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JUST CRUISING

WORDS + PHOTOS IAN MACRAE

THE WHITTLEY CRUISER RANGE was designed to meet the needs of a couple, or a couple with two children, looking for a true overnighter they could live aboard in some comfort. A bit like a caravan on water, or maybe a smaller version of a houseboat. But there aren't many houseboats out there that can hit 47mph and deliver sports boat-like handling, but more about that later.

The first cab off the rank in the Whitley Cruiser range is the 550. With twin 2m bunks in the bow, she's an ideal

first boat for a couple wanting to spend a few nights onboard in relative comfort.

But it's quite a jump up to the next boat in the range — the Cruiser 660. This is the mid-sized cruising boat well suited to Aussie families. She's a fully featured weekender capable of extended bluewater cruising, yet at the same time, she can still be towed by a middle of the range 4WD. Computer designed in Whitley's dedicated design studio, the Whitley Cruiser 660 is both refined and entirely functional in every respect.

And the level of factory fit-out in the standard rig is quite staggering.

She's a great boat, but it's a big jump up in size and money from the 550. This is one of the reasons why the Whitley team decided to create a model between the 550 and 660.

With the use of CAD technology and 3D modelling, the Whitley Cruiser 630 was born! And while she's only 0.3m shorter than the 660 and .07m less in the beam, she's almost \$15,000 less to buy, while still boasting all of the



Home sweet home... the whole family will love this nifty overnighter

features that make the Whittle Cruiser 660 a true Aussie winner.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

The *Modern Boating* team first drove the Cruiser 630 during the final judging for the 2005 AMIF Boat of the Year Awards. And we were blown away! The standard of fixtures and fit-out were superb, the innovation of design and layout was outstanding and with a 4.3lt MPI 220hp MerCruiser providing the punch, she was quite a sporty machine, while still

remaining economical to run.

On the day of this test, Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay really lived up to her reputation of being a somewhat unruly lady. The air temperature was seven degree, the wind-chill factor would have been well below brass-monkey levels and a 30-knot sou'wester had turned the 'Bay' into something that resembled a washing machine. But it didn't worry Neville Whittle and I, we were tucked cosily in behind the full set of purpose-built clears, snug as two bugs in a rug.

Though I can't say the same for the rest of the team onboard the Clearwater 1900, also on test that day. It didn't have clears on and the driving rain was making it somewhat uncomfortable for the boys.

Back on the 630, the well-proven Whittle hull treated the multi-directional chop with disdain. Her wide, well defined chines, 20-degree deadrise, sharp bow entry and pronounced strakes, worked perfectly together to trap air under the hull and deliver a soft and dry

CRUISING CLUBS

Whittley Clubs are based in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

They operate independently (but with the support) of Whittley Cruisers and the dealership network.

The objective of the Whittley clubs is to forge friendships, enjoy outings together and participate in club events. Weekend rallies involve using your Whittley boat and include informative but informal talks on boating.

Clubs also organize weekend Whittley rallies, giving owners the chance to socialise and cruise in numbers. This is a wonderful way to explore new waterways and gain confidence in using your new Whittley cruiser.

For further information contact Rob Brown, Whittley Club NSW, on 0418 287 364.

ride. There was no banging and crashing all over the ocean. Even head-on into the swells, the hull tracked straight in a following sea and even hard turns in adverse condition didn't unsettle this impressive hull's stability.

This is one bluewater hull I have no problem recommending to anyone looking for a boat that can easily handle the strong afternoon winds that tend to plague places like northern Moreton Bay and the Whitsunday Islands at certain times of the year — the ride's that good!

Fully loaded with 200lt of fuel, 100lt of freshwater and four adults onboard, this boat weighs around 2800kg, so she's no lightweight, but the 4.3lt 220hp MPI MerCruiser had more than enough grunt to get the 630 out of the hole and planing quickly. She'll hold on the plane at 10mph pulling 2000rpm, will cruise superbly all day doing 30mph at 3500rpm and tops out at 47mph at 5200rpm. The boat needs no more power than this for optimum performance.

LAYOUT

The interior of the 630 is divided into

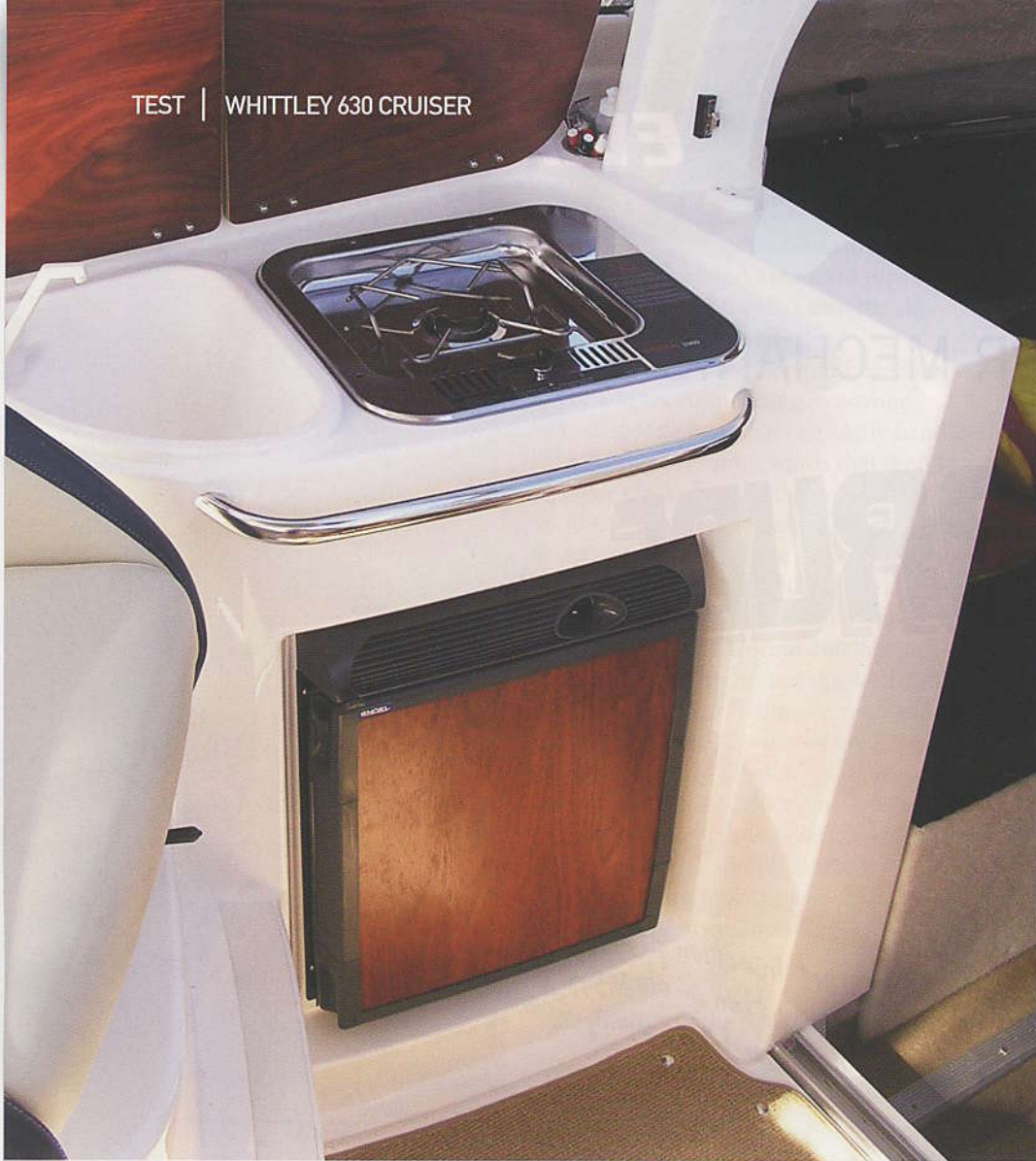
four distinct areas. The plush, forward cabin has a huge double berth, toilet, plenty of storage and access to the bow through the wide hatch in the cabin roof. The driver's position features excellent visibility, top helm ergonomics and all the instrumentation even the most fastidious skipper could require.

There's a step down to port in front of the navigator's seat, which creates more room to work in the galley. But it also stops the navigator from standing beside the skipper and still being able to see forward clearly.

The galley features a single-burner stove, a sink unit with hot/cold water and a refrigerator. Most owners normally also opt for a stainless steel barbecue, which can be sited on one of the aft rails. The aft cockpit is quite large for a stern-drive boat, because the engine bay doesn't encroach too far into the cockpit. In-floor lockers, side pockets, an Esky under the passenger's seat — the 630's got it all. The removable rear table converts into another double berth so when the clears are in place, this area becomes a weatherproof bedroom for the kids, or a couple of friends.



The choice of hull colour, upholstery and covers remains in the hands of new owners. Whittley goes out of its way to satisfy its customers.



Whittley cruisers have been describe as mini apartments or caravans on water. Why? Because these boats have all the good gear to make a weekend afloat for a family of four a wonderful bonding experience.



The last usable area is the swim platform. It's wide enough for three people to stand on without crowding and a rail aids security. It makes an ideal spot for the kids to fish from in calm water.

OVERALL

With the camper canopy fitted, the entire boat can be zipped up to create a secure home-away-from-home on the water. The canopy is included in the standard fit-out and is manufactured by Whittley in its own trim shop.

So, as the Whittley team says in the brochure: "Why would you even consider buying a holiday shack when you can enjoy the freedom and flexibility of a floating abode?"

Look at the Whittley Cruiser 630 as a luxurious, compact, floating apartment. One that if you wake up in the morning and don't like the view, you simply move. Plus, how many apartments do you know that you can ski behind? You can on a Whittley! ⚓

SPECS | WHITTLEY 630 CRUISER

ENGINE ROOM

A 4.3lit 220hp MPI MerCruiser powers the Whittlet 630 Cruiser.

PERFORMANCE

With two adults onboard in atrocious conditions on Port Phillip Bay the 630 returned the following performance figures.

MPH	RPM
10.....	2000
30.....	3500
47.....	5200

LOA:	6.9m
Length:	6.3m
Beam:	2.33m
Weight:	2500kg
Deadrise:	20 Degrees
Fuel:	200lt
Freshwater:	150lt
Price:	\$100,011 (Base)
Contact:	(03) 9798 8883
Website:	www.whittley.com.au

+ Excellent dry ride
Intelligent layout

- Galley step down