

STACER 539 SEA RUNNER



Those who entered the recent Hospital Research Foundation Home Lottery would have noticed a Stacer boat among the ancillary prizes. This time around it was one of Stacer's most popular new models, the 539 Sea Runner and, as you'd expect, the lucky winner towed the rig away from Sports Marine with an ear-to-ear grin! We took the prize boat for a spin and some new pics a couple of weeks before the lottery was drawn, and can tell you it's an impressive family outfit with dozens of applications here.

The Sea Runner is a half cab that's well suited to both family use and offshore fishing. As a genuine all-rounder, it provides a useful blend of cockpit space and cabin

accommodation, which is always useful with the wife and kids on board. There's enough room out back to fish three quite comfortably and, with the inclusion of a V-berth in-fill cushion, reasonable overnight accommodation up front. There's oodles of dry storage space beneath the cabin bunks, one of which comes with a hinged lid and the other with a lift-off cover.

The Sea Runner's dash is one piece with a cut out section that provides easy cabin access, while the helm station is quite basic, but seems to work well enough. The test boat was fitted with a medium-size GPS/sounder display, mounted on the top dash panel at eye level for the seated operator. Directly beneath that you'll find smart gauges

and, to the right of the steering wheel, toggle switches and VHF radio.

A three-piece, wrap-around windscreen would provide reasonable protection, but there's no doubt the bimini top (standard) and clears would come in handy in a choppy day offshore. The bimini fitted to the test boat also carried a six-rod overhead storage rack, which these days is a popular and virtually essential accessory.

The Sea Runner's cockpit layout is once again basic, but functional in a boat that's designed for general purpose usage. Three quarter-length side pockets are deep enough to handle gaffs, tag poles and paddles, and a collapsible aft bench seat would be useful for when the family is on board.

Dropping this seat or erecting it again takes all of ten seconds, and when it's in the down position, it provides a comfortable padded support for those fishing across the back of the boat.

Fuel capacity of 95 litres seems a little on the light side, particularly for offshore fishing, and this would have to be taken into account by prospective buyers. Having said that, however, a tank of this size would suffice for general family use and inshore fishing, particularly with motor installations at the lower end of the recommended horse power range.

Stacer recommends four stroke outboards of between 60-130hp for the 539 hull, and the test boat was fitted with a 90hp Mercury four stroke, which seemed to be a pretty good choice for everyday use. We tested this hull with a 100hp Merc a couple of years ago, and I could pick very little difference in performance with the 90 on the back. This is an 8 valve, SOHC in-line four cylinder engine with a 2.1 litre displacement and is equipped with electronic fuel injection. It weighs in at just 163kg, making it one of the lightest four strokes in its class.

Our fickle summer weather has made organising boat tests something of a nightmare so far this year. It has either been 40 degrees and blowing hard from the north or half that temperature and blowing even harder from the south; juggling the odd reasonable day has certainly been more challenging than normal.

Peter Heinrich and I dropped the Stacer in at North Haven under bright early morning sunshine, but with a foggy forecast for the remainder of the day. It was puffing consistently and obviously building, so the early start had obviously been the clever way to go.

Right from the outset it was obvious that the 90hp Mercury was made for this boat. Acceleration from rest was pretty good, and the Sea Runner



The hull works neatly and efficiently



A drop-down aft lounge makes things neat and tidy back there



Top speed of 36 knots is quite spritely

climbed effortlessly onto the plane under moderate throttle. We had a calm stretch of water immediately north of the marina entrance, providing the opportunity to push up to near full revs and a measured top speed of 36 knots. The tachometer read only 5300rpm at WOT, indicating the need for a slightly smaller propeller to achieve the optimum 5800 revs.

I was impressed by the way the Sea Runner handled tight corners over flat water. Pushing hard into a series of turns at around 30 knots there was minimal loss of momentum and, with the motor trimmed well in, no hint of cavitation.

Stability at rest was about what I'd expected, and is best described as average to good. Stacer doesn't quote an actual deadrise figure among the 539's specifications, but I would anticipate around 19-20 degrees. It's quite a beamy boat, which definitely helps out with stability, but you'd have to load bodies and gear thoughtfully when heading offshore

in a hull that weighs a modest 550kg.

We found some gulf swell and moderate chop as we headed further offshore, where the Sea Runner performed very well. It's surprisingly quiet on the water for an alloy boat, and we travelled comfortably at around 30 knots over the obviously building sea. The hull feels solid and secure under foot, and I was impressed by the total lack of rattles and bangs that come from some plate aluminiums.

As far as general purpose family/fishing boats are concerned, Stacer's 539 Sea Runner is a very good one. It's built strongly, fitted out well considering its market niche, and is certain to appeal to a broad cross section of prospective Aussie boat buyers. I would have no hesitation in taking the Sea Runner well offshore on a reasonable day, and towing it across the state for a fishing vacation would be about as simple and economical as it gets.

HOW MUCH?

As tested \$52,950

GENERAL INFO'

Length: 5.61m

Beam: 2.36m

Hull Weight: 550kg

Aluminium gauge: Topsides 2.5mm, bottom and transom 3.0mm

CAPACITIES

Fuel: 95 litres

Maximum load: 7 adults

HP Range: 60 - 130

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