

THE REAL OCEAN CRUISER

INTRO → The Kiteworld test team get their hands on Peter Lynn's latest release, the KiteCat
WORDS AND PHOTOS → William Milne



CAPTION → Looking down both barrels

THE HYPE:

Lynn Kite Sailing have developed the world's first small recreational kite-powered catamaran. Intense development started in 1987 and, 150 prototypes later, the KiteCat was born. With the dream of mixing the traditional sport of sailing and the new extreme sport of kiteboarding, the KiteCat is made up of two hulls constructed in glass fibre with a gelcoat finish, while internal bulkheads provide extra strength. The hulls have perfect floatation with a weight of 175kgs and the 'upside down' style hulls provide low drag displacement. The hulls feature breathing tubes, balancing the internal pressure when the KiteCat is heating or cooling. A three millimetre diameter tube coils around the frame for half a metre to reduce the vacuum of a sealed hull that will suck water through the fibreglass. And there are drainage plugs at the end of each hull in case you need to drain of water.

The frame itself is made up of various sizes of stainless steel to keep it strong and light. You can reduce the size of the frame by loosening six nuts to make the frame just one metre wide. For a complete pack down; detach the frame from the hull and store in four sections.

The KiteCat steers using four rudders which you control using the footpegs, similar to a land yacht or kite buggy. It's possible to make really tight turns as the rudders at the front and back work in opposite directions: when you make a turn using the left front peg, the front rudder turns left and the back rudder turns right. The rudders themselves are very robust and will stand the weight of the boat and sailor when sat on the shore.

TEST TEAM REPORT:

On first sight, the kite cat looks quite basic. There are a lot of metal bits that look rather scary if you were to end up sliding out of your seat and along the hull, but Stefan our demo expert assured us that

getting in the Kitecat once it has left the shore with kite in the air is no problem, and he was correct. It is actually possible for one person to carry the boat, too.

STEFAN'S INSTRUCTIONS:

To start off with you only need one person if you're going out in flat water.

- Carry the boat down to the water's edge and leave it resting on its rudders.
- Launch your kite and walk back to the boat.
- Stand in the centre, pick the boat up and walk into the water until you're in around a foot of water.
- Now sit back into the seat. You are not strapped to the boat, so there are no safety issues if it does capsize, and it's highly recommended to wear a seat harness so that you can hold down more power.
- Then simply dive the kite and power away as usual.
- If you're up against some shore dump then you need to be patient, time it with a wave, shout yaba daba doo and run like Fred Flintstone!



CAPTION → The control seat and pedals



CAPTION → Kiwian steering mechanism

Once the kite is powered up you instantly get the feeling that with minimal effort, sailing to France would be an easy option. With such a long rail you can tack upwind amazingly well. It actually feels like you're facing directly into the wind when you really push it, and as you're not strapped in, if you do end up facing into wind too much and the kite drops back and powers up, you're simply lifted out of the seat and land in the water beside the boat. Re-boarding is fairly easy: bodydrag back to the boat, leave the kite above your head, put your foot on the cross bar and hop back in. In waves the KiteCat will be rocking all over the place so you'll need to keep it away from your head to avoid any knocks and time your climb well.

I was surprised, and relieved, to find that even when edging against a powered

kite, it was difficult to capsize the KiteCat unless you really push it in bigger waves.

The seat is comfortable and with the frame adding extra support to push your hips against you can literally bomb upwind.

Down looping the kite on turns is almost easier than for kitesurfing and you can build up some really good speed downwind, although you won't be able to see much at this point as there is a lot of spray blasting you in the face.



CAPTION → Yaba daba doo!





CAPTION → Taking a little dump in the shoreline



QUOTE → There are two cats on this van, so one on a normal car would be no problemo



Let's see what our two extra testers thought:

MATT GRAY

AGE: 38
YEARS KITING: 8 years power kiting
RIDES: Flexfoil Blades and buggy
SPONSORS: none
FAVOURITE SPOT: Telscombe Tye for bugging, Brighton beach for jumping
LIVES: Brighton
PROFESSION: Assistant manager of Air-Born Kites

My first impressions were wow! I couldn't wait to get on it. It seemed big and stable and it gave me the confidence to go out in the rough water. I tried not to think about what might happen if I got pulled off in a funny fashion, as there are a few knobby bits on the hulls!

I immediately felt really safe, though. When I did get pulled I got pulled right off and away from the boat. There was more chance of getting snagged on the way back into the boat. I also have to say that the auto-zenith feature on the Peter Lynn kites really helps here - you can just let go of the bar and climb in.

The key was to keep the power low and then the seat felt very secure. I have never kitesurfed and can go up wind on a buggy, but am not really into the high speeds on land. At my age I have safety in mind, but with this I wasn't frightened of hitting the water at all. It gave me confidence and has actually made me to want to try kitesurfing, too.

The turning was the trickiest bit for me; because I was going slow I was turning the kite before the boat, but after a while I figured out that if you went faster you had much more steering control.

It was so good they couldn't get me to come back in! I would like to get one but just can't justify spending that much money. Anyone who has done a bit of kiting will find it relatively easy, though maybe not in rougher waters, as getting out was quite an art!



KARL TIDY

AGE: 18
YEARS KITING: 4 years power kiting, 8 months kitesurfing
RIDES: 12m Naish Torch, 9m Naish Raven, Crazy Fly twin-tip
SPONSORS: Air-Born Kites
FAVOURITE SPOT: King Alfred Beach with nice big waves
LIVES: Brighton
PROFESSION: Studies media, photography and design tech

The KiteCat looked quite daunting at first because it was quite bulky and I wasn't sure how stable it would be. I had visions of flipping it.

Once I got out I found it really comfortable and so stable. There were quite a few waves out there and it just shot through them. It's really nice to be able to get two beaches upwind in no time and ride

the waves back. It was exhilarating having all the spray in your face.

I was surprised how responsive it was when you had the power; really direct steering and even when you slowed it reacted well. Leaning had a lot of effect on the trim too so it was a very interactive experience. It even felt good riding backwards! I did manage to get the bar hooked on the edge of the KiteCat which caused a few unplanned kite loops!

If you have a little power kite and buggy experience it's a doddle to pick up and offers kiting in a completely new environment. We were using it in small waves and with a bit of shore dump, but in flat water it would be an absolute joy - you'd build up so much speed!

I would probably also recommend it to the older generation who are perhaps looking to get into kitesurfing but aren't wanting to get hurt slamming into the water all the time, or people who want to get out in really light winds. I did get a shock when I heard the £3200 price-tag though! It's a bit too expensive now. For the moment I've just got into kitesurfing, but perhaps I'd think about one of these when I'm a bit older.



CAPTION → Easy as you like

OVERALL

So the KiteCat was a great hit. It's stable, easy to manage, accelerates quickly and safely and leaves you feeling like the king of the ocean. Just get ready to raid that piggy bank! www.peterlynnkiteboarding.com And check the video of the KiteCat in action at www.kiteworld.tv *Avr*