

LOOKING FOR THAT EYE WATERING ADVENTURE

BY KEITH INGRAM



Ocean Adventure was designed to give passengers a high speed open boat experience. A ride will offer tourists the chance to experience the thrill and exhilaration of the fastest boat ride crossing the Bay of Islands to the Hole in the Rock at Cape Brett.

It is the prospect of this one-and-a-half hour journey out of the bay into open coastal water with all the salt laden wind and spray that attracts many tourist for this once in a life time experience.

Originally built in 1995, the Wild Cat Marine Cougar Cat-designed vessel has suffered a chequered history, at least during the first half of its life. It might be tempting to blame the boat, but in reality, whenever anyone breaks into new territory – especially where speed and tourist adventure thrills comes into play, mixed with the unpredictability of Mother Nature – the margins for human error become tight. Such is the recorded history of the Bay of Islands vessel *Mack Attack*.

So, when the vessel came up for disposal, the tourist company Explore Limited recognised the exciting aspects of the vessel as a tourist adventure high speed boat. It offers thrill-seekers and adrenalin junkies a holiday highlight with a difference.

They recognised she had potential to be a great vessel. The challenge was to make her safer, and to eliminate identified faults.

Cam Malcolm part of the original design and build team, now a

part of the Explore Limited was tasked to take the vessel and make her a better, safer tourist vessel.

Cam actually operated the vessel for the previous owners over a number of summers during its earlier operations. Explore company director William Goodfellow also served a stint on the vessel in the late 1990s, so between both of them they had noted a number of shortfalls in the vessel design and performance.

Like the wheelhouse design height contributed to poor close approaching vision over and under the bow, plus the afternoon glare affected the skipper's vision on the afternoon runs, and the amount of suck-back experienced was annoying when it made everything aft damp.

To correct the known faults identified in the old vessel, and a number of others as the vessel was showing signs of her age and use, would require a significant refit and repower. The fixes would include a number of important changes to correct past issues identified in various accident reports.

Plus, to be able to operate again as a tourist adventure vessel, she would have to meet the new Maritime NZ survey and MOSS standards – including the high-speed code for adventure vessels. This new code and its associated H&S responsibilities on operators was a significant change. It's led to some operators exiting the high-speed adventure market.

THE BOAT

With an overall length of 12m, waterline length of 10m and a beam of 4m the hand-laid 15mm GRP hull was in excellent condition



New command station



The important foil below



Loaded on Boat Haulage trailer

– requiring only to be cleaned and painted throughout.

The two 500 litres fuel tanks under the foredeck were checked, cleaned and tested. Likewise, the ballast tanks (used when operating with light loads) were checked, tested and their pumping and draining systems refurbished.

The passenger deck was completely refurbished and strengthened so as to accommodate the 34 new 'Shark Xtra' hydraulic jockey suspension seats complete with lap belts. The choice and addition of these seats – with lap belts – was a significant change to ensure passenger comfort, safety, and reduce the potential for back injuries.

Passenger numbers may be restricted, but we are advised having the extra seats allows the skipper to distribute his passenger weight loads better. Especially those passengers with the fuller figure of whom you may not want in the bow. Or older passengers who are looking for a more 'comfortable' ride down aft but still get ▶

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Volvo Penta power below



The anchor is stowed aft



A close up of the Shark seats

to enjoy the thrill of the day. There are a further two seats in the wheelhouse.

The construction and fitting of the new raised composite side fins – starting from amidships and travelling aft – improve the ascetics of the vessel and soften the height of the new raised command station. The fins also assist in keeping the rear seated passengers dry from the spray thrown up off the chine rails.

Being a foil assist catamaran, the main foil was redesigned in carbon fibre to an advanced arrow design. It is positioned so as to reduce the onset of the hobby horse effect that used to plague the older vessel even at moderate speeds in a seaway. This and the new fins at the rear of the hulls has all-but-eliminated this annoying attribute.

When at the top end during sea trials she could still prove to be a

tad sensitive, but the operating parameters are now such that she is not driven at the top end.

Visibility for the skipper has been improved by raising the main conning position 350mm from its original height.

This and a complete redesign which included the reverse sheer windows and an open back to the wheelhouse for ease of access in and out, are notable changes. It is interesting that with the use of reverse sheer windows and improved side vents has all-but-eliminated the annoying suck back experienced in the earlier version (a common trait also suffered by most high standing craft at speed).

The wheelhouse command station has also been completely modernised in keeping with the new look, with a well-laid-out wraparound dash panel featuring engine monitors and aids to navigation all within easy eye glance.

There is nothing worse if a buzzer or beeper goes off and you have to start looking for it while traveling at 35 knots. (Not a good look when both eyes need to be looking ahead.)

A Simrad electronics package has been installed in the vessel, designed in part for use on high-speed craft.

All switches and controls are at ease of hand with the engine controls mounted on a curved pedestal on which one's hand just seems to naturally fall. The main battery isolating and link switches are also mounted on the back of this pedestal.

A separate crew or observer seat is positioned slightly aft and to port, behind the skipper. The skipper's seat also has a handy hand grip rail at the rear of the back rest.

Although the wheelhouse has some marked changes to it, they have retained the distinctive turned down wings for looks at the rear of the structure.

IMPRESSIVE PAINT JOB

Painted in the distinctive 'Explore' corporate yellow, *Ocean Adventure* is painted extensively using Hempel paint products: Hempel Light Epoxy Primer followed by Hempthane HS Polyurethane two pack top coats above the waterline. And below the waterline, Epoxy Primers Hemptadur Quattro and Epoxy Tie Coat followed by Globic NCT. This is a premium, copper-based self-polishing antifouling with Nano Capsule Technology which helps to control the rate of polish, on a high speed craft throughout the entire lifetime of the coating.

VOLVO POWER AND Q-MARINE DRIVES

Ocean Adventure is powered by twin Volvo Penta D111 – 625hp marine diesels coupled to twin ZF305-3A-E 1.51:1 reduction gear boxes. The engines have a commercial rating of '4' and comply with the latest IMO Tier II and US EPA Tier III emission standards.

This power plant is coupled to twin Q-Marine Q-SPD QSD125 surface drive units complete with the custom-designed 26 inch ►

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Excitement and thrills abound



five-bladed surface piercing propellers.

The units have an integrated exhaust system and incorporate a full power steering system to the twin rudders on each drive. The twin rudders offer predictably positive steering and tracking at all speeds, which for a high-speed craft of this nature is vitally important.

Q-Marine also manufactured the Carbon Fibre foils and underwater fins used on the vessel. The lifting foil for *Ocean Adventure* was designed by Andre at LOMOcean and manufactured by Q-Marine, who completed the full process from moulds to final Resin Infused Carbon Fibre components.

The foil system consists of a large V shaped foil that spans the hulls at midship and carries up to 40 percent of the vessel weight. Smaller trim fins are used at the rear between hulls for stability at speed.

Although she's capable of speeds up to a scary 50 knots, it is intended that *Ocean Adventure* will only operate at a service speed of 35 knots in sea conditions up to 1.5m swells. Conditions above these parameters will dictate the operating speeds on the day – in keeping with the new operating manual and instructions for Skippers.

THE WORK


With waterfront boat yards at a premium these days, most major refits of any extended length of time are normally moved to the sheds of boat builders domiciled in industrial estates, away from the waterfront. This refit was no different, so the task of delivering the vessel and then returning her back to the waterfront fell on Boat Haulage Ltd.

Having been in the game since 1974, Boat Haulage are now New Zealand's largest boat transport company. They have a

pretty impressive fleet that includes specialised trailers, cranes and cradles and are able to accommodate and transport even the most awkward or expensive of vessels. They also have strong relationships with NZ Customs and stevedore companies for when shipping or vessels arriving from overseas.

Even though *Ocean Adventure* is in MOSS and surveyed for the inshore waters of the Bay of Islands to Cape Brett, we noted the absence of an anchor in the bow. In thinking about it, the last thing you would want in a vessel of this type is an anchor thrashing around in the bow while travelling at high speed with a full load of passengers in an open boat behind it. However all was not lost. We found a lovely anchor and warp lurking below in the machinery spaces down aft – tightly secured, but available if the need ever did arise for the crew to deploy it.

Ocean Adventure completed her sea trials and shakedown in Auckland before making passage under her own power to her home port in the Bay of Islands.

Once settled into her new-old surroundings, we believe the sight of a bright yellow speed boat obscured by a shower of spray, will become a daily sight – and a welcome addition to the tourism adventures on offer in this tourist-reliant town. 

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	12m
Beam	4m
Draft at rest	500mm
Design	Modified Cougar Cat
Refit	Explore Limited
Power	Twin Volvo Penta D11-625hp marine diesels
Propulsion	Twin Q-Marine Q-SPD QSD125 surface drives
Service speed	35 knots

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