

Riviera 37

Riviera has a history of taking out top gongs with consecutive new models. There's every indication that its new 37 will continue that tradition

When you head down to Sydney's Rushcutters Bay, order a large cappuccino, pull up a seat on an outside table under an umbrella, and cast your eyes down the gangway, as one must do when visiting Rushcutters Bay, you are confronted by a familiar theme.

A staccato of cruisers, each with familiar lines, bobs nonchalantly to the ferry wake rolling in from afar. The boats rise and fall like piano keys, each in harmony.

But if you were admiring the view recently you would notice a new member in the family, a boat playing a different tune. Blending familiar touches with nouveau styling, the Riviera 37 is a refreshing and regaling cruiser from Australia's biggest boatbuilder.

While on one hand this is an all-Australian boat - with the layout and design that local boaties had come to love, with a good-sized cockpit in which to enjoy the great outdoors, a big flybridge from which to cruise for views, and an interior which is very much family-oriented - on the other hand it is a worldly cruiser.

Gone are the hard edges, the perpendicular lines, the broad expanses of plain white gelcoat. With a styling makeover, cleaner interior, new hull, improved engineering and electrical systems, the Riviera 37 raises the bar in local, off-the-shelf, cruiser designs.

Influenced by foreign tastes as much as they are founded on our maritime heritage, Riviera has become more than an Australian company. It is a key player in the boatbuilding world, with the lion's share of production heading overseas and foreign dealers crying out for more stock.

But it's the fact that the boats come from Australia which has stood them in good stead. They are considered solid cruisers with Mick Dundee-like invincibility. Whereas boaties in other parts of the world might cower at the whiff of a storm, Aussie boaties are considered tough enough to go boating in virtually any seas.

The new 37 is set to continue the tradition. It is a cut above your average production cruiser, in part due its cleaner lines, modish styling, an interior which wows, but also because of its build quality.

TRUE TO ITS NAME

The Riviera name has never been so suited to a cruiser than the 37. Less than a decade ago you'd have to turn the pages of a foreign boating journal to find a boat like this. The new model will be just as comfortable on the

Cote d'Azur as Chesapeake Bay or Sydney Harbour.

Of all the past-generation models, it was the Riviera 36 that was considered one of the better travellers. The new 37 replaces this boat and is better again. It boasts a more modern hull dressed with what the company calls 'Millennium styling', which means rakish, flowing lines and a distinctly more Euro look.

Another thing that will contribute to the 37's appeal is the boat's proportions. It's not too big, not too small and by virtue of its user-friendly but voluminous size, it is at once perfect for couples, families and entertaining. With a few spare weeks up your sleeve you could port hop up the coast. Add some poles and game rods and you can fish tournaments. It just may be the perfect off-the-shelf all-rounder.

But what I like best about the new Riviera 37 is the fact it is a hands-on cruiser for captains who aren't into boating by proxy. You don't need a professional skipper, a hired handyman, a massive marina berth to park this baby. You can drive, moor and maintain the boat on your lonesome. With that comes the thrills of being a competent and conversant captain.

It's for these compelling reasons that sister magazine, BlueWater, is looking very hard at a Riviera 37 as we speak. If the boat is adopted as the magazine's next project it will do a bit everything: lots of gamefishing, cruising the

Whitsundays and more.

So it was with more excitement than usual that we downed the dregs of our coffees and set-about exploring the Riviera 37. It wasn't hard to find. It was the one with the most cosmopolitan styling and a big Australian flag splashed across the transom.

HEART DESIGNED TO PUMP

The first thing we looked at was the lockable engineroom. The heart of the Riviera 37 seems to feature cleaner laminates and gelcoat and an improved finish. It is most definitely better designed, with a lot more emphasis on engineering and accessibility than previous models.

Access is still gained by swinging open the moulded cockpit sink and climbing down a small ladder. I might have been mistaken, but I didn't find a catch to keep the sink unit open. The door swung to-and-fro as the boat bobbed on the passing ferry wake. Natural light flashed on and off though the lighting inside is sufficient to work by.

With the base engines, twin Cummins B330s, there was a surfeit of servicing room. I guessed at least 30cm to spare over the highest point of the Cummins. In most spots it was more like 45cm. You can access all sides of the motors easily.

Day-to-day maintenance is aided by the positioning of strainers and filters, oil taps and so on near the

engineroom door. The boat comes standard with a 7kw freshwater-cooled Onan genset with muffler and its own starter battery. There is 40-amp auto battery charger, high-water, engine temp and low oil pressure alarms. You might also notice that all the wiring is now coded and numbered.

The Onan is easily accessed forward of the motors, where the Kirby fridge unit, battery banks, hot-water system, and an internal wash down can be found. Twin polypropylene water tanks outside the engines collectively hold 405lt. They are linked to a gauge where you want it - in the galley.

Soundproofing looks substantial and there are watertight bulkheads fore and aft of the engines which is more than you can say about some big overseas (and local) cruiser makers.

The fuel tanks hold 1100lt, Okay, but some 37 owners will probably be looking to carry a bit more juice for long-range work. Perhaps Riviera can be persuaded to add another 400lt or so up forward.

The hull is all hand-laid fibreglass with a solid keel and chines. There is a watertight collision bulkhead in the bow and a weight-conscious foam or balsa-cored superstructure for improved stability.

Engine options currently range up to twin 350hp Cummins.

DECKED OUT

The decks of the Riviera 37 are certainly better integrated than before. The boarding platform has cut-outs to prevent slap when backing up. In tight turns, the platform edges drag a bit. Keen gamefishers will no doubt delete the platform and go for the stainless step protector on the marlin door. In any case, the big marlin door grants terrific access to the water for morning swims.

Coaming width has been increased thereby making the cockpit more convivial. By this I mean you can plonk yourself down just about anywhere and not feel as though you are going to be tossed overboard. Rodholder and downrigger installation is also aided by the wide coamings.

Teak on the cockpit sole is a listed but must-have option for most buyers. Anglers will go for the spread of five heavy-duty Reelax rodholders, the reinforced cockpit floor with alloy base for a gamechair, and the padded coamings.

Unlike some gameboats, the padded bolsters slot into slides so they can be removed, cleaned, repaired or replaced as time goes by. An in-transom livebait tank with a big window holds plenty of potential.

There are no hawse-pipes and cleats back under the deck, but instead you get semi-recessed designer cleats in the transom corners. These sure make attaching the

mooring lines a snap. It's now a one not two-stage operation.

You also get pop-up fender cleats, snubber cleats, a solid, large-diameter bowrail and siderails around the cabin. The steps up from the cockpit help you on your way forward and you can feel the non-skid on the decks taking hold. The windlass is a new compact Muir model.

There are twin fender baskets, chain and rope lockers, seawater washdown tap, and stylish circular deck hatches on the foredeck. There is also room for a rubber duckie or liferaft. Looking back, the window line is overtly more rakish and, despite having just the one upper helmstation, the for'ard tinted saloon window is a transparent number.

Some owners might opt for a blanked out lower window, however you can achieve much the same result by leaving the black front windscreen cover on. Either way, the boat looks sleek with its new big tinted windows with curvaceous lines. I like the fact the aft window from the saloon slides open for fresh air and a view to the cockpit.

Back under the cockpit coamings are four storage hatches, one with a freshwater (hot and cold) deckwash, another with a seawater tap, plus two big side lockers which cut back under the coamings.

The storage hatch near the saloon door is a beauty as the gear kept inside is easily accessible.

Underfloor is a useful port-side fishbox with an overboard drain and pump. On the starboard side you gain additional access to the lazarette, whose main hatch is centrally located.

Under the bridge ladder, meanwhile, is a useful service centre comprising a big eutectic cockpit fridge/freezer, storage shelves which will hold bait-rigging gear, and the aforementioned sink which swings open to grant access to the engineroom.

BEST BRIDGE BY FAR

Virtually everything that can be round, like the hatches and the oval potholes, are made that way on the new Riviera 37. The flybridge ladder passes through a big oval cut-out to the bridge, which is an absolute beauty.

In this would-be skipper's opinion, the highlight of the new Riviera range is the bridge. The layout is so much cleaner than the old Rivs, the amenities that much better, and the seating is such that bridge does justice to being the only helmstation on the boat.

The optional moulded fibreglass hardtop makes the station. It's supported by large-diameter stainless tubing and includes an overhead radio box and handy hatch for fresh air.

There are stylish Pompanette helm and copilot seats, staggered so you can both sit behind the console in comfort. And, should you choose, you can sit here with

your feet on the dash in a perfunctory way, like driving with your arm out the window.

The view from the raised helm seat to the bow and cockpit is excellent, though as a fishing boat the 37 is best without the rear bridge awning. The clears are the top-shelf Vibak brand, which feel lovely and thick when you scroll them up.

Contemporary is the word befitting of the new console, which has carbon fibre inserts, thoughtfully moulded dash panels, and recess space for flush-mounting electronics - no need to mount them proud. The VDO gauges badged Cummins were chic chrome-rimmed numbers and the switchpanels are improved waterproof types.

Details include a Clarion stereo remote, central compass, Hynautic dual controls with incremental detent positions, an upright Destroyer-like wheel, spotlight and searchlights, and, in this case, Raytheon L760 chart plotter/sound and a ST6000 pilot.

There is seating for freeloaders on a forward facing lounge ahead on the console which, at a pinch, is wide enough to sleep on. Storage space is generous - under the lounge, in the flybridge brow, and in a an excellent cupboard with two shelves ahead of the copilot.

A listed option fitted to the 37 seen here, and which makes the bridge truly self-sufficient, is the fridge with small freezer for ice trays mounted in the side of the

console. The flybridge carpet was rather nice underfoot, adding some cushioning to the soles when they weren't resting on the dash.

SOCIAL SALOON

Cheerful, uncluttered, elegant, and traditional in parts describes the interior of the new-age 37 and 40ft Rivas. There is a choice of teak or teak for the joinery, but with a high-gloss finish it looks up-market. You can choose from a whole range of interior designer packages spanning things such as scatter cushions and lounge upholstery to bedspreads, linen and bathware.

The boat here had bone-coloured carpet and soft-touch wall and ceiling liners, with all the joints and joins nicely finished. There were cream pleated curtains, a powder-coated oval cockpit door, and camel-coloured leather lounges. The neutral colours make the teak spring to life.

Immediately to starboard is the master circuit board with obviously more sophisticated and logical wiring. It's recessed in a teak cabinet which had an optional U-Line fridge and ice-maker. There was a small gloss cabinet top, power outlets, and light switches.

Ahead of this are two big storage cupboards. A loose chair filled the void that was once the area where you might stand at the lower helmstation. But better use can be made of this space by fitting a lounge. This way, you would have two lounges facing each other, with the

dinette in between. Perhaps the lounge bases could detach and create casual seating at the dinette?

As it is, the big L-shaped lounge to port can seat five people. It has high backrests and a degree of cushioning that is neither too soft nor too hard but, as baby bear said, is just right. Views from the lounge stretch out the tinted saloon windows and also to the cockpit. Mixed gold and navy scatter cushions are a nice touch.

A small detail worth noting, borrowed from yachties who spend time on the high seas, are the handrails down the centreline of the ceiling. These allow you to move forward in a seaway. Set into the windscreen on the starboard side is a big teak cabinet with an impressive entertainment centre.

Pretty much everything here was optional, but you would be doing your Riviera 37 a disservice by not fitting a CD stacker, 51cm flat-screen television, DVD player. A cabinet alongside is designed to hold CDs and videos, while an overhead alarm panel alerts to anything being awry with the boat's plumbing or electricals while you are tucked away inside.

By no means a small thing, the Riviera 37 comes with 16,000 BTU reverse-cycle airconditioning in the saloon. A second unit serving the two cabins is optional, as is a lower helmstation or entertainment cabinet, an opening saloon windows. My advice? Go for one helm, the

entertainment centre, no opening windows (no leaks) and leave the saloon door and opening rear window open if you must.

GALLEYING GOURMET

Two steps lead down to the galley on the mezzanine level. Unlike the Rivs of yore, the galley isn't set so far down that you feel like you're in the bilges. The servery (which needs a light underneath it) is low enough to let you chat to lounge lizards in the saloon and even partake in a partial view out the saloon windows.

L-shaped Granicoat benchtops offer ample food-prep space. A big circular sink that lets you stack plates and leave the washing up till later. The single mixer is a stylish number, while a better locking system has been introduced to the sliding timber doors covering the overhead shelves and pantry space.

Aided by the eutectic in the cockpit, the 12V DC/AC fridge is big enough to serve weeks at a time (it also includes a vegie crisper compartment). A better system of stainless catch is being used on the fridge door; the old plastic clips were a pain.

There is a dedicated cutlery drawer and a huge undersink storage compartment with a shelf. The idea here is to load up the area with baskets containing cooking utensils, food stuffs and washing-up gear. And some plate and coffee-cup racks.

Set in the mock-teak Antico flooring is a big hatch leading to a hold for victuals, though they must be kept separate from workings of the airconditioning unit. Put it all together and there is a lot more space than may be obvious.

Standard appliances include a two-burner electric cooktop, convection microwave (opposite the galley in a teak fascia), exhaust fan and receptacle. In other words, there's everything you need to whip-up a dinner party.

Me thinks many crews might also opt to add a spigot-mounted barby in the cockpit.

BIG CABINS, BIG HEAD

The two-cabin and single-head layout accommodation under the foredeck of the Riviera 37 is made to measure. each cabin is big enough to be truly liveable and the head has as much space as you will find in boats twice this size. Rather than offer alternate layouts, the boat is available only with this ideal layout.

Guests will find their cabin has twin bunks big enough to sleep in. I measure 1.8m in length and I could rest my head on the pillow while the feet just missed hanging out the end of the bed. More importantly, the bunks seem wide enough that you can turn around without falling out.

There is a lot of floor space or dressing room, an overhead circular hatch, soft-touch bone wall liners, hanging space and two drawers, and neat blue bedspreads with a gold

leaf motif, piping and matching pillows. For a guests cabin, it is voluminous.

Opposite is the single head that is again big on floor space. The moulded liner includes Granicoat mock tiles, a full shower stall with chic mixer and shower head, and a one-piece vanity with sink. There's an extractor fan, a big circular hatch, shelves and two mirrors. The head is both serviceable and stylish.

Last but not least, the master cabin in the bow has that signature Riviera island queen-size berth, the single item responsible for more boat sales than any other, with an innerspring mattress and access around all sides. There's storage beneath the base which lifts on gas struts, soft-touch padded walls and sidepockets, a navy bedhead, and a coffee-coloured spread.

The hanging locker is exceptionally deep, with three shelves and a piano hinge on the door to handle lots of clothes changes. There's a separate storage locker recessed in the wall. It wouldn't take long to work out a mounting spot for the television. There are also reading lights, portholes and a big round hatch, but the big teak wall awaits a maritime painting or two.

DRIVE TIME

There was an air of excitement surrounding the drive of the Riviera 37. The winter chill was off the water, a clear blue sky beamed overhead, and one felt privileged to be in

a position to seize the day before the throngs of office workers dreaming about this very scenario.

The Cummins' seem like clean-running quiet motors and the boat responded to the throttles by turning about its length in the busy marina arm and idling at around 5kt at 680rpm out to the harbour.

Some vibration could be heard at the helm, however, and Editor Sinclair duly traced it back to the throttle cables. Apparently, a cheap rubber grommet is all it takes to fix the problem.

While Americans like the feel of the Hynautic throttles, which click into various incremental positions, some say they can make it difficult to synchronise the motors and that, at times, your ideal speed may be between increments.

Nevertheless, the Cummins' had no trouble getting the 37 with full fuel and water onto the plane. At 1200rpm there was a clean wake with nice clear windows and waves at lure-trolling speed of around 8.5kt.

At 1800rpm and with some trim-in, the boat starts shifting onto the plane. There is no big transition and at 2000rpm the hull is happy to run flat for a low-speed, heavy-weather cruise of 14.5kt. More often you'll run at 2200rpm and 20kt, 2400rpm and 24kt in good weather, and 2800rpm and 27.5kt at the sailpast.

Suffice to say, it was a fleeting drive of the Riviera 37. In any case, strong westerly winds meant I'd need to travel some way to sea to find a wave. I was prepared to go, but there were people waiting to trial the new 37 back at the marina.

For what it's worth, quartering the wind the boat seemed dry. And it was predictable with its handling, an easy thing to master, even for those stepping into a cruiser for the first time. The dealer, who has taken the boat through big seas, says it is exceptionally seaworthy.

With 167 Riviera 36s sold to date, the new 37 is poised to take centre stage. Riviera, the Pied Piper of the waterfront, might be playing a new tune. But it's one that's sure to attract a big following at high-profile marinas all around the world.

HIGHS

- Pretty new styling, smart interior finish, bigger cockpit than Riv 36, and excellent new flybridge all deserve credit.
- Engineering and electrical systems are vastly improved.
- A handy size to drive, park and maintain, with big cabins and bathroom, the new 37 is a balanced all-rounder.

LOWS

- Vibration in the throttle cable was annoying.
- Void on starboard side of the saloon might be better fitted with a small lounge.
- The livebait tank needs a bigger pump and engineroom door needs a catch.

RIVIERA 37
Price as Tested \$467,584 (with Cummins B330 diesels)
Options Fitted
GRP hardtop, teak cockpit, ice-maker, flybridge fridge, outriggers, rodholders, rocket launcher, livebait tank, gamechair plate, padded coamings, rear awning, bridge carpet, clears, loose teak chair, entertainment centre with DVD, CD, flat-screen Sony 51cm television, Raytheon electronics, interior decorator packages, and more.
Priced From \$404,948
General
Material: Fibreglass with composite superstructure
Type: Deep-vee planing hull
Length: 11.56m
Beam: 4.23m
Draft: 1.05m
Deadrise: n/a
Weight: tba
Capacities
Berths: Four plus two
Fuel Capacity: 1103lt

Water Capacity: 405lt

Engine

Make/Model: Twin Cummins B330 diesels

Type: Six-cylinder diesel engine with turbocharging and aftercooling.

Rated HP (ea): 315hp

Displacement (ea): 5.9lt

Weight (ea): 572kg (excluding transmission and props)

Gearboxes (Make/ratio): Twin Disc/1.8:1

Props: Bronze

SUPPLIED BY Riviera Sales Sydney,
Rushcutters Bay (NSW), tel (02) 9363 0000.

For further information on the [Riviera](#) range go to our New Boats Section.