships and is slightly larger than its forward counterpart. A thick leather cloth unrolls and snaps across the top porthole for privacy

or to prevent sunlight from entering the cabin. The aft cabin doesn’t offer as much storage but it’s still more than adequate.

The portside owner’s suite includes a luxurious island berth; full ensuite with shower; padded two-seat bench, whose cushion lifts up to reveal a handy storage area; a floor-to-ceiling storage locker that’s half wardrobe, half linen closet; and a secondary wardrobe for hanging clothes. The island berth is aft while the ensuite is forward, with the bench and lockers in between. I was impressed with the roominess of the ensuite although the moulded sink unit appeared of average quality; the small door covering the storage and plumbing area below the sink didn’t fit well at all.

Returning to the helm, I was relieved to see that we’d nearly arrived at Sanctuary Cove. As we disembarked and bid farewell to our hosts, I thought that overall, the Cumberland 44 is an impressive example of a boat class we don’t see all that often in New Zealand waters. Its largely insignificant flaws are vastly outweighed by its performance, toughness, economy, style and, most of all, affordability. And it proved an ideal platform from which to start the action in the America’s Cup. ■■■

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>BOAT</b>	
model	Cumberland 44
designer	Joubert/Nivelt & Olivier Flahault design
builder	Fountaine Pajot Catamarans
construction	infused grp
thickness	variable
loa	13.4m
lwl	12.85m
boa	6.55m
draught	1.2m
disp, light	14,000kg
disp, full	18,000kg
height, with mast	6.06m
horsepower range	225 to 310hp
top speed	27kts
cruising speed	15kts
cruising range	1000nm
fuel capacity	2 x 800L
water capacity	600L
price as tested	\$1.45m
packages from	\$1.375m
<b>ENGINE</b>	
make	Volvo
type	shaft-drive diesel
horsepower	310hp
propellers	four blade 23in by 20in
<b>boat package supplied by:</b>	
EC Marine Pty Ltd, Australia	
<b>Other supplies include:</b>	
Raymarine: autopilot, radar, anemometer, GPS, depth sounder, speedometer; Icom: VHF radio; Lofrans: winch; Kleenmaid: stove, oven, microwave; Alpine: stereo; Aquapro: dinghy; RFD: liferaft.	