

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

The Sailfish 2800 Gamefisher is a serious offshore boat perfect for reef fishos with all the creature comforts.

By Mark Ward

THE Sailfish 2800 Gamefisher is a purpose-built offshore fishing vessel that is without doubt one of the most impressive and complete boats I've had the pleasure of reviewing.

Sailfish Catamarans has been on the scene for over 25 years now and has grown a solid reputation and a loyal following of owners. Talking to Gavan Daly from Sailfish dealer, Webbe Marine, a large number of the orders they now receive are from repeat customers.

Fisho got to review a 2800 Gamefisher that had been sold and with the owner on board. It was a great opportunity to discuss the functionality of the Gamefisher with someone who knows it well. The owner Rob is a mad keen reef angler from Brisbane and purchased the Sailfish to chase snapper and other reefies with his large family and friends. And I don't doubt that Rob has a heap of friends with a boat like this.

Rob previously owned an eight-metre fibreglass monohull but had a mate who owned the smaller 5.5 metre Sailfish. The two mates did a few trips up north in the Sailfish and Rob started comparing it to his bigger, heavier glass boat. Rob was taken aback by how well the Sailfish handled the rough stuff, how good the ride was, how quiet the hull was and how economical it was to run. The 5.5 performed as well as Rob's eight-metre hull but in a smaller, cheaper and more economical package.

After being impressed by his mate's Sailfish, Rob went looking for a new reef fishing vessel and just couldn't go past the Sailfish. Rob told Fisho:

"I changed my mind eight times but just kept going back to the Sailfish".

He went on to say that the finish was what sealed the deal. The welds, paint, floor and attention to detail is sealed it but the fishing that Rob experienced in the older 5.5m kept playing on his mind. With the Gamefisher 2800 being 8.8m long with a fat 2.8m beam, it's a lot of boat and a lot bigger than the 5.5m Sailfish that originally impressed Rob.

Not only is Rob keen to get out and bottom-bash the reefs out from Moreton Bay, but he is looking forward to extended trips away, especially out from the Queensland town of 1770, which is one of Rob's favourite locations. The 2800 Gamefisher has a range of over 600kms which allows Rob to be out for days without having to return to fuel up.

The boat has been fitted out accordingly. It has plenty of well insulated large eskies and two big kill tanks that are very well designed with good drainage and a recessed bung to ensure it can be thoroughly cleaned out. The sink has been moved to the transom and a four burner gas stove takes its place under the cover of the hard-top.

Rob is not new to fishing the reefs and Sailfish have worked with him to ensure that everything he wished for has been installed. Even a hand washing facility at the gunwales where he baits up has been fitted as well as a hose at the bait board which is the deck wash, the sink on the transom and a shower on the walk-through transom.

Staying overnight isn't a problem with the large forward V berth cabin with lockable door and electric toilet. The cabin has roof vents to circulate some air but can also be easily fitted



with air-conditioning for summer getaways.

From the helm that hull drove like a limousine. We took it offshore on a spectacular day that allowed just enough swell to test the hull while keeping it all comfortable for the old blokes on board. I had dislocated my knee a couple of days before the test so was a little concerned that the strapping wouldn't be enough. I had very little to worry about. Even lifting the bow over a swell or two ended in a very smooth and predictable landing. The huge captain's chair with flip up bolsters to create a very comfortable leaning post if you prefer to stand. With a dicky knee and a very comfortable chair, I treated it like I was watching the footy in a recliner. The design didn't leave your feet dangling either, which is one of my pet hates. It was fitted with a large foot rest that was deep enough to brace yourself over a swell.



The helm was fully enclosed with glass windscreen and gliding glass to the sides as well. Add to this a sunroof style port above your head and it is a very well designed and thought out helm. The instruments were all flush mounted which is a must these days. With the engine's panel above the massive 15.6' Furuno sounder/GPS unit, it all ended up very neat and uncluttered. The marine radio sits overhead and all switches are in easy reach of the helm.

The test boat was fitted with twin 200hp Yamaha four stroke outboards. They had a nice wide split between the engines so operating them independently to assist in manoeuvring was a breeze. Splitting the sticks, the hull can easily spin on its own axis and with 400 ponies, there was no issue pushing the big 8.8m hull along. It launched out of the hole with a slight



ABOVE: The Sailfish 2800 Gamefisher makes for a versatile craft for the serious fisho and family.

LEFT: Cats are super stable and soft while under way.



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Fuel economy is a big plus with the Yammies and economical nature of the Sailfish.

groan from the two Yammies but once on the plane, the engines were incredibly responsive.

The cabin has a lockable door and is big enough to sleep at least two in comfort. It can be separated into two single beds or create one large bed. A chemical toilet was fitted in the cabin and this tucks away very neatly. The Sailfish can come with a holding tank if you don't like the idea of a chemical toilet. While you're on the toilet, you could go over the wiring behind that console. This is in its own hatch and makes looking for faults very easy.

The rear deck has all a fisho would need. The flooring is a Poly Paint Chip that is non slip and looks amazing. There are grab rails everywhere and everything has its place. I lost count of how many ice boxes were on the deck and the finish of the bait board and hardtop is a testament to the workmanship at Sailfish. Rod storage is overhead and under cover and there is no shortage of rod holders on the deck.

I have to give an honourable mention to the electrician who wires up the boats for Sailfish. I've wired up a few boats in my days but the standard of work on the Gamefisher was without fault. Even the battery switches were the neatest I have ever seen and everything was incredibly servable. It is as though the sparky had a say in how the hull was designed and it is bound to impress those thinking of buying a Sailfish.

FISHABILITY

Rob has his 2800 Gamefisher ready for the reefs and whether bottom bashing or chasing mackerel out of Moreton Bay or floating for big snapper down south, this setup is hard to beat. The bait board is massive and has room for knives and pliers. The bait tank is a good size and off course, it recirculates and keeps baits in excellent condition. Anglers can even step through the transom and fish between the engines which still gives access to the bait board, live bait tank and the burley bucket. The kill tanks are a little short for big mackerel or wahoo but is a fair compromise considering the size of the fuel tanks. Sailfish had to leave enough room for foam to ensure that the hull has basic floatation just in case something horrible did happen.

The lighting on the deck is designed so that Rob and his mates can all fish at night without having lights shining in their eyes but that doesn't mean that the deck is not well lit. The LED lights are overhead and in the gun'als so that everything can be seen and found without being blinding.

The Sailfish can be set up for trolling and certainly has the range to chase billfish out wide. ●