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Arvor 20 revisited

Col Buckley | August 03 » Area Articles / New South Wales / Sydney / Sydney North / Save as PDF | A+ A-

This classic French shaft-drive inboard has undergone a makeover for Australian conditions

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If you have a mooring and are looking for a small fishing boat to attach it to, take a gander at the French-designed Arvor 20. This enclosed wheelhouse boat was initially intended as a fishing platform for the turbulent English Channel and comes to Oz with a proven pedigree of safety and fishability.

We ran a review of this boat a year or so ago but there have been a few new features added to this pocket cruiser that are worth a mention. The Arvor 20 is now manufactured under strict guidelines and the watchful eye of Peter Collins at Nowra, on the South Coast. Collins Marine, based at Alexandria, is the Arvor agent for Australia.

Arvors are now a regular sight on many of our waterways, proving that Peter has cornered a nice little niche market. Speak to any Arvor owner and the positive vibes are hard to miss.

The changes to the latest models are not numerous but they are significant. The four-piece windscreen is a significant departure from the curved, wrap-around, Euro-look screen of old. Constructed from toughened glass, the new screen increases the safety factor. If a large wave or object hits, the screen will withstand the impact without shattering and endangering the helmsman and crew.

A fibreglass rib system has also been incorporated in the hull for extra rigidity – not that the boat needed it. Wooden cross-stringers, fibreglassed over and sealed, make for a very strong body that will resist lateral flexing whatever the weather dishes up.

This extra reinforcing also acts as a stronger rostrum for the super-economical Nanni shaft-drive diesel. This rigidity helps with subduing engine vibration and enhancing shaft harmonics. This extra stiffening should improve a rock-solid boat that's already built to survey standards.

Another new feature is the shortened port cabin bunk, to allow passenger standing room in the cockpit. A small navigator's seat, which folds away, can be supplied as an optional extra. This newly created area let me stand next to the helmsman, maintaining a good view through the windscreen and without having to sit or stand close in between the bunks to conduct a conversation. There is still dry storage under the bunks and the infill will turn the V-berth into a double bed. The overhead hatch can be opened to provide flow-through ventilation – something not so necessary in European climes but essential in our Summer.

I must admit I have a liking for this vessel because it has all the requirements I look for in a fishing platform. The boat features a full walk-around configuration – ideal for fighting hard-running game fish. High, split bow rails make for good hand-holds and there are grab rails on the cabin roof for extra security.

The large anchor well can accommodate heaps of warp and chain plus a variety of anchors. A single cross bollard and the stainless bow roller on the moulded sprit will take all the kellicking forces our reefs can dish up without showing signs of stress.

In the cabin, the helmsman presides over a stainless steel wheel and a single-lever gear and throttle control. Within easy view on a practically laid-out dash are a fuel gauge, rev counter, a switch panel incorporating circuit breakers, and engine warning lights. There is plenty of room for additional electronics for all those who like pushing buttons.

Wide coamings

Outside, strong stainless steel cleats sit aft and passenger grab rails are well-positioned in the cockpit. For those who troll the blue yonder, a few more rod holders can easily be fitted to the wide coamings and a set of game poles would not detract from the stylish lines. Safety is paramount when offshore and the Arvor has this to excess. Under way, the boat is bone dry, even in big seas, as the large shoulders deflect spray well away from passengers.

The high coamings also help to keep water out and occupants in. If it starts to rain or blow hard, the fully enclosed helm station will keep captain and crew dry until the weather clears. Something that takes a bit of getting used to is turning the Arvor 20. Instead of leaning into a turn, as a conventional outboard monohull would, the Arvor 20 stays upright with no inclination to lean.

At rest with three hefty blokes on one side, the boat hardly dipped at all. Characteristics like this add to overall security. The easily-accessed Nanni turbocharged diesel will purr away all day with the four-bladed

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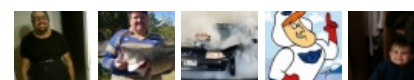
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prop pushing the boat at 20 knots-plus if you want to get there fast. However, at a leisurely 15 to 18 knots, the Nanni will drink a meagre five to eight litres of juice per hour. There is a mile of room out the back for at least four to fish very comfortably, even if a large live bait, storage or bait preparation table was added in the middle of the extensive deck.

The rear tiller arm with an optional throttle is terrific for trolling or manoeuvring to pick up crab traps, or just to be outside enjoying our glorious weather. Once standard, the stainless steel gunwale rollers for hauling up fish traps (a bit of a pest if you are not a commercial fisherman) are now optional.

The deck is self-draining and has a non-skid surface. The engine hatch is raised about 25cm and can stub a few toes. There is a wet (remains full of water) reticulating live bait tank underfloor near the engine hatch that will keep a dozen yellowtail or half a dozen slimy mackerel active while the boat is under way.

Because the boat has a single shaft-drive donk, a bit of experience is needed when docking. The Arvor 20 won't respond to wheel movements unless there is water flow over the rudder, so short bursts of power can create the water movement required for manoeuvring.

This French-designed boat is trailerable but, at around 1900kg fully loaded, a V8 or a large 4WD is needed as a tow vehicle. There's a fair bit of mass to this little lady.

As a traditionalist (call me old fashioned!) I am drawn to the classic lines of this craft. Maybe it's just the memories of those enclosed-wheelhouse boats plying the River Thames in London that I used to sit and watch for hours as a little kid. The Arvor 20 captures those halcyon days but has taken a gigantic leap into the 21st Century with the style, performance and gizmos expected on today's modern boats.

SPECIFICATIONS

Hull Fibreglass

Length 6.16m

Beam 2.48m

Draft 0.65m

Weight (approx) 1800kg

Fuel Capacity 80 litres

Engine 85hp Nanni diesel 5.250TDI

Propeller Nanni 4 blade 19 x 22"

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Stainless steel pulpit; stainless steel keel protection; anchor davit and locker; mooring cleats; stainless grab rails; cabin hatch; 2 rod holders; live-bait tank; boat hook; emergency tiller; removable cockpit bench; stainless steel ladder; bilge pump; switch panel with circuit breakers; fuel gauge; engine instruments; electric windscreen wiper; navigation lights; interior light; fully upholstered V-berth.

OPTIONS

Bimini top; deck wash; extra rod holders; berley bucket; 27MHz radio; cockpit throttle; marlin board; companion seat; cockpit seats; VHF radio.

Basic boat price \$64,500 Inc GST

Boat supplied by: Collins Marine, Unit 26, 17-21 Bowden Street, Alexandria NSW 2015. Ph 02 9319 5222 Fax 02 9319 5561

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Peter Le Blang December 10

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