

SILENT GROWS WITH SOLAR POWER

Like Aquila and Iliad, Austrian company Silent-Yachts only builds power catamarans, except that its models are based on solar-powered electric propulsion.



— *Silent-Yachts is building its 80 in Italy; in April, the Austrian company announced that it had sold six units of its solar-electric flagship*

Silent debuted its 55 model at Cannes in 2018 and is currently producing its new 60 in Thailand and Italy. It's also building its flagship 80 in Italy, announcing six sales by April, while also developing an 80 Tri-Deck featuring a flybridge with 90sqm of living space.

Described as “virtually maintenance-free”, the brand’s catamarans use solar power via special panels on the flybridge, li-ion batteries – like in Tesla cars – and electric motors developed by Silent Yachts, enabling unlimited range without noise or fumes. The cats are principally outfitted with lightweight, recyclable materials, although the interior layout and decor are customisable.

Michael Kohler, founder and CEO of Silent-Yachts, said: “I built my first solar-powered prototype in 2009, which is still operational today. The current owner hasn’t used the generator for the last two years.

“Silent boats are generally self-sufficient, like a sailing yacht is for cruising, but the main advantage we have is that we can store sun-generated power in the batteries. We also have a generator on all of our boats as a safety issue in the rare case there’s simply no sunlight for a few days or any other special circumstances.”



— *The absence of an engine room allows for a huge garage on the Silent 80*

Solar power also sustains the household items on board like air-conditioning, lighting, refrigeration, cooking, AV equipment and on-board systems. As well as solar technology, Kohler is also a firm believer in the increasing popularity of power catamarans.

“At the Cannes show, there were only a few power catamarans five years ago, and these days there are over a dozen. Multihulls are multiplying and the trend is definitely going towards more comfort and luxury – and we can deliver this luxury without using a generator.”

Silent is producing some of its 60 units at the Bakri Cono shipyard in Rayong near Pattaya in the Gulf of Thailand, which has experience of producing solar-powered catamarans.

The Silent 60 is available with a range of accommodation layouts, from three cabins up to six cabins. The shipyard has also created the design and moulds for its own H70 model, a development of its Heliotrope 65.



— *The Silent 60 is being built in Thailand by Bakri Cono*

In conclusion, Leopard’s Kit Chotithamaporn says multi-hulled motor yachts “still represent a small portion of the overall motor yacht market” but that this niche sector will continue to grow in demand, just as sailing catamarans have.

“Powercats have steadily increased in popularity for charter and more recently for private owners as well. Firstly, there are the obvious reasons like space, comfort and stability, and that they’re a lot more economical than monohulls,” he says.

“Secondly, the products have continuously improved in terms of design outside and inside, ergonomics, interior finish, luxury and the level of equipment on board. Finally, in terms of price per cubic foot, they offer tremendous value.”

If sales in the US are any indication, powercats – the niche within a niche – could eventually become as mainstream as their sailing sisters.