

powerboat
test

Fairway 37 Flybridge

PHOTOS
NATHAN JACOBS

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BOASTING AN AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRETCHING BACK TO 1980 AND A LOYAL FOLLOWING, **JAMES DURMEGUE** NOTES THE FAIRWAY 37 IS A SERIOUS CONTENDER IN THE MID-SIZED FLYBRIDGE CRUISER MARKET





RIGHT The open flybridge is the perfect spot to drive and entertain on fair-weather days, the bimini keeping the harsh summer rays at bay.

THIS PHOTO There is comfortable seating for six in the cockpit.
RIGHT Bi-fold doors bring the inside out and vice versa.



“...the Flybridge model has all the living on one level and

does a great job of *bringing the outside in and the inside out*”

Whenever I bring a boat back to its berth after time out on the water, I always enjoy watching the heavens open up to give it a pre-washdown, especially if you are on a vessel with a lower helm protected from the weather. For the sake of the crew it's ideal if it stops raining a couple of minutes before it's time to hang the fenders and throw the lines.

Starting the day with rain and overcast conditions wasn't the reward the team at Fairway Motor Cruisers (FMC) deserved after dedicating many hours to commissioning this new model

fresh off the ship, a little more than a week prior to our visit.

I boarded the vessel up the Coomera River with Stewart Smith of FMC and we headed down to collect the photographer at Runaway Bay, right on the edge of the Gold Coast's Broadwater. This 45-minute journey gave the very passionate Stewart a chance to share the proud history of FMC. It also gave the weather a chance to commingle its elements into a beautiful afternoon on the water.

Originally the darling of Queensland's single-engine bay and coastal cruisers, the brand has stretched its following a fair way farther afield and still plies

the waters of NSW, Victoria, SA and NZ. Every single Fairway 36 was built by the same three-man team, Wally Schuba and his two shipwrights in Southport. This included building vessels for celebrities such as Formula One legend Sir Jack Brabham and speedway legend Ivan Major.

With 130 Fairway 36s produced over the 33-year history of Fairway Marine, “King Wally” – as the Fairway Owners Group or FOG-gies call Schuba – knew it was time to spend more time on the water and build one last Fairway. This time for himself and in April 2013 he launched hull 131, a 36 Flybridge aptly named *A-Wal*.

Although Wally desired to be AWOL, he didn't want to see his beloved Fairway marque take leave along with him. With a career spanning four decades he has seen boating trends change dramatically, from the cost-effective single-engine vessels he started with to the heavily imported guzzlers pre-GFC. Wally recognised that traditional lines were again becoming a more common sight around Australia as the boating public becomes more conscious of rising fuel costs. More people are turning to displacement and semi-displacement trawler-style vessels, for they often have a heritage of seakeeping



THIS PHOTO The narrowing of the coach house has allowed for walkaround decks.



TOP PHOTOS You'll agree, the interior is clean and stylish.



“...the fine-entry bow slices through the water with a

wake more reminiscent of a well-trimmed sailing yacht”



THIS PHOTO The new Fairway 37 Flybridge features the company's ECO Cruise Hull for improved performance.

abilities and fuel efficiency. This is what rekindled the conversation with David Wright, who had shown interest in the marque 20 years prior.

NEXT GENERATION

The Fairway 37 now replaces the ever-popular 36 and David Wright and Stewart Smith of United Motor Yachts have done a fabulous job of continuing the legacy. Starting with such a successful platform, they set about lengthening the hull by 300mm and completely redesigning the flybridge. By integrating current boating desires with all necessary modern refinements, the all-new Fairway 37 is a nice culmination of experience with tradition and practicality.

The all-new 37 Sedan was launched at last year's Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show and subsequently sold, as did hull 3 at the Gold Coast International Marine Expo. The interest hasn't just been the local Australian market; hull 4 was sold to a Chinese client and hull 5 to Japan.

Fairway's new and improved ECO Cruise Hull sees better performance - the fine-entry bow slicing through the water with a wake more reminiscent of a well-trimmed sailing yacht. It pushes a thin veil of translucent water closer to the sides of the hull rather than an air-filled mass of water pushed more outward. Even though we tested this boat in calm conditions, any time we crossed a decent-sized wake the Fairway 37 Flybridge handled it proficiently, with less rise and fall than I expected.

There is often a divided camp when it comes to hull colour, like the practicality of white versus the regal beauty of dark

blue. The dark blue of this model gives it an elegant look, the traditional lines accentuated by the definition between the hull and the superstructure. It is this superstructure where owners of the Fairway 36 will first notice the changes. By bringing the sides of the coach house in by 280mm, you can now enjoy safe passage to the foredeck along walkaround decks.

Changes to the hull length have enabled changes to the cockpit. Fairway 36 owners will notice the increased liveability, two corner L-shaped settees allowing seating for up to six adults, the most outboard seats enjoying views forward along the walkaround deck. The extension of the hardtop over the cockpit gives welcome additional sun protection.

I like the fact a vessel of this size doesn't have a permanent table in the cockpit. The large lazarette under the sole houses the batteries and has room for the removable tables to be put away with ease. The increased hull length combined with the aesthetically pleasing curvature of the transom have also enabled the inclusion of decent-sized storage lockers either side of the central-entry split gate. These are expansive, with one side handling the storage of fenders and lines, keeping the other free for watersports equipment, fishing gear, outboard or even a few crab pots. Handy and safe access to this storage area is also available inside the cockpit under the seats.

FAIR LIVING

On trend with the Fairway 37 Sedan, the Flybridge model has all the living on one



CLOCKWISE Natural light floods the stateroom from an overhead hatch and hull ports; Second cabin is a twin single with decent-size bunks; Bathroom includes a separate shower stall.

“The master cabin has been extended and the deck above

raised making it *simple to move around with the door closed*”

level and does a great job of bringing the outside in and the inside out. The sliding doors of old have been replaced with bi-fold stainless steel doors and a pop-up stainless steel window at the end of the galley bench; giving an unobstructed and division-diminishing blend of the interior and exterior. To port of the saloon is an L-shaped settee finished in quality leather, while the table has an appropriately-angled cutaway allowing two people to pass each other comfortably, saving the shins from a square-on blow to a more glancing brush-by.

Opposite the saloon and running forward the full length of the starboard side is the galley. A light-coloured Corian benchtop with the often overlooked lip, has an expansive amount of bench space for food preparation. On this model it was fitted with a microwave and an electric two-burner cooktop but options for gas are possible, as seen on the recently delivered Fairway 37 Sedan. An under-bench brushed stainless steel Waeco fridge on this model can be complemented by an

optional freezer. The cockpit also has additional refrigeration with a front-opening Waeco unit below the flybridge ladder, perfect for grabbing a cold drink without entering the saloon.

The lower helm is to port, with a comfortable seat for two adults or an adult and two children. The wheel feels a touch small but allows good visual access of the instruments. A sliding helm window offers welcoming fresh air and works just as well to lean the head out and give instructions to whoever is on lines and fenders duty.

Forward of the saloon and down are the accommodations. To port is the twin cabin with over-and-under bunks. These are wider than I anticipated and both easily accommodate an adult up to six-foot. The light textured panelling is accentuated by particularly good joinery. The difficulty I had trying to find the join on the trim around the bathroom door is testament to the 10-year relationship of Stewart Smith with the boat-production facility in Shanghai. The bathroom is clean and functional and the surprise here is the

size of the separate shower area, equal to that on a vessel of much greater size.

Compared to the 36, the forward master cabin has been extended aft 100mm and the deck above raised, making this area simple for occupants to move around with the door closed. This room features an island double bed that lifts to reveal cavernous storage below. With the additional hanging storage on both sides, the owners of these vessels will have more freedom in what they carry with them. Meanwhile, for those hot, calm nights it's reassuring to know that the 18,000 BTU air-conditioning unit will cool the boat down for comfortable dining and sleeping.

ENGINE ACCESSIBILITY

The business end features a well-finished engineroom, a day hatch on the floor just inside the saloon allowing for quick checks of the essentials. When more room is required the floor of the saloon lifts hydraulically, revealing the uncluttered and easily accessible single engine.





“Originally the darling of Queensland’s single-engine bay and coastal cruisers, *the brand has stretched its following a fair way*”

facts & figures

Fairway 37 Flybridge

PRICED FROM
\$425,000

GENERAL

MATERIAL Fibreglass
TYPE Monohull
LENGTH 13m overall; 11m hull
BEAM 3.65m
DRAFT 1m
WEIGHT 7-tonne

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE (NIGHT) 4
FUEL 700lt
WATER 550lt

ENGINE

MAKE Yanmar
TYPE Diesel
RATED HP 240

SUPPLIED BY

UNITED MOTOR YACHTS
Suite 18, The Boardwalk,
Rialto Quay Drive,
Hope Island, QLD, 4212
PHONE +61 7 5514 0866
FAX +61 7 5514 0966
EMAIL sales@umy.net.au
WEB unitedmotoryachts.com.au



tradeboat says...

Fairway Motor Cruiser’s new 37 Flybridge is a surprisingly voluminous vessel suited to both experienced boaters and those gaining experience. She is great in close-quarters situations and underway, safe with the walkaround decks and simple to manoeuvre with bow and stern thrusters. Comfortable shaded seating in the cockpit creates a liveable space, enhanced by the blurry line between indoors and out. Additional real estate afforded by the Flybridge plus accommodation in two cabins for four adults adds to the universal appeal of this vessel.

The engineroom also houses the 4kVa Mase genset against the aft bulkhead, while the standard 240hp Yanmar six-cylinder engine sits in the centre – if you want more power, the 315hp engine is an option. That said, there was a fast response to cruising speed from the standard engine and the trade-off of added weight for a marginally higher top speed may not be worth the extra investment.

Preferring to get a feel for the vessel from the main deck I saved the flybridge to the end. Climbing the ladder and lifting the weather/safety hatch, I was pleasantly surprised with the completely redesigned flybridge. The arc of the new ladder improves climbing and the slightly closed-in arrangement of the 36’s flybridge has been replaced with a contemporary J-shaped lounge to port. The rolled backrest of this lounge keeps the breeze blowing across the kidneys, allowing natural thermo-regulation and preventing one’s back from adhering to the seat on hot days.

The hardtop’s cockpit overhang extends the real estate of the flybridge and Stewart informs me the preinstalled davit mounting plate allows the option of storing a tender up here. If you prefer the snap-davit system, the swimplatform’s stainless steel rail is available. The central helm seat is accompanied by a co-pilot’s seat to

starboard which I was quite content to spend the rest of the time in.

For those of us that cruise in crab pot infested or tidal areas with ever-changing sand bank locations, it is reassuring to have the prop and rudder protected by the shoe of the full-length keel. Extending past the prop and rudder, the shoe represents the deepest part of the hull, so if the occasion arises it should be a simple matter of reversing out of the situation with nothing more than a little pride and antifoul diminished.

Traditionally, single-screw vessels with a full keel can be challenging to manoeuvre in close quarters without a decent flow of water over the rudder. I prefer the slow and gentle approach, which doesn’t always allow for enough steerage from this arrangement, but the addition of bow and stern thrusters more than compensates for this.

The full-length keel, as well as offering protection, does add to stability, reducing leeway and roll with a beam sea. The fully protected prop and rudder will save on costly haul-outs and repairs to the shaft and rudder should a sand bank rise up from a location it wasn’t charted to be in.

Couples, retirees, families, sailing converts and even pet owners will all appreciate the benefits these boats have to offer. ■