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Cut THROUGH THE CHOP

Easy to tow and economical to run, the Formosa Tomahawk 580 Centre Cab gives you offshore potential at an affordable price.

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“Versatility rules with the Formosa Tomahawk 580.”

Often, there is little need for a big boat when plying the offshore fishing grounds, and these days many smaller ones are heading over the horizon to the blue yonder. Part of the reason for this has been builders of some of the larger trailerboats recognising the bluewater niche.

This evolution has resulted in boats as small as the one reviewed here packing a punch in the offshore fishing market – and at bargain-basement prices.

From the outset, versatility rules with the Formosa Tomahawk 580. It has enough width around the centre cab to allow easy passage, and gunwales that overshadow the deck to the extent that you can balance and fight fish with comfortable support.

This is complemented by centre cab side walls that slope inwards, up from the deck, so there is plenty of elbow and shoulder room when struggling with your rod. The foredeck rises about 100mm, and this helps to make the forward three-quarters of this boat more angler-friendly when fighting fish.

The anchorwell is open to the air and spacious enough for a few hundred metres of 12mm rope and the accompanying ground tackle.

The bowrails are 32mm, which is heavy-duty, to say the least. They're relatively low, but this makes life a lot easier when rods are bent double and you're circling the deck, trying to clear obstacles.

For the same reason, the permanently mounted bait-rigging table and livebait tank might be better replaced with a removable type

if you're chasing species such as tuna that do a lot of the fighting directly below the boat. The top of the transom bulkhead is spacious enough to install an aftermarket livebait tank, such as those distributed by Johnson Pumps, if you don't want to have one custom-built during hull manufacture.

BUILT FOR STRENGTH

The strength of the Formosa's build can be seen in the hardtop, which is pressed for rigidity.

It's constructed from plate alloy and is bristling with rodholders across its aft end, as well as handrails for those standing behind the helm seat and skipper's chair.

If you're challenged for height where you park your boat, you'll be relieved to know that this superstructure can be quickly

folded into the cockpit. This also helps with substantial fuel savings when long-hauling on the highway between the hot bites.

At the helm there is ample shoulder room, and the remote engine control is well-positioned. The small brow that makes up the instrument panel will handle a couple of multifunction gauges, but it takes up valuable electronic cabinet space, something that is in short supply on the 580.

One option is to do away with the standard instrument panel, install the multifunction gauges in the helm wheel fascia and bolt a gimbal-mounted cabinet squarely in front of the skipper. These days, with NMEA 2000 being so compatible with many engine brands, some of the instrument functions, such as speed and fuel consumption, may be interfaced with your depthsounder and/or chartplotter screens to make life easy.

The cabin makes a good tackle locker and provides easy access, thanks to the top of the dashboard being heavily rebated (that's where the electronic cabinet space went). There's a small amount of stowage in the boxes that the skipper's and passenger's chairs are mounted on, but you won't find any stowage cavities under the short berths in the cabin, as they're foam-filled.

The Tomahawk's transom has a walk-through section on the portside, closed off with a nylon door. This cuts into available space for a second battery, due to the inclusion of the oil reservoir for the E-TEC engine, but this configuration is easily changeable. That's one of the great benefits of alloy boats such as the Formosa – it's easy to customise them.

OCEAN PERFORMANCE

Well, the 580 looks the goods, but what's it like outside? We tested the boat on a day with

small swell and without much chop, but with enough bumps to test the hull's 17-degree deadrise. It offered a soft ride for a hull of only around 760kg and had good manoeuvrability over, along and around the swells banking up on the bar entrance. It didn't show any nasty surprises.

With the power off and sitting dead in the water, the Formosa's aggressive reverse chines played their part and gave good overall stability while two adults moved about the cockpit. Drifting and cubing from this hull should be a relatively comfortable affair.

The Tomahawk 580's Evinrude 130hp E-TEC outboard showed plenty of grunt throughout the power band. It gave us the impression that the maximum horsepower recommendation of 150hp would be overdoing it, unless you intended to carry big payloads.

At 5600rpm, the rig scooted along at 34.5 knots. Its SeaStar hydraulic steering was silky smooth and comes standard on these boats, which is a most welcome feature.

As wallets become leaner, yet the call of the bluewater remains, you can expect to see more of this style of boat heading to the Shelf. It's a tidy little offshore unit. ■

HIGHLIGHTS



Foam filling comes standard, which deadens a lot of ambient water noise.
It's beamy, stable and dry.
Solidly built.
Good walkaround fishing ability.



SPEC CHECK



FORMOSA TOMAHAWK 580 CENTRE CAB

PRICE AS TESTED

\$52,990.

OPTIONS FITTED

Hardtop visor, coloured paint, baitboard/livebait tank, plumbed fishbox, Humminbird GPS/sounder, VHF radio.

PRICED FROM

\$47,990.

GENERAL

Material: 5083 high-tensile plate, 4mm top and bottom sides
Length: 6m
Beam: 2.45m
Deadrise: 17 degrees
Weight: 760kg

CAPACITIES

Minimum rec. hp: 115
Maximum rec. hp: 150
People (day): 7
Fuel: 200 litres
Maximum transom weight: 220kg

ENGINE

Make/model: Evinrude E-TEC 130
Type: fuel-injected 2-stroke outboard
Rated hp: 130
Displacement: 1.72 litres
Weight: 177kg
Propeller: 17-inch Viper stainless steel
VELS rating: 3-Star

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