



FREEDOM CRUISE REVIEW

By Warren Steptoe
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Freedom's new 'Cruise' model represents a step forward into a brave new world for this Queensland boat builder. For many years Freedom have been renowned as builders of excellent, value for money entry-level packages, but with the Cruise they've stepped outside this square. Now, Freedom is moving towards the top-of-the-range where the big guys rule. They have done an excellent job on this boat, although that, as they say, is getting ahead of the story.

The Freedom Cruise is set-up as a comfortable weekender for a couple, or a day cruiser for owners plus a couple of friends. The layout is similar to most boats of this style with a bow bunk, deep bucket seats in the helm area and an aft lounge/ dinette. And powered by a 140hp Johnson four-stroke and swinging a 19" pitch prop, we didn't expect the 6.2m Cruise to perform like a ski racer — and it didn't. But it wasn't designed to either.

In the confines of the Noosa River estuary, the combination was nimble enough and while the EFI DOHC four- cylinder outboard didn't shove you in the back in your seat when the taps were turned on, it was no slouch with a top speed of almost 35 knots (34.9).

This boat is 'Cruise' by name and cruise by nature. And this Freedom does it effortlessly between 4000rpm (19.3 knots) and 5000rpm (27.3 knots), translating into economical cruising.

FIT-OUT

Her level of appointment is high with standard fittings like an electric anchor winch, a built-in refrigerator and a sink with pressurised freshwater on tap. The standard equipment inventory also includes suede upholstery, a fully lined interior and a height/reach-adjustable helm seat mounted on a suspension post.

There is a transom shower and a spacious U-shaped aft lounge, again upholstered in suede, with a removable table that makes it a dinette when required.

However, our first thoughts as we clambered onboard via the folding telescopic ladder mounted on the stern was about suede in a small boat... it's inevitably going to get wet in bad conditions, even if the guests can refrain from plonking themselves down on the lounge while still dripping wet from a swim. Surely, the suede upholstery can't last.

Well, we need not have worried, because apparently it's not real suede (as in leather) at all, it is an Italian-made suede replica that is reportedly totally saltwater proof. While enquiring about the suede we were informed that all of the Freedom's seating contains no timber. Even the backing boards of the bunks and lounge seats are made from inert material, so wood rot isn't going to be a problem.

The hull is also constructed without the use of timber and all of the internal-stringer system is made from fibreglass. Armoured glass is used for the windscreen and the Targa bar is standard fitment. So is the shade canopy seen in our photographs and all are top quality fittings.



Ergonomically, the Cruise gets plenty of brownie points in the seating department for the aft lounge's high backrest and the extra-long berths in the bow. Even without the infill cushion in place a six foot adult can stretch out in comfort with room to spare. The aft lounge is big enough for four adults plus an ankle biter or two, while the helm seats can be rotated 180 degrees so everyone in the cockpit can join in on the conversation. Without the clears in place, between the windscreen and bimini top, the Cruise's interior is well ventilated for those tropical Noosa summer afternoons, as is the cabin when the big Weaver hatch is open. The cabin temperature is also lower because the roof is lined with carpet.

Storage is always at premium in any boat, but more so if a couple intend to live onboard for a day or two as the Cruise invites. Accordingly, storage is something the Cruise doesn't lack and it was probably while the team was lifting seat cushions and bunks and checking out the enormous pockets along each side of the cockpit that we began to realise how much we liked her. Under the bow berth we expected to find storage lockers. After all, every half-cabin boat since the year dot has had them there. But under the aft lounge we found the unexpected. Freedom has added a built in modular system that includes a lift –out moulded centre section. Plus, on each side, beside each helm seat, are small side pockets for sunnies and those other personal items that seem to disappear all too quickly if you let them get too far away.

Gracing the helm station is a new GME weatherproof VHF radio and a Lowrance sounder, plus the usual speedo and tachometer — black on white, very stylish — fitted behind a sporty steering wheel. The outboard control lever is set into a moulded side panel beside the helm seat. It's easy to reach and coupled with the adjustable seat and footrest, creates a comfortable helm position for all drivers.

OVERALL

The Cruise is a very liveable boat that's extremely easy to board over the stern. Access is aided by strategically placed antislip panels in the engine-well, thoughtfully placed grab bars, a recessed fuel filler and pop-up stern cleats. However, exit and entry over the stern 'does' involve standing on the aft lounge, which was when we were concerned about the suede covering.

The on-water test was conducted on the Noosa River where an afternoon sea breeze raised a light chop that was no test for this variable deadrise hull. However, it did showcase just how quietly the boat rides. There were no annoying rattles and engine noise was a mere murmur.

Freedom's Glen Grams told Modern Boating that he rarely sees a Cruise leave the factory without the optional toilet under the bunk cushions and most were also optioned with LCD TVs and DVD players. The word optional, regarding the loo, surprised the team a little. Considering the comprehensive inventory we thought that the loo would be a standard item. Even so, we found plenty to like about Freedom's Cruise. And nothing at all we didn't like, which is a substantial compliment in itself.

POWER PLAY

Powered by a 140hp Johnson fourstroke and swinging a 19" pitch prop, we didn't expect the Freedom 6.2m Cruise to perform like a ski racer and it didn't. Nonetheless, for people who have no ambitions of ski racing, we found the combination quite pleasant.

In the confines of the Noosa River estuary, the combination was nimble enough and while the EFI DOHC four-cylinder outboard didn't shove you in the back in your seat when the taps were turned on, it was no slouch with a top speed of almost 35 knots (34.9). This boat is 'Cruise' by name and cruise by nature. And she does it effortlessly between 4000rpm (19.3 knots) and 5000rpm (27.3 knots), which translates into extremely economical flat-water family cruising.



ENGINE ROOM

The Cruise was powered by a 140hp EFI DOHC Johnson four-stroke, swinging a 19" pitch prop. It cruises effortlessly between 19.3 knots and 27.3 knots, which translates into extremely economical flat-water cruising.

PERFORMANCE

In light conditions with four adults onboard the Freedom Cruise/Johnson J140PX4SR combination produced the following performance figures. Speed to RPM: 10.1 knots @ 2800rpm, 19.3 knots @ 4000rpm, 27.3 knots @ 5000rpm, 34.9 knots @ 5800rpm.

SPECIFICATIONS

- LOA: 5.79m
- LENGTH: 6.2m
- BEAM: 2.5m
- WEIGHT: 1900kg
- FUEL: 170lt
- FRESHWATER: 60lt
- PRICING: 57,000
- WEBSITE: www.freedomboats.com.au

+ Value for money, Access via stern

– Loo not standard Words & Photos by Warren Steptoe

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