



# The Best Yet

The Buccaneer 685 Exess may very well be the best new model the company has released since the 635 Esprite DC 13 years ago. While in that time they have been extremely active in releasing new models through the Esprite, Exess and Billfisher range, for me, the latest member of the established Buccaneer family is their best yet.



**T**he 685 Exess is the sixth member of the Exess family, which includes the 530, 565, 605, 635 and the flagship 735. Having tested all of the aforementioned models in the past few years, it was with some special interest that I headed to the beautiful Whangaroa Harbour in the far North to spend a day with the 685 Exess.

Whangaroa is 40 minutes drive north of the Bay of Islands, with awe-inspiring scenery, with towering sheer bluffs and volcanic rock formations protruding through steep forested shores, its colours reflected in tranquil water. Whangaroa remains an unspoiled natural resource, ideal for rest and relaxation. It's fishing is legendary. What better place to do a test.

From the start it is easy to see the family resemblance, with traditional Buccaneer lines that have been honed to perfection over time. My first impression of the 685 Exess was one of an extremely well balanced boat. A lot of thought has obviously gone into the overall design to make sure the aesthetics of the boat are just right. The hardtop looks like it is meant to be there and the external lines of the boat flow harmoniously from the moulded anchor platform to the portofino stern.



*The ride and handling in the rough water off Whangaroa Harbour was no problem.*



*The seats open to reveal massive storage areas.*



*The rear bin seat can be removed for access to the batteries and storage under the transom area.*

Released at the New Zealand Boat Show in May this year, the 685 Exess was an immediate success and achieved the prestigious All Purpose 6-7m Award. It was that same boat that I had to test three months later, although Buccaneer was busy building #8 in their Hamilton factory.

#### Family Resemblance

The new 685 incorporates a number of features from the large Buccaneer 735 Exess but in a smaller package. The hull is derived from the 735 Exess and Billfisher, but has had 500mm taken off the transom and the sheer has been lowered. To achieve a headroom clearance of 2.3m under the hardtop, the cockpit sole has been lowered by 760mm over the 735. The forward screens are from the 735 but sliding side windows have been added. It is interesting to note that all the design and tooling for the forward screens were done by Buccaneer and are the only cross curved screens on a trailerable hardtop in the country.

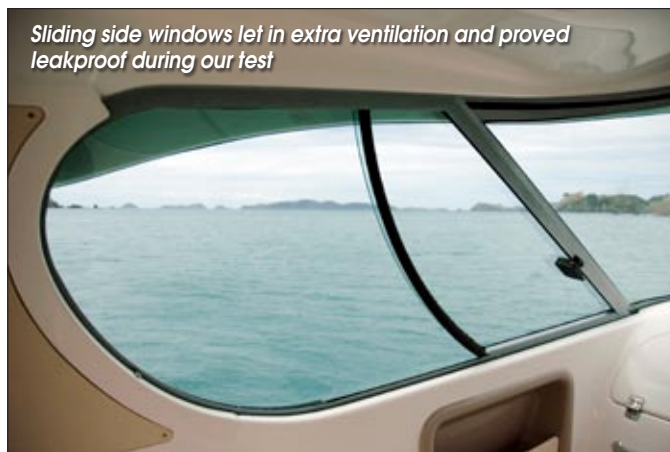
One Roca windscreen wiper is standard, with a second one on the passenger side optional. The hardtop is all new and lighter, but does retain some of the shape of the 650 and 735 Billfisher.

From the forward cockpit bulkhead through to the bow, including the cabin everything is almost identical to the 635 Exess and from the bulkhead back to the

transom its all 735 Exess. In fact the length of the cockpit is only 30mm shorter than a 735 and the layout is the same. The 685 Exess has a new full internal hull liner from gunnel to gunnel bow to stern. Room in the cabin has been increased by 75mm.

#### Lockable Cabin

The cabin offers two 2.1m long berths with an infill to make a large double berth. While the chemical toilet is a standard fixture under the centre forward



*Sliding side windows let in extra ventilation and proved leakproof during our test*

squab, you can upgrade to an electric head. Storage is provided under both side squabs in deep bins as well as in side shelves with deep cushioned fronts. Overhead a Cule hatch allows in extra light and also gives you access forward to the foredeck should you ever need to go there. All anchoring can be carried out from the helm with a Maxwell RC auto

rope/chain winch making the task easy.

The anchor locker is very large and will easily take 100m of anchor warp and 10m of chain. Following the popular trend of the 635 and 735 Exess, the 685 Exess has a fully lockable cabin with a sliding door. Also any water that finds its way into the cabin can simply drain through to the aft bilge.

With the increasing popularity of large MFDs, Buccaneer have made the dash capable of taking up to 14" screens.

Our test boat had a Simrad NX45 and it looked well suited, leaving space on the port side for the trim tab controls and winch switch to starboard. Triple Yamaha digital instruments are set into a burr elm panel, with the BEP switch panel and ignition controls either side of the helm. Other items on the dash were a Fusion stereo, VHF and fire extinguisher. A new feature for Buccaneer is a lower shelf, ideal for keys, cellphones and sunglasses.

The fully adjustable helm seat allows you to position it to where it is most comfortable for you. Standing or seated it's a great driving position and especially nice with the protection of the full hardtop. The 685 Exess is offered with either a full marine grade carpet sole or you can upgrade to Flexiteak.

Opposite in front of the passenger seat is a small glove box and open tray for



*A dash large enough to handle 14" MFDs.*

storage in the coaming, plus full-length side shelves complete with rod holders. The back-to-back seating units are separate moulds, with a slight variation in design between the two. The port-seating unit has been designed to accommodate an optional 40-litre Engel fridge unit, while both offer massive storage under and there's even plenty of space for dive bottles.

Behind the removable bin seat is



*Over 2m length berths, loads of head room and a head under the squab.*

access to the batteries, (now with plenty of height to handle larger batteries), cut-off switches and extra storage. Plenty of room for a holding tank or fresh water tank should you plumb up for either. There is also a large wet locker under the cockpit sole and the transom has a kill/bait tank to port and another storage locker starboard with wash down pump or fresh water rose. A central bait station looks after your fishing needs. An 1100 gph bilge pump with a float switch is set into the bilge to handle any water that comes into the cockpit.

#### All Fibreglass

Buccaneer have gradually been updating their construction systems over recent years and now use virtually no timber in their boats. The 685 has a full internal fibreglass liner and fibreglass tophat section stringers and girders under the sole. Everything is glued together with Plexis for a secure bonding. Buccaneer have once again made use of the High Modulus Smart Pac for the hardtop, deck and the hull liner. Either side of the central wet storage locker and 240-litre alloy fuel tank are foam filled sealed compartments.

Buccaneer have kept an eye on the weight of the boat and wanted to achieve a towing weight of less than 2220 kgs. Our test boat came in at around 2300 kgs with 180 litres of fuel. While it's not something that you'd tow with a Corolla, it's well suited to a six cylinder or V8 sedan and doesn't require the extra grunt of a diesel 4WD.

#### Bloody Steep

The 685 Exess is rated to 250hp, although for the test we had a 2010 Yamaha AETX 200, 3.3 litre 4 stroke which gave us close



*The new low profile Maxwell RC auto winch fits well in the foredeck recess.*

to 45 mph @ 5800 rpm with a 17" three blade stainless prop. A 19" would have increased the speed by at least 2-3 mph but sacrificed the performance at the bottom end. While this is probably the smallest rated horsepower you would fit to the 685 Exess, most have been sold with either 225hp or 250hp outboards.

Fitted with a 225hp outboard and 21" three blader you could expect a top speed of around 53 mph and if you really want some boogie then a 250hp is going to see the speedo nudging somewhere around 56 mph.

The first 685 Exess with a big bore 4.2 litre displacement, Yamaha 250, was due out of the factory shortly after our test, an engine that will certainly deliver awesome "out of the hole" performance and mid-range acceleration. The new engine is 19 kgs lighter than the Yamaha 200 AETX, is the same height, but runs a 1.75:1 gear ratio as opposed to the 2.00:1 of the 200 Yamaha AETX.

The day of the test, the waters off Whangaroa varied from between smooth to bloody steep! On the run down to Flat Island and into the shelter of Mahinepua, we ran in the following 1m sea



*The 685 has a full inner liner and comes with dedicated rod holders either side.*



The cockpit is designed for overnighting as well as day cruising, with an optional full canvas camper pack.

at a comfortable 31 mph. After playing around in the shorter choppy waters inside the Cavalli Islands we headed back to Whangaroa Harbour.

The wind and waves had certainly picked up from when we left the shelter of Whangaroa Harbour in the morning and it was a whole different set of waves that confronted us around the end of Flat Island. A stiff 35-knot NW had come in and it was right on the nose. The close 1.5m swells meant it was impossible to maintain any speed and I was restricted to around 15 mph until after a few miles I turned and with a beam sea increased that to around 22mph. Given the sea state I reckon the boat performed exceptionally well and thanks to the hard top we never got wet! The ride was as comfortable as you would expect given the conditions. What I was impressed with was the engine never

waivered and left me with constant on demand power despite us climbing and surfing on the swells.

**Ticks All The Boxes**

Personally I can't think of a better hardtop boat of a similar size that I would rate higher than the Exess 685. For me it ticks all the boxes and has the ability to be a true all-rounder, catering for the fishermen as well as those that just want to cruise around. It is a day boat with overnight concessions.

With a reasonably good option list you can transform the standard boat from the basic 685 to a smaller version of a fully decked out 735, including fridge, freshwater system, plumbed in head and shower and full camper canopy pack. Very easy to make the 685 into a full weekender.



The kill /bait tank can be plumbed up if you want a live bait tank.



*Standard features on Test Boat*

- ✓Hardtop ✓Compass ✓S/s rod holders
- ✓Compound curved screen
- ✓Chemical toilet ✓Cockpit lights
- ✓Lock-up cabin ✓Windscreen wiper
- ✓Fibreglass liner ✓CPC standard
- ✓Hydrive hydraulic steering

*Notable Options on Test Boat*

- ✓Simrad NX45 MFD ✓Maxwell rope/chain anchor winch ✓Extending canopy and clears ✓Trim tabs ✓Fusion MSRA200 stereo ✓Cobra VHF ✓Bait station.

**Make:** Buccaneer  
**Model:** 685 Exess  
**Designer:** Gerry Gerrand

Price As Tested:	\$ 138,090
Material:	GRP
Type:	Hardtop
LOA:	6.85m
Beam:	2.48m
Deadrise:	22.5°
Hull Config:	Deep Vee
Trailerable Wght:	2220kgs
Height on Trailer:	2.90m
Engine Capacity:	175hp-250hp
Power Options:	Outboard Only
Fuel Capacity:	240 litres

**Performance**

Revs	Speed MPH	Litres/hour
600 rpm	3.0 mph	2.2 lph
1000 rpm	5.0 mph	4.0 lph
1500 rpm	6.5 mph	6.2 lph
2000 rpm	7.5 mph	9.2 lph
2500 rpm	10.0 mph	15.5 lph
3000 rpm	15.5 mph	21.6 lph
3500 rpm	23.5 mph	25.3 lph
4000 rpm	29.0 mph	30.5 lph
4500 rpm	33.5 mph	40.0 lph
5000 rpm	37.0 mph	46.5 lph
5500 rpm	40.5 mph	56.5 lph
6000 rpm	44.5 mph	73.0 lph

Speeds recorded on a Lowrance GPS and rounded off to the nearest half knot.

**Engine**

Make:	Yamaha
Type:	4-Stroke
Horsepower:	200hp
Cyl Type:	V6
Max RPM:	6000 rpm
Propeller:	17" 3 blade s/s
Retail Price:	\$ 31,890

**Trailer**

Make:	Voyager
Axles:	Tandem
Suspension:	Springs
Braked:	Hydraulic
Rollers:	Multi
Std Equipment:	Walk board, Hold downs, Sub Lights.

**Manufacturer:** Buccaneer Boats Ltd.  
**Boats supplied by:** Buccaneer Boats Ltd, 21 Forman Rd. Hamilton, New Zealand  
 E: jenny@buccaneer.co.nz Ph: 07 - 849 7129  
 www.buccaneer.co.nz