





REVIEWED: FORMOSA SEA ROD

Sea Worthy

Mark Ward checks out two of Formosa's most popular Sea Rod plate models – the 580 Off-Shore and 520 Classic – at a recent Yamaha Marine event.

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BY MARK WARD.
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The 580 is pushed along by Yammie's 150hp four-stroke, providing ample power.

The Sea Rod 580 would make an ideal offshore sportfishing boat with a quality build and loads of space.

Formosa Marine has been building quality plate boats for over 20 years and over that time has continued to develop and refine its hulls. Striking graphics is the first thing you'll notice and when climbing on board, the wide beams, loads of storage and a finish that is second to none. Hidden under the waterline is a ballast system that stabilises the hull when fishing and a sharp entry with increased deadrise to smooth it all out when under way.

Formosa's Sea Rod series starts at 4.5m and goes up to 7.4m. Configurations range from hard top half cabins to side console and everything in between. With so many options, Fisho hit the water with the team from Formosa, Yamaha and Gold Coast Boating Centre to put the Sea Rods to the test. We have reviewed the Sea Rod previously so we were particularly interested in what is new as well as breaking down the models for readers.

With this in mind, we launched a 580 centre console Off-Shore as well as a 520 side console Classic. The 580 is perfect for offshore sportfishing and the 520 is the ideal hull for estuary and bay fishing.

The Hulls

Sea Rods are built from 4mm plate alloy with full length quality welds. The continuous "fillet" welds are separated only by the spot weld marks that are left by the process of holding the sheets in place before the full weld can take place. On the test hulls, even the rod holders were fully welded. After having hulls crack at the welds before on other boats, I have no tolerance for sloppy builds and the Sea Rod is delight to see. I found myself running my fingers along the welds, but I am a little obsessed with boats and boat building...

The hulls have a stabilising ballast system that comprises of four chambers that rapidly drain when powering onto the plane. A large reverse chine also aids stability at rest while preventing excessive pitching in tight turns. The deadrise has been increased in the a new hull design called the V2. This gives both hulls an 18.5 deadrise as well as a very sharp bow that slices through chop and swell. Watching how the boat rides on the plane, the large reverse chine stabilises the hull when on the plane and aids in pushing the spray wide of the hull to avoid a wet



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ride on windy days. Overall, the design and functionality of the hull is difficult to fault and ride quality is excellent.

The beam is 2.4m on the 520 and 2.45 on the 580. It makes the 520 look almost square which in a small fishing hull, that adds up to a lot of functional space. Consider that a couple of metres of any hull is taken up with bow and transom structure leaving only around three metres of functional fishing space in a five metre boat. This is why wide beams in small boats are so valuable. There is over half a metre of functional fishing space in a five metre hull with a 2.4m beam compared to a 2.2m beam. That's a couple of tackle bags or a spare esky.

Layouts

There is every layout option imaginable with the Sea Rod, however the two hulls we tested were the side console and centre console. The side

console on the 520 was the Classic set up while the 580 centre console was the Offshore option.

The 520 Classic has marine grade plywood deck with raised casting deck and fold down transom. The forward casting deck on the test boat was higher than standard which gives more storage under floor but I found it a long drop and big step for us old blokes. Good options for younger knees though. The seats are pedestal seating that can be moved to a number of positions around the deck. With the transom folded down, it doubles as a rear casting deck allowing for two or more anglers to cast lures or two fly fishermen could even wave the wand without any problem. It can be optioned up with an electric motor mounting point and a removable bait board that includes storage at the transom. Add to this a live bait well, side pockets and underfloor kill tank and there is everything an angler needs for a day on the water.



The 520 Classic features an incredible amount of fishing space for a boat of its size.

The 580 Offshore is purpose built for the rough and rugged world of fishing the reefs and deep blue water. The self-draining deck and checker plate floor is ideal for fishing offshore and for backing up onto big fish. The 580 also has a bait board and live bait tank on the transom. There's storage everywhere in the 580 including loads or dry storage and built in tackle trays. The centre console has a little additional storage and folds down for parking undercover. The console has rocket launchers to keep rods and reels out of the sea spray and plenty of space for sounders, radios and GPS units. The seat is big and comfortable enough to seat two and opens up to a large esky or can be used for more storage.

Performance

The 520 Classic was powered by a 90hp Yamaha which was well under its maximum power but was an ideal match even with two big blokes in the boat. It pulled up onto the plane effortlessly and cruised along nicely at 52kph without the need to push the revs too far.

The 580 Offshore had a 150hp Yamaha bolted to the transom and as you'd expect, this big power

plant had no problem with the 580. It launched out of the hole instantly and when opened up it pushed us along at an impressive 39 knots.

The design and innovation that Formosa Marine put into the Sea Rod range is equal with the very best on the market. The hulls plane at slow speed which is great for the mackerel and tuna trollers who in calm weather can troll on the plane, saving a heap of fuel. The big keel and thick reverse chin work together to allow the hull to bite in tight corners.

Fishability

The variation in size, layout and features in the 520 Classic and 580 Offshore means that the two hulls are designed for different fishing applications. Both hulls are ideal for taking the family out on the water and wetting a line and both hulls can handle a little rough weather but that is where the similarities stop.

The 520 Sea Rod in the Classic configuration is all about casting lures and bait fishing in estuaries, lakes and bays. The 520 set up with a bow mounted electric motor would make an ideal tournament boat for competitive tournament or club anglers. The fold down

SPECIFICATIONS

Sea Rod 520 Classic

Length Overall: 5.4m

Beam: 2.4m

Deadrise: 18.5 degrees

Dry Weight: 650kg

Max Hp: 140hp

Sea Rod 580 Offshore

Length Overall: 6m

Beam: 2.45m

Deadrise: 18.5 degrees

Dry Weight: 820kg

Max Hp: 175hp

transom option is perfect for this application because it creates two fishing areas with all the room anglers would ever need for casting lures. The kill tank can double as a live well especially if it is plumbed to pump fresh water in. The optional bait board is removable and seating can be moved around as required. This is also ideal for trolling lures for bass, cod, barra or flathead.

The 580 Offshore has all the reef and bay fishing ability that you'll ever need. The checkerboard deck can be left as it is or covered. It has a lot of grip underfoot even with wet feet and is easy to clean as it is but can get hot, especially in the tropics. The ballast system and reverse chin gives the hull a lot of stability when bottom bashing or working a big fish to the boat. The centre console allows a fish to be played all around the boat without any problem. Even the anchor has easy access just in case you have to release it to play a fish in.

Both Sea Rods have loads of ramp appeal and are incredibly well built, well designed and well optioned. The ride is very smooth and the ballast system makes the hull stable at rest so there is very little to fault. ■

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