

Buccaneer El Dorado



WHILE THE BUCCANEER EL DORADO MAY HAVE A RESEMBLANCE TO THE BUCCANEER BILLFISHER, IT IS QUITE A DIFFERENT BOAT AS BARRY THOMPSON DISCOVERED.

Fisherman

INSET: THE YAMAHA 200 4S GAVE US A TOP SPEED IN EXCESS OF 45 KNOTS.

Hamilton based Buccaneer Boats have always been innovators and their latest offering is no different. They were one of the first local production builders to offer a large bowrider in the 635DC and were the first to come out with a big fishing walk-around boat in the form of the Billfisher. While the Billfisher is marketed as a walk-around style, the El Dorado takes that one step further, with the company

referring to it as a centre cabin.

"There is a big difference between the two and they are quite dissimilar boats in a lot of respects," says Wade Gerrand from Buccaneer Boats.

He adds that the concept behind the El Dorado was to develop a boat with enough working space to be suitable for soft baiting, slow jigging, live baiting or bottom fishing, without



Friendly

the anglers getting in each other's way. The cabin needed to be big enough to accommodate 2m berths and a head, yet not be so big that it encroached on the walk-around footprint that makes this such a special fishing platform.

"When we started the design, one of the criteria was there had to be enough room around the bow area for two fishermen to fish with space. We also wanted the bulwarks deep and wide

enough (250mm) for easy access and a cockpit that would handle another 2 or 3 fishermen", says Wade.

To do this, it was necessary to pinch a little from the width and length of the centre cabin, but although there were some differing opinions in the design stage, the end result is a perfect balance. Access all round is great, although with the open bimini top version you do have the rear stainless

THE LOW PROFILE CENTRE CABIN BLENDS IN WITH THE FLOWING LINES OF THE BOAT.



TOP: WORKABLE FISHING SPACE GOES FROM TRANSOM TO BOW.

BELOW: TWIN PEDESTAL SEATS ARE STANDARD AND STILL LEAVE ENOUGH SPACE FOR ACCESS TO THE CABIN.

supports and a rod holder to negotiate when dropping back into the cockpit. With the hardtop version this will be gone and access will be uninterrupted.

We had hoped to do the test with the hardtop version but unfortunately it just wasn't quite ready. The difference between that and the open boat is simply the grp hardtop, which comes with a large single glass front screen with

windscreen wiper option, sliding side windows and fits onto the same basic footprint as the screen on the open version. Height under the hardtop will be close to 2m.

True Walkaround

You might ask, how much different really is the El Dorado than the Billfisher 650 & 735 that Buccaneer has been producing for quite a few years? Where the Billfish has a self-draining cockpit, the El Dorado has an inner liner and a separate high capacity bilge pump. One of the reasons for this was to keep the centre of gravity down, so you are actually walking around inside the chine line. While the Billfisher has always been regarded as a walk-around, the height of the 'trench' is only around 250mm, on the El Dorado this has been increased from 500mm to 650mm at the bow. Very much more fisher friendly and certainly extra safe, which is great if you had kids going forward. This is a true walk-around in every sense but with the bonus of a surprisingly large centre cabin.

As mentioned, the bow area has been designed to become another fishing space and it really does work well. We had two guys softbait fishing without fighting for room. They could stand and cast or sit in two separate seating spaces. The forepeak section is a copy of that found on the Billfisher and comes with a Maxwell RC6 winch and a deep locker for plenty of anchor tackle.

Fisherman Friendly

The cockpit area is split between the helm area forward with twin seating and access to the cabin and a big open space for fishing. The stainless steel rocket launcher (and the future hardtop) is positioned far enough forward so they don't encroach into the fishing air space.

The cockpit layout forward, has been carefully conceived so there is enough space around the helm and cabin entrance, while still providing wide side decks. Twin single swivelling MTI seats are standard, with some other seating configurations being considered for the first





LEFT: THE CENTRAL LIVE BAIT TANK IS OPTIONAL AND LIFTS TO GIVE ACCESS TO THE BATTERIES.

BOTTOM LEFT: THE DASH CAN TAKE UP TO 14" MFDS.

BOTTOM MIDDLE: 2M BERTHS AND AN INFILL PROVIDE A GREAT PLACE TO RELAX OR STAY OVERNIGHT.

BOTTOM RIGHT: EVEN WITH THE CENTRE CABIN, DECK SPACE IS GENEROUS ALL ROUND.

hardtop model. A good option is to have a small cooler bin alongside either seat, which can also double as extra seating when required.

Knowing that the boat will be used primarily for fishing, Buccaneer has provided plenty of space for a large MFD screen. While we had a Lowrance HDS 12, you can in fact squeeze in a 14" screen. A trio of Yamaha engine management and fuel gauges are mounted above and extras such as the Fusion MSP500 and Lowrance Link 5 VHF below. I liked the small tray under the helm for my car keys, sunnies and phone. With the open bimini layout, the seated position when driving is wind-free, with the Sandbrook screens doing their job. With the hardtop version, using the same pillars as the 685 Exess, you will be totally protected from the elements. With the sliding seat adjusted back I found the

driving position when standing was perfect.

The business end of the cockpit (same as the 685 Exess) for fishos is great, with the optional central live bait tank and Manta bait board (as found on the larger Billfisher models) looking after your baiting needs. Unlike the Billfisher, the live bait tank moulding is fixed on a piano hinge so you get easy access to the batteries etc.

Rods can be stowed overhead, in the side trays (enough length for soft bait rods) or in the coaming mounted rod holders. An underfloor wet locker is perfect for dive gear or with a lift-out bin and some salt-ice another space to keep the catch. To port is another small transom locker and in the portside step through a bait or catch locker. This can be plumbed as a live bait tank if you don't go for the big 80-litre live bait tank option.





TWO PEOPLE CAN FISH THE BOW WITH ROOM TO SPARE.

Cabin Surprise

It came as a surprise when I went into the centre cabin and discovered how much space there is. Although it's not a boat designed for overnighting, with almost 2m long berths and portable head, it's something you could easily do. There is sitting headroom inside for three adults and with the infill enough space for two to sleep comfortably. Add a fresh water system with a handheld shower, plug in a portable fridge and a rod holder mounted bbq and you would have everything you need for a night away.

Great Ride

With the hull of the El Dorado, exactly the same as that of the popular Buccaneer 685 Exess XL, a boat I owned for a few seasons, I knew how it would ride, albeit the weight distribution would be a little different. Wade explained to me that the El Dorado and 685 Exess Hardtop both weigh around the same at 1250 kgs. The difference is the El Dorado carries a bit more weight in the forward half of the boat. "With the deep bulwarks and mouldings forward there is a lot of 'glass' that goes into making the boat, so even though it's only got a soft top bimini, it still comes with as much weight as a hardtop 685 Exess", says Wade. I have never been one to worry about excessive weight, as long as it's in the right place (the boat that is not me!) and the team at Buccaneer have done a nice job of keeping everything in balance. Underway the El Dorado trims easily,

with a nice riding attitude. In the heavier seas it doesn't have any tendency to drop the bow and I found that with a stiff cross wind only need a touch of the sensitive Lenco tabs to get the boat on a level manner. When the hardtop model is released the weight of the finished boat is going to increase by around 80 kgs.

Rated from 175hp – 250 hp, our test boat was rigged with a Yamaha 200 4S, which is a mid engine package for the boat. Trimmed to the max, with full fuel and three people aboard I managed to squeeze just over 45 knots @ 5800 rpm from the El Dorado. The fuel indicator showed 75.5 lph and had we carried on a range of around 120nm. I could have gone from Auckland Harbour Bridge to the Bay of Islands, done some trolling around Cape Brett and still had a few litres in the tank. I found a very comfortable cruise range at 3500-4000 rpm that returns a speed around 30 knots and a very economical 1.2 lph. The range increases to 180 nm, which is a lot more than most of us would do in a day's boating. If you are looking to troll then at 600 rpm (just in gear), the El Dorado will run along at 5 knots for over 300 nm, making this an ideal set up for game fishing.

Construction is conventional grp with a top-hat stringer system between the hull and inner liner. All areas between are foam filled and the El Dorado more than meets the CPC floatation requirements.

The El Dorado is a boat that isn't going to appeal to everyone, but it was never designed to. Wade says that they see the market for a centre cabin boat in much the same way as a bowrider. "There are those that love them and there are those that don't".

If you are looking for a good size trailer boat to go serious fishing, be it live baiting, soft baiting, towing lures or bottom fishing, then the El Dorado might just be what you need. I look forward to seeing the hardtop version, which in my opinion will be more popular than the open model as hardtops and fishing just seem to be a natural fit. **PPB**

TECHNICAL

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Make & Model: | Buccaneer El Dorado |
| Manufacturer: | Buccaneer Boats |
| Priced from: | \$NZ 108,000 |
| Price as tested: | \$NZ 128,500 |
| Type: | Walkaround |
| Construction: | GRP |
| LOA: | 7.13 m |
| LOH: | 6.82 m |
| Beam: | 2.48 m |
| Deadrise: | 22.5 deg |
| Height on trailer: | 2.25 m |
| Trailerable Wgt: | 2220 kg |
| Test Power: | Yamaha F200 |
| Propeller: | Reliance 19" |
| Maximum RPM: | 5800 |
| Top Speed: | 51 mph Knots |
| Power Options: | Outboard |
| HP Range: | 150-250 hp |
| Fuel Capacity: | 240 litres |
| Trailer: | Enduro Tandem |
| Notable Standard Items on Test Boat | |
| Bulwarks courtesy LED lights, Hydrive hydraulic steering, CPC rated, teak coaming caps, stainless steel rod holders | |
| Notable Options on Test Boat | |
| RC6 winch, Lenco Trim Tabs, rocket launcher, Lowrance HDS 12 MFD, moulded live bait tank, Porta Potti. | |
| Contact: Buccaneer Boat Co Ltd: www.buccaneer.co.nz | |

FUEL & PERFORMANCE DATA

BUCCANEER EL DORADO / YAMAHA 200

Fuel capacity: 240 litres

| RPM | Knots | L / h | L / NM | Range (NM) |
|------|-------|-------|--------|------------|
| 600 | 5.0 | 3.5 | 0.7 | 300 |
| 1000 | 7.0 | 5 | 0.7 | 300 |
| 1500 | 8.5 | 9.5 | 1.2 | 180 |
| 2000 | 10.5 | 13 | 1.3 | 160 |
| 2500 | 15.0 | 18.5 | 1.3 | 160 |
| 3000 | 22.0 | 22.5 | 1.1 | 190 |
| 3500 | 27.0 | 30.5 | 1.2 | 180 |
| 4000 | 32.5 | 37 | 1.2 | 180 |
| 4500 | 35.5 | 53 | 1.5 | 140 |
| 5000 | 40.0 | 70.5 | 1.8 | 120 |
| 5500 | 42.0 | 73 | 1.8 | 120 |
| 5800 | 45.5 | 75.5 | 1.7 | 120 |