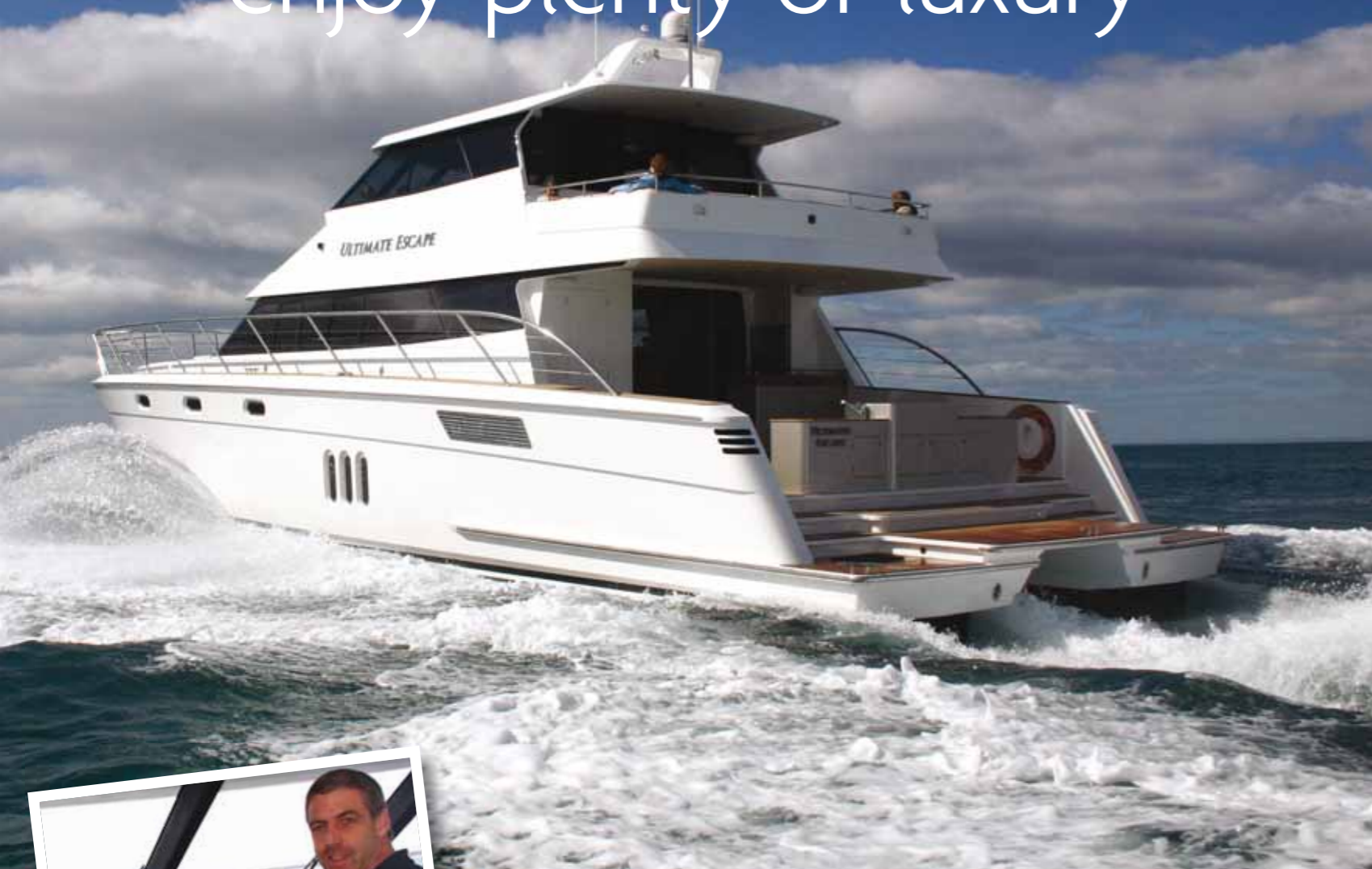


# CORPORATE BOATIES enjoy plenty of luxury



BY KEITH INGRAM

Life often moves  
in mysterious  
ways, and with  
it opportunities  
may present themselves.

Craig and Patricia Armstrong previously operated three vessels on Lake Tarawera with their company, Clearwater Charters. The flagship was the *Clearwater Spirit*, a 15m catamaran designed by Malcolm Tennant and built by Pachoud Boatbuilders in Tauranga.

One young couple got married on the boat, fell in love with the lake, the business and the whole experience, and offered a price the Armstrongs found hard to refuse. They saw it as an opportunity to improve on the lessons they had learnt thus far, approach a new location and move upmarket.

Tauranga looked to have potential, as no-one was working at the top end of the market they wished to focus on. They had the skills, but the next question was how to make it happen and get past the bureaucratic red tape, said Craig. The next step was a new vessel. She had to be easy to operate, and specially designed for corporate entertainment, with space for large day groups, yet luxurious accommodation for smaller corporate numbers and liveaboard charters.

She had to look like a luxury vessel and not a ferry, with aesthetic appeal to draw the eye and encourage people to want to travel on her, plus plenty of windows and a service speed of around 25 knots.

Most importantly, the vessel had to be designed so



Main saloon looking forward



ABOVE: The main saloon looking aft

BELOW:  
The absence of a wheel disconcert some masters



that the client could feel that that this was his private vessel for him and his guests for the duration of the cruise, be it a day or a week.

She needed to provide a range of activities for clients, and gourmet meals. There would be three guest cabins with ensembles to sleep up to six guests overnight or on extended cruises in the Bay of Plenty, the Coromandel coast and the Hauraki Gulf, plus accommodation for two crew. For day trips, they wanted a survey licence that would allow them to carry up to 80 passengers, although for most charters this would be around 30 to 40 people, and the facilities to be able to hold a product launch, corporate presentation or reward programme.

With their heads filled with specifications, ideas and dreams, they approached Dave Pachoud to build a 20m cat based on Roger Hill's lines, but incorporating many of the owner's and boatbuilder's ideas and changes.

This could have been fraught with danger, but *Ultimate Escape* is a case study of how improving ►



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ABOVE:  
Her hulls provide plenty of lift

RIGHT:  
An example of a master suite



on a designer's fixed ideas can frequently produce a far better vessel.

They went for a high-volume planing hull form in which one tonne of weight equalled 10mm of hull immersion, and a conventional drive train with 11 degrees of shaft angle, with the propellers being one-third covered in the half-tunnels.

The half-tunnels reduced the draft of the propellers, concentrated half of the propeller's thrust and added additional lift to the stern. This helps to maintain trim, even when large numbers of passengers congregate towards the stern.

On stepping aboard the *Ultimate Escape*, it is easy to see that the superstructure is quite well for'ard, as the clients wanted the additional interior volume and shelter without the "ferry" look.

Across the stern is a wide boarding platform with a folding knuckle crane under the step to launch or recover the tender, a 3.5m Nautica rigid-bottom inflatable with a 40hp outboard.

The platform has steps up to the aft deck on both sides of a centre island.

Two live bait tanks and insulated fish bins are built into the transom, and the centre island houses a barbecue with benches on either side and cupboards beneath. Fresh and salt water deck outlets are built into the steps.

The aft deck is a spacious outdoor entertainment area. A day head and shower is accessed for'ard to port, and beside this is the fishing rod locker. Guests have almost everything they need on board to enjoy a full range of water sports. Scuba equipment can be arranged, and there are complimentary masks, snorkels and flippers. Two kayaks are carried on board, plus two windsurfers. Guests can enjoy waterskiing, wakeboarding and tubing behind the tender.

The lighting on *Ultimate Escape* received special attention from Hella Marine, with LED navigation lamps, courtesy and high-intensity interior lamps, electronic fluorescent lighting and gas-discharge docking lamps. Small, blue LED strip lamps are built into the steps to ensure passengers maintain a safe footing, and blue LEDs pick out the stainless steel lettering.

Inside the head is a locker for storing wet-weather gear. Opposite, under the shelter of the upper observation deck area, is a large bar, an icemaker and the exterior entertainment system.

The main saloon doors are electric, and slide into a cavity for'ard of the head. Behind the bar is a similar door with direct access for the crew to the galley to starboard, which is equipped with everything the hospitality staff require to ensure that guests' catering needs are never compromised.

To port, a spiral staircase gives easy access to the enclosed bridge. For'ard of the staircase is a customised wooden dining table with tasteful paua inserts.

The timber used throughout *Ultimate Escape* is saligna, a member of the eucalyptus family grown locally on Matakana Island. For'ard of both the dining and the galley area is the main lounge, complete with a wonderful ceiling feature and mirrors. There is a pop-up 40in television and a premium Sony entertainment system fed from a Lexcam digital system, including a hard-drive, a DVD player, and a selection of movies and music DVDs.

The warm, natural timber, leather, soft carpets and inviting décor all add to a feel of intimate luxury. A notable feature in the saloon is the excellent vision, whether seated or standing, with no joinery work sticking above the window line. Guests will be free to relax with a sumptuous meal and fine wines and liqueurs, then relax or dance on the aft deck.

For'ard on each side are the companionways down to each hull which contain twin cabins aft and a large double for'ard.

The crew's cabin is in the starboard hull aft, and the laundry, washer and drier and a large freezer are hidden behind panelled doors in the companionway.

The spiral staircase to the large, enclosed bridge is very manageable, and we find another beautifully built wooden table with seating for 12. The stern doors lead to more seating for up to 14 people on comfortable, padded benches.

The enclosed lounge has another 32in flat-screen television, which may be linked to the onboard entertainment system. The saloon and the enclosed bridge are fully airconditioned.

Moving for'ard to the helm station, any thoughts of a ferry look have gone, as the dash panel and control area is formed from madrona burr, a sustainable, non-endangered natural timber originally from North America.

The Twin Disc 5114 Quickshift engine controls are for the right hand, and give positive electronic links to the main engines. There is a range of Furuno electronics, plus the twin screen for the Nav Net system.

Another screen repeats the display of the on-board cameras, which are situated in both engine rooms, the aft deck and the anchor locker. The anchor, winch and staghorn post are all concealed below the wing deck, and this camera shows the skipper the status of the anchor.

Communications equipment includes a cellular mobile telephone, internet access, a facsimile machine, SSB radios and a VHF.

The *Ultimate Escape* is steered by a small joystick perched on the dash, but I am told that she will run on the autopilot most of the time. Not within harbour limits, I hope, or even a busy waterway. But let's not go there.

Both stern quarters are in a blind spot, but the skipper has five positions he can plug the hand-controlled autopilot unit into – the bridge, the bow, the aft cockpit and the lower and upper deck – for good visibility during berthing or manoeuvring.

The *Ultimate Escape* is fitted with hydraulic bow thrusters for'ard in the hulls, and a hydraulic anchor winch. Behind the helm are two comfortable seats designed by Dave Pachoud, based on the international Crown seat. Two 24in Weaver hatches provide additional ventilation, and the skipper can use them to gain better visibility in closed-in conditions by standing on the seat and using the auto-control.

We return to the saloon and step out for'ard on to a sunbather's haven, with a comfortable sun bed

built into the slope of the coaming. Hatches give access to large lockers for stowing fenders and ropes in each bow, and access to each anchor winch and anchor. The fo'c'sle lends itself to being a people's place when travelling in good conditions for observing marine mammals or watching marine events such as yacht racing.

Back in the cockpit, I look for the fuel and water intakes. "They are under this hatch, just before you step into the saloon," I am advised. On lifting the hatch, there are the fuel couplings, water

couplings with all the fuel isolating valves and the fire activating valves to the engine room fire suppressors. These are all built into a fuel spill save-all that meets international marine pollution standards.

Access to the engine room is through two large hatches set into the aft deck. Lifting the large, soft-top hatch covers reveals the twin MTU 825hp marine diesel engines. These have power to burn and deliver a top speed of 30 knots and a service speed of 25 knots. The fuel and water tanks are built into the hulls, with 5500 litres of fuel and 2500 litres of water.

The engine room spaces are large, with plenty of room around the engines. A small but functional built-in ladder allows the crew to drop down into this space with ease. There are two gensets, a main 22.5kVa set for daytime and main service, and a 10kVa set for night-time silent use. The main hydraulics are in the starboard engine room.

To say we were impressed with the *Ultimate Escape* is an understatement. Everywhere we looked there has been obvious attention to detail, and everything has been well thought out.

She handles particularly well, the noise levels are noticeably low, and her seakeeping ability is very stable. When underway she throws a bit of spray, but not as much as we would have expected.

She is a welcomed addition to the Tauranga charter and cruising fleet. ■



A fine example of a tidy engine room with good access

specifications	Length overall	21.3m
	Beam	6.7m
	Engines	2 x MTU marine diesels
	Power	2 x 825hp
	Gensets	1 x 22.5kVa, 1 x 10Va (silenced)
	Fuel	5500 litres
	Fresh water	2500 litres
	Maximum speed	30 knots
	Service speed	25 knots
	Boatbuilder	Pachoud Motoryachts
	SSM	SGS M&I