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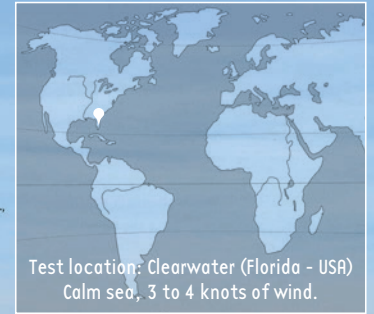
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Aquila 54

On course for blue water cruising

MULTIHULLS WORLD EXCLUSIVE

The latest addition to the Aquila shipyard, the 54, is aimed at both the ocean cruising market and the luxury yacht market.

A development that seems logical for this major player in the power catamaran market.

Since 2012 and its first power catamaran, the Aquila 38, the Chinese-American brand has come a long way with successful models. The Aquila 44, for example, with well over 100 units sold, is on its way to becoming the best-selling power catamaran in the world. This success is due in part to one man - Lex Raas - and a clever partnership with Marine Max (the largest dealer network in North America). But Aquila doesn't intend to stop there. To meet the demand, the brand has embarked on the development of a range of yacht catamarans with the ambition to tickle the top names in the field, including those who are satisfied with a single hull. While the 44 laid the foundations for this evolution, the 54, and even more so the 70 - both presented this winter - are pushing the concept much further, at all levels. A strategy that already seems to be paying off,

since even before its official launch, the 54 has received 26 orders. Most of these orders came from owners of other Aquila models. An excellent sign for the brand that it is capable of building customer loyalty. It is precisely in order to keep up with these enthusiastic users that the manufacturer wants to expand its offer.

A first step in the field of large power catamarans

From the first glance, the Aquila 54 is an eye catcher. Surprisingly, it clearly distances itself from the design of the 44 by displaying lines that are found more on the 36 or even the 32 with thin stems and a very slender and sophisticated line. By the way, the shipyard does not hide the fact that its sources of inspiration are in Europe, and particularly in the superyacht sector. At 54'2" (16.5 m)

long and 25'2" (7.68 m) wide, the Aquila is pretty impressive, especially with the addition of the flybridge which reaches the height of 24'4" (7.43 m). Very voluminous, the nacelle is also imposing, a good point for the rigidity of the whole boat, but also for the habitability inside the catamaran.

In addition to the sleek lines of the superstructure, the 54 boasts vast glazed surfaces, both on the hull and on the upper deck, an element that clearly evokes the yacht world. Same idea with the large flybridge - topped with a hardtop - which extends far out to provide protection and shade for the cockpit.

You can get on board via the platform and a couple of steps. The stern, with identical profiles on each side, is composed of the two sugarscoops and a larger platform in the center. This is designed to accommodate a tender up to 14 feet. Once on board, a sort of mini cradle allows the tender to be chocked, but only on one side, as Aquila has also developed a range of small rib catamarans to be used as tenders for its boats. This plat-

form features another interesting accessory since it is surmounted by a retractable crane that disappears completely into the cockpit roof and can be operated remotely. Once again, it's rather well done. A storage compartment is hidden behind the back of the rear bench seat to store mooring lines or other accessories. Finally, the stern features an integrated and retractable swim ladder, with a nice handle to help in climbing up as well as a large storage box (one on each side) to stow the watersport equipment.

At the top of the steps, a small gate can block access to these, a good point when it comes to the safety of young kids. From there the cockpit integrates a long bench seat and it is spacious enough to accommodate a large deck table. On the port side, a door opens upwards to reveal a staircase leading to the crew cabin. Rather well outfitted, this cabin includes two single beds, a full bathroom, a desk and a porthole. If you don't have a crew, this cabin with independent access will also be perfect for a teenager. On the starboard side

of the cockpit, a comfortable staircase leads to the flybridge, but we will come back to this.

To access the foredeck, you just have to use the pretty wide catwalk - 17" (44 cm) which allows you to move around easily. In addition, a high enough balcony makes it even safer to move around. Like all the models of the brand, this is intended to be a space for relaxation, and the 54 is no exception. There are in fact two sun loungers for two people and, in the extension, two benches to face the open sea or enjoy a sunset on the horizon. A solution to install a small table would have been appreciated, but unfortunately this is not the case. The sunbed chairs do feature folding backrests, though, which offer a very comfortable position. The bow is well secured by quite high pulpits and circulation remains easy. It also is there that the secondary anchor is located, on its bow roller, the main one remaining at the anchoring station. Finally, two translucent deck hatches provide access to a

1/ In the chop, the front bulbs are impressive, ensuring a good pitch to the catamaran and avoiding the spray.

2/ The Aquila's profile is elegant and dynamic and a flybridge doesn't add too much weight to the lines.

3/ Despite a pretty thick nacelle, the central tunnel remains impressive.

3





huge storage locker, similar to the sailboat's sail lockers. This time, it will house the fenders or the mooring lines. Back in the cockpit, the Aquila has a traditional door to access the main deck, as well as a window that opens upwards. Then you unfold part of the galley countertop and, thanks to the two stools, the cockpit is transformed into a bar, a good spot to have a drink at night

First-class Comfort

Taking advantage of its width, the main deck of Aquila 54 is organized around a beautiful sofa/dining area. In fact, there is a large U-shaped seating area that can accommodate eight to nine people, plus another sofa for two or three additional guests. As a bonus, the table can be folded out for a comfortable dining experience.

The U-shaped galley is located on the aft port side of this deck and features all the necessary appliances for cruising. The space also benefits from excellent luminosity thanks to the numerous windows all around. Finally, there are storage spaces hidden just about everywhere, all-important for boating.

Forward, a door opens into the owner's cabin - one should rather call it the «owner's suite». Occupying the entire width of the main deck, this space benefits from a king-size bed (195 x 204 cm), but also from a bathroom with two sinks, a separate toilet, a separate shower, a vanity/office area and a real walk-in closet. Again, there is plenty of storage space and lots of natural light. One small point to note is that although the XXL size of the shower is to be welcomed, the location of the washing machine is more curious, because it is located in the shower, behind a door ...

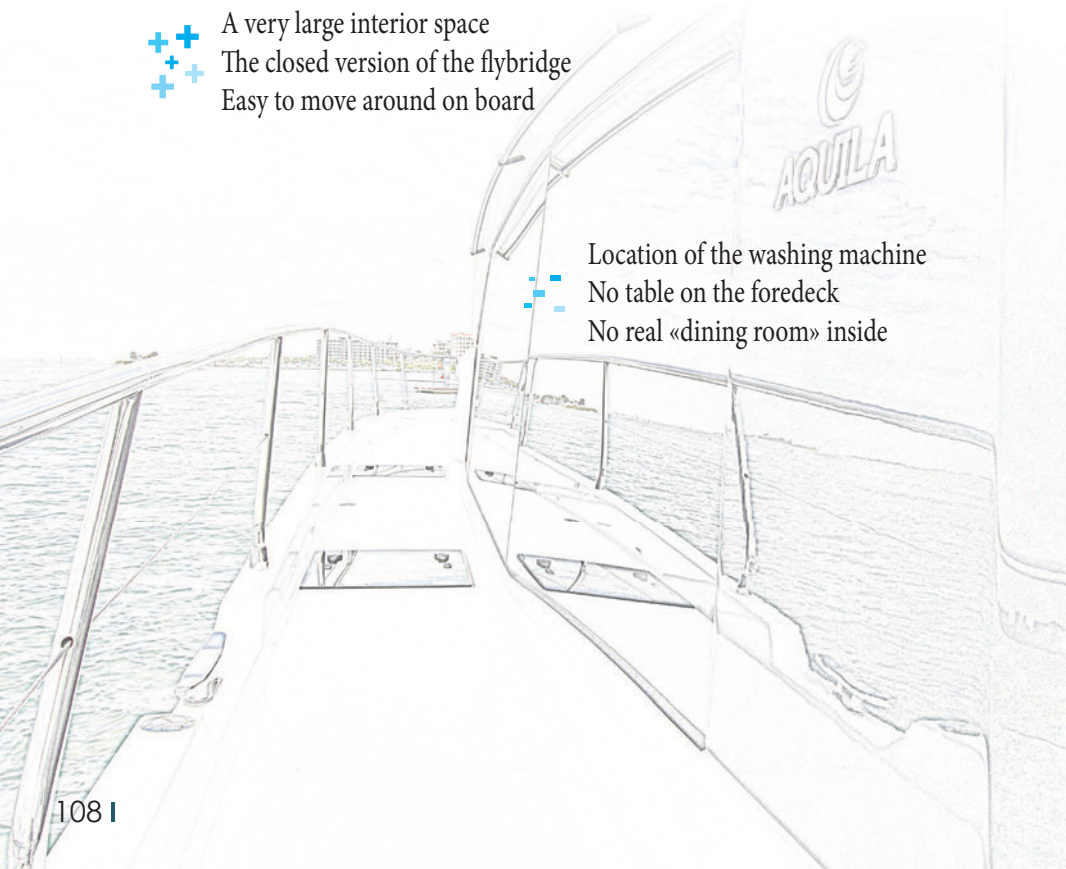
The hulls are intended for guest cabins, knowing that the catamaran is available in three or four-cabin versions. For our test, we had the three-cabin model with one room

on each side. Particularly spacious, these cabins offer a queen-size bed (163 x 198 cm), a private bathroom, a small desk and, once again, lots of storage space. The Aquila 54 is resolutely rooted in the 21st century and it offers a very good level of technological comfort. In addition to the numerous TV screens, cleverly hidden in the furniture or in the ceiling, there are USB sockets and wireless charging stations for smartphones just about everywhere, and the lighting is almost all LED and indirect. The interior style is modern and tasteful with light color wood, understated fabrics and meticulous finishing touches, all of which accentuate the high-end aspect of the vessel. In addition, a certain degree of customization is available upon order.

Last but not least, the flybridge is a real plus for the 54. Indeed, far from being a simple helm station with a bench seat or sunbathing area, this area is almost as large as the upper deck. There are also numerous seating areas, an L-shaped bench seat, an outdoor galley with a grill and an open terrace to install table and chairs, a sun lounger,



A very large interior space
The closed version of the flybridge
Easy to move around on board



Location of the washing machine
No table on the foredeck
No real «dining room» inside





or some lounge chairs, at the owner's discretion. Please note that this flybridge is offered in a traditional open version or in a closed version as on our trial model. In this case, the flybridge is fitted with real glass (not plastic canvas) and, on the back, with a very well-built sliding door. The terrace area remains open. A really interesting concept, just as much important in the slightly humid areas as it is in the cool areas, allowing those aboard to stay sheltered in hot and tropical areas where they can enjoy air-conditioning, or cooler temperatures where you may need some heating.

The side doors of the flybridge give access to the upper deck, a place well protected by the

sides of the flybridge and which allows you to go around it. This is very well done. It is also from this area that you can access the Portuguese Bridge. Very comfortable, it is also very safe thanks to a sturdy handrail. It gives direct access to the sun loungers and the foredeck without making the lines heavy.

One of the advantages of this catamaran is obviously the distribution of the different living spaces. Everyone can find his or her place without being disturbed by the others, be it on the foredeck, the cockpit, the interior and the flybridge. By the way, the power catamaran is approved for thirty people in the United States, enough to organize a nice party.

A good cruising speed

Built partly in infusion, the 54 offers a very good stiffness, a characteristic reinforced in particular by the thickness of the nacelle. The two hulls benefit from real research work. Unlike some power catamarans, which are simply adaptations of sailing models, the Aquila 54 was designed from the start as a motor boat. You only have to look at the bows to measure the work done. To begin with, you can find the famous bow bulb, a real brand signature. A system inherited from commercial vessels that allow the boat to maintain a better pitch by keeping the bow in contact with the water. Under way, the result is quite remarkable.



4/ The foredeck features two double sun loungers with reclining backrests, a must for perfecting your tan.

5/ Even with 30 tons laden displacement, the Aquila 54 creates a fairly modest wake, a nice way to respect the environment.

6/ Between the two hulls, a platform can accommodate a tender up to 14 foot with a removable cradle.

7/ Two stools, a window that tilts upwards, a countertop that unfolds and here you are, in less than two minutes, with a real cockpit bar.

8/ The saloon table folds out, almost doubling its surface area.

9/ The owner's cabin takes up the entire width of the main deck, enough to accommodate a king size bed, a bathroom and a desk.

This element also brings more comfort, especially in chop as the bulb attacks the wave before the rest of the bow. Finally, it avoids spray, a good point for the crew. The bow itself is sharp as a sword and has an angle of only 15°. The hull also features two solid inverted chines that will repel spray and improve course keeping. In addition, the air cushion effect generated by the tunnel and excellent weight distribution give the boat a very nice attitude under way and, above all, excellent comfort on board. The shipyard offers three different engines from 2 x 380 HP (Volvo Penta D6) to 2 x 550 HP Cummins to adapt the power catamaran to the needs of each owner. For versatile use focused on cruising, the intermediate power, 2 x 480 HP D8 Volvo Penta represents an excellent compromise to move the 30 tons this boat displaces when laden. This is precisely the power we had at our disposal during the test.

When you turn the ignition key, the first surprise comes from the sound volume, which is really well controlled. In fact, the engine room deserves a look. Very clean and tidy, it makes maintenance even easier. Next to the engines are the generators and the rest of the boat's technical systems, all very accessible. Thanks to the soundproofing, the mechanical part is therefore forgotten even in the cockpit, again, it is a real plus for cruising.

To take the helm of the Aquila 54, you have to go to the flybridge, where the only steering position is located. In the open version, you will probably prefer sailing in good weather. On the other hand, once installed in the driver's seat, visibility is optimal, and the dominant position allows you to see far away. In front of the helm, two superb screens display the main information relating to navigation and engine controls, and the rest of the instrumentation naturally finds its place around. Very easy to maneuver thanks to the twin engines, the catamaran can be easily extracted from the marina. The helm is smooth, and the vessel is surprisingly very responsive. Remaining perfectly flat, the Aquila takes off quickly and, at 1,000 rpm, we already find ourselves at 7.5 mph (6.5 knots). The cruising speed is around 18 mph (16 knots) at 2,800 rpm, which is relatively economical. Range is one of the boat's strong points, since at a speed of 9 mph (8 knots), you can cover around 1,000 miles, which is not bad. If that's not enough, two additional 2 x 92 US Gal (360 L) tanks can be added as an option.

To corroborate this autonomy, the boat is in a category A according to international certification. In other words, you can plan a nice cruising program. By pushing the handles to the full



speed, you can reach 25 mph (22 knots), but this is absolutely not the boat's program. Beyond the performance aspect, what is really pleasant is the comfort while sailing, an advantage that only two hulls can provide. In addition, the boat turns completely flat without oversteer as with some competitors. The helm is smooth, and the power catamaran reacts quickly, both in terms of acceleration and course changes, making it a true family catamaran where activity on board can continue, even under way. In short, a real pleasure. Of course, you can choose the maximum power which should propel the boat beyond 25 knots, it all depends on what you are looking for.

Conclusion

With this 54, the Aquila shipyard thus confirms its dominant position in the power catamaran market and demonstrates that its know-how is also applicable in the world of large units, both in terms of dynamics and in terms of finishing and decoration. The 54 also opens the doors to real offshore cruising, an area where the shipyard was previously absent. A beautiful evolution that is confirmed with the 70, but that's another story...

- 10/ To starboard, still in the owner's cabin, there is a private toilet, a bathroom countertop with two sinks and a very large shower.
- 11/ Patented by Aquila, the telescopic bathing ladder also features two sturdy handles to assist in getting out of the water.
- 12/ The shower is pretty large, on the other hand, the location of the washing machine, inside, is surprising.
- 13/ Each guest cabin benefits from a queen size bed with a breathtaking view and multiple storage cabinets.
- 14/ To launch the tender, the catamaran integrates a retractable crane in the cockpit roof. Well done!
- 15/ The engine rooms are very well laid out with easy access to all systems.



14



15



Multihulls World figures

Engine and crew:
2 x 480 HP D8 Volvo Penta, 6 persons on board.

Rpm	Speed (kts - mph)		Consumption (l/h - US gal/h)		Range (nm)
1000	6.5	7.5	11 l/h	2.91	1,300
1500	7.4	8.5	15 l/h	3.96	1,085
2000	8.6	9.9	23 l/h	6.08	823
2500	11.8	13.6	75 l/h	19.81	346
3000	18	20.7	109 l/h	28.79	363
3500	20.6	23.7	159 l/h	42	285
3600	21.7	25	185 l/h	48.7	258

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

Boat builder: Aquila (China)
 Designer: Aquila (USA)
 Overall length: 54'2" (16.50 m)
 Length at waterline: 49'6" (15.10 m)
 Beam Overall: 25'2" (7.68 m)
 Draft: 4'5" (1.37 m)
 Height Above Waterline Including Radar Mast: 24'4" (7.43 m)
 Dry weight: 49,659 lbs (22,525 kg)
 Fully load displacement: 66,138 lbs (30,000 kg)
 Maximum passengers: 30 (USA)
 Sleeps up to: 8 (10 in 4 cabins version)
 Fuel tank: 581 US Gal (2,200 Liters)
 Water tank: 238 US Gal (1,000 Liters)
 Maximum power: 2 x 550 HP
 Recommended power: 2 x 480 HP
 Certification A
 Price and options: in process

