

BOATING

NEW ZEALAND

A PLACE OF IDEAL HAPPINESS.

The success of the Elliott Pilothouse sloop continues with Elysium - the 15th boat built to this concept. Shane Kelly went aboard.
Photos by Geoff Osborne.



Given designer Greg Elliott's reputation for innovative, powerful and striking race boats - it's a surprise when he states that the yacht he'd most like to be sailing in the Fiji race is a pilothouse sloop.

This from a sailor who has spent so many hours at speed in the mighty schooner Elliott Marine (aka Primo) and his own Coyote. But as he describes the thinking behind his series of pilothouse performance cruising boats, it makes a lot of sense. After all, Elliott has always been a designer who spent his hours at sea constantly thinking about the things that make a boat faster but even more importantly, retaining performance while making the boat more user-friendly.

Which brings us to the newest Elliott design to hit the water, the 14 metre pilothouse sloop Elysium, built by Custom Yachts for owners Humphrey and Sarah Sherratt. Elysium is a practical combination of comfort, self-sufficiency and the ability to reel off the miles sailing. As the 15th boat built to the Elliott pilothouse concept, it's clear that it's a popular choice.

The designer describes Elysium as the latest refinement in a concept he has been working on for a number of years. The lineage now goes back to the 1990s, with similar designs ranging from 12.5m up to 16 metres; 10 have been exported, five remained in NZ and another three are under way.

Says Greg Elliott: "We do a lot of research and from each boat we glean information on how we can improve them. It's been interesting how we have been able to refine the boats."

The concept of having a pilothouse with a large cockpit area and same-level walk through into the main saloon to provide indoor/outdoor flow is quite unusual in a yacht. A pilothouse yacht that still looks good is even more unusual - typically they are ungainly looking and somewhat slab-sided.



Greg Elliott says the success is the result of getting many elements of the design to blend together in a complex interplay.

"We get down to the last 10 or 20mm and we have to be very accurate with them. There are so many factors involved in the whole concept," he says. One of the key styling elements is the curved toughened glass screens, which add the finishing touch to the yacht's looks.

After owning two smaller yachts, the Sherratts turned to the Elliott pilothouse design when looking for a bigger yacht - they'd seen and liked a predecessor, Collioure. The concept fitted their requirements for a performance cruiser fast enough to compete in passage and long distance races - such as the Fiji race, which Humphrey has plans to enter in Elysium.

In keeping with most of the Elliott pilothouse boats, Elysium's interior was personalised to Humphrey and Sarah's requirements. The layout has a large saloon, with the galley forward and slightly lower (only three of the pilothouses have had the galley located away from the saloon) with a good-sized bathroom and toilet to port opposite the galley and a four-berth bunkroom forward.



A watertight bulkhead separates the bunkroom from a forepeak stowage area right at the bow, which is suitable for fenders, spinnakers etc. Down aft are two mirror-image double cabins. The uncluttered look of the exterior carries through inside the yacht, with clean lines, everything stowed away, and a lacquered grey or steamed Euro Beech timber with hardwood trim finish. The engine is located beneath the cockpit sole, where excellent insulation keeps noise levels right down.

While one of the Pilothouses, built for world cruising by a European couple, had minimal sleeping accommodation and huge quantities of storage, Elysium has more balance in its accommodation, with twin double cabins and four single bunks as well as large amounts of stowage. One example: under the cockpit, with a hatch lifted by gas struts, is a massive space - easily big enough for Elysium's Zodiac, boogie boards and assorted cruising gear.

But while fast cruising and even racing will be a regular feature of Elysium's sailing programme, look for complex deck gear and rigging and you'll be disappointed.

The essence of this boat is simplicity, with a rig featuring a furling headsail and an in-boom furling mainsail. The few major control lines are led back to the cockpit to a bank of jammers each side. Winch power is provided by two Lewmar 48 secondary winches for the headsail and two Lewmar 50 primary winches (electric or

manual) that make things really simple when raising the mainsail and for general rope handling when short-handed. One great feature is a pair of huge rope bins built into the cockpit coamings that keep everything tidy.



On Elysium the mainsheet is a single loop running through pulleys on top of the pilothouse - and no mainsheet traveller. It relies on a powerful Navtec hydraulic boom vang to keep leech tension on the mainsail and by using this system the usual clutter of traveller, car and mainsheet is removed from the cockpit. The mainsheet can be trimmed by the electric winch.

What about sailing performance?

Elysium has a slippery, medium-displacement hull with a relatively narrow waterline with powerful bilges. Foils are an L-shaped keel/bulb configuration and spade rudder. A strong but light hull is also important, with high quality composites chosen for an E-glass/foam cored/epoxy laminate.

What this adds up to is a 14m boat that will log 180 mile days, whose balance and trim make sailing simple, particularly with all the sail controls led back in the cockpit, where you spend the majority of time sailing offshore in safety and comfort. The boat's outstanding balance makes life easy for the helmsperson. This is also important for the autopilot which has less wear when it is not working hard and also less current draw from the battery bank when sailing.

Elysium's displacement is 9 tonnes light ship but the hull form chosen by Greg Elliott will cope with the addition of another couple of tonnes of weight in the form of fuel, water and cruising supplies, with minimal effect to its balance, trim or overall performance.

"If you make the boat a little more bilgy it takes a lot more weight to sink it than a V-shaped hull form," says Greg. "The pilothouse concept still has a relatively narrow waterline, otherwise there would be an increase in drag.

"This is a complex design because you end up with the situation where you are able to take on more than a tonne of liquid, which affects the displacement dramatically."

"With extreme cruising it can add another tonne so this boat has to be a very good load carrier."

It was important that Elysium be as self sufficient as possible. With the two most difficult provisions to get while cruising being diesel and fresh water, the boat carries plenty of each, with the provision to make more water by using the watermaker. Liquid capacity is 800 litres of diesel, plus another 800 litres of water (with a 40 gallon per hour desalinator run from a power take-off on the back of the engine).

The diesel capacity will also allow long motoring periods. This is to get the boat through windless high-pressure systems and into more breeze where it can keep logging 180-mile days. While cruising is fun, the ocean bit is generally best dispensed with quickly, allowing more time for enjoying the tropical delights of sun and fresh coconut juice.

And when it comes to relaxation, this is one heck of a machine to do it with. Relaxation that comes from being able to reel off ocean miles, from comfort, from having good water and simple sail handling systems. Relaxation too from knowing a quality construction job by Custom Yachts will also look after the crew.

The name Elysium is from Greek mythology and refers to the Elysium fields - a place or condition of ideal happiness for heroes favoured by the gods.

It seems an appropriate name for a yacht with so much capability.



Technical Specifications

Elliott Pilothouse

LOA 14m (46ft)
LWL 13.1m (43ft)
Beam 4.6m (15ft)
Displacement 9 tonnes light ship
Ballast 3300kg lead
Draft 2.6m (
Sail area
Mainsail 67 sq m
Headsail (110%) 48 sq m
Fuel 800 litres
Water 800 litres
Engine Volvo 50 saildrive

Notable equipment:

Project Management by MD Marine, rig by Sparcraft, Furlex genoa furler, KZ Marine Millennium furling boom, North Sails, Lewmar winches, Navtec hydraulics, Pure Water desalinator, B&G H1000 instruments and chart plotter, Vacuflush toilet, Accustop noise proofing, Isotherm fridge, Force 10 gas stove, Interspray 900 paint finish, Icom VHF.

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