



Stacer hopes to make a real splash with their new range of offshore models. A 168L fuel capacity will give a safe range of 159nm at 25kts.

The new Stacer Ocean Ranger is a rugged offshore alloy model with a long pedigree. Our test off Queensland's Gold Coast revealed it might challenge many fibreglass designs when it comes to ride and practicality.

It amused me recently when a mate and fellow boat tester was abused online for his comment that a particular aluminium boat rode as well as a lot of fibreglass versions of similar size. It sure opened a can of beach worms. And to give the trolls some credit, such a claim would have been laughed down a few short years ago because many tinnies were pretty ordinary in the soft-riding department.

Plastic boat tragics would do well to score a ride in one of the new generation of plate boats because many doubters will be surprised how well they perform. The Stacer 619 on show here is such a boat.

Stacer will be a familiar name to most anglers, having been in production since the 1970s. Lots of families would have owned one at some stage, with examples of their compact pressed alloy tinnies in use on bays, estuaries and inland rivers all around the country.

This recently released 619 Ocean Ranger is a different kettle of fish. It's a big, ballsy, heavy-duty plate boat designed for offshore fishing duty. It's built to withstand rough treatment, to perform well and to be returned to sparkling glory at the end of the day with a quick hose down.

As well as the hardtop version of our test, the 619 is also available as a cuddy cabin with

bimini, but the enclosed hardtop is the flavour of the month at present so it should prove very popular. Lots of colder climate anglers have taken to hardtops for obvious reasons, but their northern cousins are also finding the enclosed cabin is a practical solution to getting out of the harsh sunshine. They are also ideal for keeping everyone dry on overnight forays to outer reefs.

No question, too, about the looks of a hardtop. They are toughness on a stick. With its gleaming Cortez Silver paint job, the test boat looked the goods and the red accents of the side stripes set off the red cowl of the Evinrude E-TEC Gen2 engine. For those of you who like a

bit of bling on your ride, Stacer has a wide range of colours and graphics to individualise a rig to your specifications.

Big sliding windows let in enough breeze to keep the cab nice and cool, while a height of around 6'4" means it's spacious, airy and bright.

Looks count for nothing in an offshore fisher if the hull isn't up to the task and Stacer have put a lot of development into their EVO Advanced Hull to make sure it lives up to the Ocean Ranger badge.

When you step aboard, the immediate impression is that everything looks like it's built to last. Fittings are sturdy and handrails are thick and attached with welds that haven't spared the rod. Raw checkerplate on the floor and the metallic clang when you drop the folding lounge at the transom let you know you're on a tinny, but apart from a couple of handcrafted welds here and there, things are neat.

Wide side decks make practical seating and have indestructible-looking rod holders welded in. Low shelves either side run the length of the cockpit and are raised to lock feet in at deck level.

A starboard side gate at the transom uses a deck-level live bait tank with clear window as



The Stacer's hardtop adds an even more purposeful look to an already eye catching design.

in interior step, but I found that a swim ladder folding up to the gate from the outside makes access a bit awkward.

Centrally located on the transom is an aluminium bait table with nylon cutting board, overboard drains, two cup holders, storage shelf



We found the ride soft and predictable. It's probably one of the best performing hulls out of the Telwater factory and it matches the company's claim that this is a true bluewater fishing boat.

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: \$80,100

GENERAL

Type: Monohull Hardtop
 Material: Alloy-5mm bottom, 4mm sides
 Length: 6.62m LOA
 Beam: 2.4m
 Weight: 1044kg
 Deadrise: 21 degrees

CAPACITIES

People: 7
 Rec. HP: 150-200
 Fuel: 168L

ENGINE

Make/model: Evinrude E200XH E-TEC
 Gen 2
 Type: V-6 fuel injected two stroke
 Weight: 253kg
 Displacement: 3441cc
 Gear ratio: 1.85:1
 Propeller:

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and five rod slots. It's set at a practical height for most people and it would serve as a sturdy leaning post, although the fold-down seat will also be a popular perch for a couple of crew when underway.

The crew will also like the way the port side of the transom has been left clear, allowing easy access over the back to reach a roto-moulded burley bucket, but they might not be so keen on the potentially line-catching bollards in the corners.

With the seat base in its open position, the service area for fuel filter, battery and main switches can be easily accessed.

The standard 168L fuel tank still leaves room in the cockpit deck for a decent sized kill tank, or you can opt for an extra 80L of fuel and forego

the fish storage. More rod storage is found at the rear of the hardtop and they are a clever Stacer design with six aluminium holders that fold down individually at the turn of a knob. It's a good system and makes things much easier to reach rods which would be otherwise too high for a lot of people.

There is access to the bow from either side deck or through a large hatch in the cuddy cabin roof. A grip rail helps if you choose the side option, and up front you'll find an open hold housing a 1000w SAV drum winch and a plough anchor under a ship sized bowsprit between a pair of 32mm split rails.

Carpet lining and a 120mm wide extruded aluminium shelf lend a softer look to the cuddy cabin interior. Sides are painted white and the

The new generation E-Tec 200 is a punchy V6 two stroke that delivered sparkling performance and a top speed of over 42kts (78kph).





Everything on the Stacer is built to withstand hard work. The big drum winch is easily accessed through the cabin hatch, while the anchor rests on a sturdy bowsprit.

roof is silver, while seats along the sides are carpet covered for a measure of comfort, and with the roof high enough to sit up to four, it's a very usable space.

Naturally, the standout feature of the layout is the helm area under the lofty hardtop. Aluminium boats, especially enclosed hardtops, are by their nature bound to be noisy so carpet

PERFORMANCE

2kts @ 1000rpm -2.3kph
 6kts @ 1500rpm -5.3lph
 7kts @ 2000rpm -9.6lph
 9kts @ 2500rpm -14.6lph
 11kts @ 2600rpm -16lph — on the plane
 18kts @ 3000rpm 19lph
 25kts @ 3500rpm -23.7lph
 29kts @ 4000rpm -30.6lph
 33kts @ 4500rpm -39lph
 36kts @ 5000rpm -49lph
 40kts @ 5500rpm -63lph
 42.6kts @ 5800rpm -68lph — wide open throttle

lining of the sides and ceiling is a welcome feature and, as demonstrated later, it keeps all external noise to a minimum.

Contoured bucket seats are located on metal bases with inbuilt storage, and foot rests offer the bracing support needed to drive from a seated position in rougher conditions. A wide cuddy walkthrough divides the dash into two



The spacious cabin offers protection from the cold or the sun and has ample ventilation to keep you cool.



With lots of cockpit space and a well equipped transom, the 619 is ready for fishing. The folding seat keeps things neat and the door will be useful to drag big fish on board.

sections with a storage bin and grab rail for the navigator and room for screens and instruments ahead of the skipper.

A single Lowrance HDS9 screen shares sounder and mapping duties and a 4.3" ICON display shows engine readouts. Switches control a wiper with freshwater wash, Volvo QL trim tabs, the winch and the usual array of lights and bilge pumps.

Speed on the Broadwater delivered spirited performance from the Evinrude 200hp engine. This Gen 2 E-TEC has bucket loads of low down grunt and we were on the plane at only 2600rpm and 11kts. The most efficient cruise was 25kts at 3500rpm for 23.7lph and a theoretical range of 159nm

with 10 per cent in reserve. At wide-open throttle of 5800rpm, we hit 42.6kts where the boat felt stable and tracked true without any chine walking.

On powering out through the Gold Coast Seaway, we found the sort of lumpy short three-to-four metre sea perfect for testing the claims of Stacer about their offshore range.

The Sea Ranger's sharp entry and 21-degree deadrise cut effortlessly through the waves and the hefty weight of the 1044kg hull kept us on track. Landings were soft and it was easy to feel the smooth shape of the underwater profile allowing us to settle into the water with a gradual effect.

Speeds around 20kts into the wind

demonstrated this is a very capable boat in the sort of rougher conditions encountered regularly by those anglers short of time to wait for a better day. At rest, the boat was fishable and belied the theory that wide chines are necessary to balance a deep vee.

Pricing ex-Queensland is just on \$80,000 as tested and ready to go on an alloy trailer.

Anyone interested in the no-nonsense benefits of an alloy hull that can handle rough treatment and rough seas would do well to consider the 619. It's a good-looking boat with superior weather protection from a well-respected brand. Resale value is good from Stacers, so it should hold its value for years to come. **FL**