

DOUBLEFUN AQUILA 36

Versatility in a boat means it will be used more and of course it allows canny builders to supply different markets; such is the case with the remarkable Aquila 36, reports **KEVIN GREEN.**

Chinese Aquila is becoming a worthy rival to the big French and South African brands with its well crafted catamarans, including the innovative Aquila 36; an open-plan dayboat with commercial and owner specific varieties. *Image Kevin Green*



FROM TOP:
The spacious open plan deck is packaged in a stylish hull which was pushed to 33kts with the 300hp Mercury outboards.
Image Kevin Green

I found the steering position comfortable, well protected yet with good visibility. *Image Kevin Green*

The Aquila's console has all the essentials – comfortable electronic steering wheel, slick throttles, auto tabs and Raymarine autopilot and plotter. *Image Kevin Green*

First impressions can be startling, and so it was at the Sydney boat show when I came upon the Aquila 36.

Strong yet smooth aesthetics – thanks to raked back lines, a low profile and some hull overhang that maximised deck space. The deck space was in fact the key selling point of this boat I realised as I took it all in. My mind raced with the possibilities – as a sub-aqua diver I could see myself using it as functional dive platform on the Barrier Reef but all the deck space could also be used as seating (CE rated for 26 people); while the final accolade revealed itself in the two double cabins. So there were several good reasons for Multihull Central to import this first hull and dealer Jake Wynne's optimism about sales. "We can fit the boat out to many requirements with gear like bait tanks, ice makers and barbecues etc for day party charters or whatever.

CREDENTIALS

Chinese Aquila had impressed me when I did a sea trial on its flybridge 44 powercat which sported



pioneering bulbed bows and a quality finished interior. But long before that I'd dealt with them because of their high specification grand prix race monohull penned by legendary American design house Reichel/Pugh, the Aquila RP 45. Other credentials included building Leopard catamarans and the Sunsail 38 models, so it wasn't surprising that American charter company

ABOVE LEFT: The main switchboard has well laid out with DC top and AC power below; and handily near the skipper's console. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE RIGHT: The swim platform and gunwale side doors give good access to the Aquila 36. *Image Aquila*





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The open air deck can be enclosed and the optional sunroof is on this model. *Image Aquila*

ENGINES AND OPTIONS



Plenty of torque and speed from these 300hp 6 cylinder Mercury outboards. *Image Kevin Green*

Our review boat came with twin 300hp 6 cylinder supercharged Mercury petrol outboards. The hull is rated up the 350hp model that can reach 37kts top speed while the entry level 250hp reaches 27kts. Engines are attached to the hull on alloy struts – allowing them plenty of clearance when tilted up and able to be adjusted by Mercury’s auto-trim system when deployed. Owners seeking more manoeuvring capabilities for tight marina berths or circling divers might consider the Joystick Piloting System which can be fitted to the 300 and 350 models. The Joystick intuitively can be pushed to you direction of intended travel and move both outboards in different directions. This also enables the use of holding-station GPS systems such as Skyhook, so ideal for waiting near the fuel dock or over a reef when fishing.

ENGINES: 2 x 300hp Mercury Verado Outboards
2.6 litre inline 6 cylinder block, supercharged with electronic fuel injection
70 Amp alternators
WEIGHT: 288kg dry
PROPELLERS: 3 blade and can counter rotate
SHAFT LENGTH: 508mm to 762mm

MarineMax approached them in 2011 to build the Aquila range of power catamarans. As one of the USA’s largest powerboat dealerships, MarineMax has plenty clout in the business so were able to put together a design team with equally large clout, led by the experienced J&J Design Group. J&J Design and their development arm, Seaway, have worked on designs for Azimut, Bavaria, Beneteau, Dufour, Elan, Jeanneau, Monte Carlo and more. This partnership was first established when Sino Eagle Group began building the Aquila 38 specifically for MarineMax’s new charter business. Fast forward to the present and the yard has the 44 and 48 flybridge powercats; and now the 36 sport style.

ALFRESCO SALOON

The open style topsides can be optionally enclosed for more temperate climates but for Australia the review boat layout was ideal: a large spray screen with only two fibreglass bulkheads and alloy struts forward

SPACIOUS DECKS ARE CLAD IN SYNTHETIC SEADEK, A SLIGHTLY SPONGY COVERING THAT REDUCES HEAT AND DEADENS SOUND WHILE IT GAVE A GOOD GRIP TO MY DECK SHOES

to attach the composite bimini. Beneath was a functional layout with L-shaped seating and table to port, just across from the wet-bar while the steering console is given plenty of space on starboard with a double seat. More seating and a sunpad is on the transom and there’s also ample room for guests to move about. Boarding is via two gunwale doors on each side so ideal for unloading a busy charter boat or mounting side ladders for a dive party. The wet bar has a deep sink, icebox and small fridge beneath with optional hot plate to complete the casual galley arrangement.

Spacious decks are clad in synthetic SeaDek, a slightly spongy covering that reduces



TOP: A spacious foredeck with sunpads and storage is good feature on the Aquila 36. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE: Boarding can be via side gates on each hull and there’s a central swim platform for watersports on the Aquila 36. *Image Kevin Green*

heat and deadens sound while it gave a good grip to my deck shoes. I’m unsure about its longevity but it suits this style of boat. Looking aft, the swim platform has to be central due to the outboards which rather complicates its use as a dive platform especially as its fairly high; so I’d probably put removable ladders on each side gate and for total safety (in dive mode), fit prop guards. There’s a fresh water shower here and handy locker but I’d prefer guard rails on each side.

With no sidedeck, access to the bow is via a door through the forward saloon which reveals a large and

Performance figures measured during sea trial: 2 people, 75% fuel and calm seas.

RPM	kts	L/PH total	Range NM (approx)
1000	3.7	7	
1500	5.2	12.4	500
2000	6.6	18.2	
2500	8.2	25.1	
3000	11	42.9	
3500	14.8	58.9	349
4000	19	79	
4500	21.2	94	
5000	25	126	268
5500	29.7	178	
6000	33.8	223	

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deep cockpit – so, safe at speeds. I sat there in bow rider style while my host for the day Jake steered and I experienced very little moisture but should spray land, there are large scuppers. This area is a major feature of the Aquila 36 thanks to double sunbed, moveable chair backs and a wide space that only catamarans can offer. Special touches include drinks holders with LED lighting – and further bling is available from underwater versions. Practicalities aren't neglected thanks to two sets of retractable cleats, vertical electric Quick windlass with manual over ride and sealed chain locker; all surrounded by a stainless guardrail. There's also storage beneath several bulkheads and the cockpit sole has a large one that drains outboard. Also, sunshades can be optioned for both the bow and stern decks.



A GOOD QUALITY OF FINISH IS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE AQUILA 36 WITH SOLID JOINERY ON DOORS AND NO FLIMSY ATTACHMENTS

SYMMETRICAL CABINS

The symmetrical cabin layout has the bed forward and bathrooms aft with a sliding door for privacy. The rather spartan décor – bare gelcoat and plain vinyl – is easy to clean while the double berths have enough volume to avoid stuffiness, even with the door slid shut. An opening deck hatch and large rectangular portlights give plenty natural light and quality OceanAir blinds. Storage includes a large under-bed locker. Sensibly, the starboardside cabin has the main switchboard – so the skipper at the helm can glance behind to check what's on. The large switchboard has 12 volt controls on the top and the 230 AC shore power below – often the most hazardous item aboard – monitored using readable analogue gauges. The heads are electric fresh water flush with macerator, so I'd option the larger tanks and some may consider a water maker (run off the generator). There's a Corian basin with opening portlight beside it. Underfoot, a teak grate is a nice touch and headroom is nearly 2.0m. A good quality of finish is found throughout the Aquila 36 with solid joinery on doors and no flimsy attachments.



FROM TOP:

Berths are in each bow and will sleep two and ventilation is adequate. *Image Aquila*

The moulded bathrooms have electric heads and plenty headroom plus an opening hatch. *Image Aquila*

The wet bar has a deep sink, icebox and small fridge beneath with optional hot plate to complete the casual galley arrangement. *Image Kevin Green*



VERSATILE HULL

The infused vinylester hull is foam cored without any plywood structures (that may deteriorate), using moulded stringers instead and has distinct hard chines to add rigidity and reduce drag – something that was very noticeable during my sea trial. Fine bows with two chines enable a narrow entry while high bridgedeck clearance and sculptured nacelle underside further reduce the Aquila 36's drag. Opening several of the hatches revealed a smooth finish which demonstrates the credentials of the Sino Eagle yard. Outboard engines free up a lot of internal hull space so the Aquila 36 has vast storage on each side aft. The stern section houses alloy fuel tanks located against the inboard bulkhead (which helps trim). There's space on the

Nudging the 36ft Aquila onto a beach in Sydney Harbour demonstrated the versatility of this boat. *Image Kevin Green*

starboard side for a generator set (to supplement the 70amp alternators on the outboards) but ample space is available on the fibreglass bimini for a large array of solar panels.

BEACHED AT SYDNEY

Nudging the 36ft Aquila onto a beach in Sydney Harbour demonstrated the versatility of this boat. No need for a tender to be towed, simply tilt the motors

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and glide onto the sand. All that was missing was the optional bow ladder so I had to jump off to take the pictures you see with this article. On the move, the Aquila felt effortless under power with little wave noise as I sped through the harbour, reaching a maximum speed of 33kts. Smooth power delivery is what you get with six cylinder outboards like these 300hp Mercury Verados and my only complaint was about their roar at high speed which made chatting a wee bit difficult. Snug behind the wind shield, my head was well protected and thanks to the open style cockpit I had surrounding views – especially good when you have a load of guests on Sydney Harbour. From take-off, the slim hulls had cut through the smooth waters taking us on the plane at about 12kts, then as the bow rose the active trim moved the outboard legs and the Aquila sped off with easy control thanks to the electronic wheel and braced standing position. Reaching a comfortable slow cruising speed of about 15kts kept the fuel burn moderate at 58 l/ph while moving on to fast cruising at 25kts burnt the petrol at 126 l/ph for a range of 268nm. But unlike many monohulls, these cats can cruise quite happily in displacement mode so a sedate 5kts would take you over 500 miles. Yet more good news for buyers is an upcoming outboard that will be extremely economical but Multihull Central have put an embargo on me telling you guys just yet.

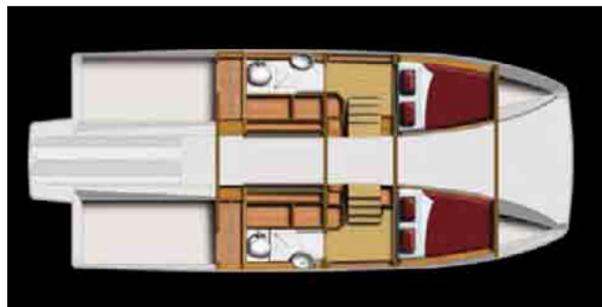


High speed handling felt slightly strange at first because there's not hull tilt into turns so the weight doesn't shift to compensate for the gravitational pull. But once I did a few doughnuts and figure-of-eights I felt confident in going beyond the Sydney Heads where the stability really was felt and decks remained totally dry in the metre swell. So, ideal for ferrying these often seasick sub-aqua divers who used to suffer mal de mer on my Zodiac RIB. The only slight flaw I could find was a tendency to go off track when following a wake, as the wave pressure built up between the hulls to cause

a wee bit of oscillation but that's really knit-picking. Slow manoeuvring, when I went astern to pick up a mooring was done with ease; helped by the fairly high aft sections that minimised drag.

So, my first impressions from the Sydney boat show were confirmed after a day on the Aquila 36, as it really is a special powercat and like most cats it can have many different lives; so pick yours.

AQUILA36SPECIFICATIONS



LOA	10.96m/ 36ft
Hull length	9.94m
Beam	4.45m
LWL	9.3m
Height above waterline with hard top (excludes electrics and electronics)	3.05m
Draft	0.60m (outboards retracted)
Displacement	6,700kg
Displacement loaded	8,800kg
Fuel tank	1,350L (2 x 675)
Water	200L (540L optional)
Holding tank	2 x 80L
CE certification	B:8 ; C: 18 ; D 26
Engines	2 x 300hp Mercury Verado outboards (max rated is 350hp)
Accommodation	Two cabin, two head
Design	J&J Design/MarineMax/Sino Eagle
Builder	Sino Eagle, China

Price: \$501,375.28 ex GST base boat (250hp engines)
Price: \$543,636.48 ex GST as tested

PROS

- Sleek and efficient hull
- Versatile deck layout
- Excellent storage

CONS

- I'd prefer guard rails on each side of swim platform
- Spartan interior
- Questionable longevity/toughness for the deck material

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