

Stone the **CROWS**

WE'VE BEEN HEARING GREAT THINGS ABOUT THE NEW NORTHBANK 750 HARD TOP, SO JOHN FORD WENT TO ADELAIDE TO CHECK IT OUT. HE RECKONS THIS SOUTHERN BEAUTY DESERVES A WIDER AUDIENCE





Northbank 750 Hard Top

“Northbank Fibreglass Boats is a family-run business established in 1996”

Before heading over to South Australia for a look at the Northbank 750 Hard Top, I had a look at a map of Adelaide to get a feel for the place. I knew it was the city of churches (so they must be a god-faring mob), but when I saw the vast waterways and magic locations like Kangaroo Island along the wide sweep of Gulf St Vincent it occurred to me that they are truly blessed.

Well, that's on a good day. The shallow waters and strong winds can soon make conditions unpleasant or worse, especially close to the eastern shore in winter, so vessels heading

wide need to be well prepared and seaworthy.

Rob Cuming from Christies Beach Marine, and owner of Northbank, confirmed that it builds its boats to conquer the short, sharp chop that often prevails across the gulf. South Oz isn't alone in this respect and a boat that can handle these conditions will have widespread appeal around the country.

Northbank Fibreglass Boats is a family-run business established in 1996. It moved to its current 4000m² facility at Lonsdale in 2006 and while popular in its own state, Northbank has had limited

representation elsewhere.

The 750HT is the flagship of a range of seven models down to 5m and our test boat was a new version, running a 260hp Volvo Penta D4 diesel with Duoprop sterndrive.

It's a big lump of boat on the trailer but still manages to come within Australia's 2.5m maximum trailerable width without having to emblazon the boat with Oversize signs. Substantial bracing of the custom Dunbier trailer is required to support the boat's 3.4t when full of fuel, so it also requires a powerful tow vehicle.

Black sides underscore the straight sheerline and high sidedecks and

the raked cabin dominates the white superstructure and does nothing to detract from a purposeful and well-proportioned look.

Game poles towering over the cabin and the roof-mounted radar send a clear message that this Northbank isn't to be taken lightly. Its sensational looks will attract attention at the ramp and give the owners instant fishing guru status.

The sharp entry and wide flare of the bow runs back to a flat transom with 21 degrees of deadrise, while wide chines and three rows of lifting strakes promise an efficient hull and good stability.

LAYOUT

With all the talk of rough conditions, not a breath of wind greeted us at the ramp and as we headed out past the

breakwall and settled back for a look around the boat, the gulf was a glassy, blue mirror.

Impressions that this is a big trailerboat were confirmed once on board. Metre-high sides around a monster deck give a feeling of being well-protected and having plenty of room to play, even with the enginebox for the Volvo in the aft section.

The hardtop is enclosed on the front and sides and opens to the cockpit for an unrestricted work area. This style of boat is garnering favour in wider circles than just the southern states, because such a layout makes just as much sense under a baking Queensland sun as in the chilly winter of Tasmania. And the benefits of a dry ride home when conditions turn nasty can't be overstated.

Tinted windows give a great all-

Highs

- Comfortable and accommodating
- Well constructed and finished
- Superb handling, big-boat feel
- Enclosed hardtop for weather protection
- Reliable and economical diesel

Lows

- Maybe swap bait table and one of the tanks

ABOVE LEFT The roomy hardtop provides excellent weather and sun protection from the cold south to the steamy north.

ABOVE RIGHT Volvo Penta's EVC engine management system can be also be shown on the Garmin 8012 screen taking pride-of-place on the dash.



How does it rate?

Northbank 750 Hard Top

- 1 FUN FACTOR/FISHABILITY ★★★★★★★★★★
- 2 INNOVATION ★★★★★★★★★★
- 3 DESIGN AND LAYOUT ★★★★★★★★★★
- 4 QUALITY OF FINISH ★★★★★★★★★★
- 5 HANDLING AND RIDE ★★★★★★★★★★
- 6 STABILITY AT REST ★★★★★★★★★★
- 7 ERGONOMICS ★★★★★★★★★★
- 8 STANDARD EQUIPMENT ★★★★★★★★★★
- 9 VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★★★★★★
- 10 X-FACTOR ★★★★★★★★★★

Average ★★★★★★★★★★

Sea Trials

Sincel 260hp Volvo Penta D4 turbo-diesel, with Duoprop leg

RPM	SPEED (KTS)	FUEL BURN (LT/H)
1000	6	3.3
1500	8	6.8
1900 (on the plane)	12	11
2000	15	14
2500	22	19
3000	28	29
3500	33	40
3600 (WOT)	35	48

**Sea-trial data supplied by author.*



OPPOSITE TOP DOWN Vee-berth is 1.85m long and can convert to a full bed with an optional infill; Padded enginebox lid is the only seating available in the cockpit with the rest of space set aside for fishing of course; Covered anchor well shows off the optional electric winch.

ABOVE On the trailer the big Northbank 750 Hard Top shows off her impressive Volvo Penta Duoprop sterndrive. A hefty vehicle will be required to haul this boat when loaded, but she does slip in nicely within the road-width limit.

tradeboat says...

Although the name hasn't yet spread much beyond South Australia, the Northbank brand is well worth a look. The 750 Hard Top is the flagship of the range and gives away nothing when compared to its East Coast competition.

round view and sliding sections at the sides, as well as a hatch in the roof, open for a flow of fresh air.

Gas-dampened, black vinyl and stainless steel Cruiser helm seats for the skipper and navigator add to the boat's serious seagoing vibe. They have plenty of forward/aft adjustment and swivel 360 degrees, so it's easy to keep an eye on things down the back.

For the rest of the crew (capacity is seven) there are grabhandles and a non-skid deck but apart from a padded rest on the enginebox, further seating has been sacrificed for a clutter-free deck, as is fitting for a hard-core fishing vessel.

Happily there is respite for weary crewmembers in the cabin. Here the simple stipple-finished roof slopes forward but still allows two each side to sit on the 1.85m V-berth, an infill option converting it to a full bed. Two padded vinyl shelves run along each side and I noted more storage options

under the seats.

A wide roof hatch will allow the beefiest of crew through for accessing the anchor winch or to grab a mooring, and it also provides good airflow below.

Flat sidedecks are wide enough to sit on and they incorporate recessed grabrails, a couple of rodholders each side and a full-length storage shelf, strong enough to use as a step to reach rods in the six-slot rocket launcher attached to the back of the hardtop.

The transom area is pure fishing – livebait tanks in each corner and in the centre, a superb bait table with three rodholders and a covered section for knives and tools. With the enginebox butting up to the transom it will require one knee resting on the box to work at the table.

Large cleats that have been embossed with the Northbank logo are strategically located down the sides and like all the locally made custom

stainless steel work throughout the boat, are very high-quality.

Unlike most versions of the 750 our test boat has a 400lt fuel tank in place of the normal 350lt one, meaning that there is no room for the standard killtank between the helm seats. It's a case of range over storage – there is room for on-deck fishboxes and it is possible to have underfloor holds fitted alongside the fuel tank if desired.

ON THE WATER

Fitting a Volvo Penta diesel is an interesting development for the boat as they have thus far been generally powered by outboards up to 400hp, so it was going to be enlightening to see how the 260hp-rated oil-burner would perform. To be fair, diesel horsepower seems to be rated on draft horses rather than ponies and their torquy nature can often overcome top-end performance in real world comparisons.



ABOVE A versatile hull, the 750HT is available in single or twin-outboard configuration or like out test boat, with a sterndrive diesel leg. Power ratings range from 220 to 400hp.

Time for a drive and it's novel to pass the e-key over the starter to get ignition. Sitting high on the helm seat is a comfortable and commanding experience and the Volvo Penta slotted silently into gear on its digital control.

Instruments and electronics are laid out to the right of the companionway, on a dash that is angled in the upper section for better viewing and falls away to vertical for less-used controls. Across the top are the usual engine readouts including tachometer, engine trim and oil pressure, while below these a Garmin 8012 screen displays input from the GPS, sonar and Garmin 48nm HD Radar. All engine diagnostics are displayed on the Volvo's Electronic Vessel Control screens or if desired, on the Garmin as well.

Further down is a panel of membrane switches for lights and pumps, Lectrotab trim tabs and Stress Free Midi winch.

The Northbank 750 was surprisingly brisk out of the hole as the props hooked up and had us planing at 12kts and 1900rpm before settling into a slow cruise of 22kts around 2500rpm where fuel use was 19lt/h – pretty good for such a big boat. This fuel economy would give a range of 416nm with 10 per cent in reserve.

And that's the core of the Volvo-Northbank package, combining fuel-efficient diesel power with a capable

hull for covering long distances in comfort and safety.

Acceleration from mid-range to wide open was smooth and while it's not entirely free of turbo whistle and induction sound, it's still possible to hold a normal conversation.

We reached speeds in the mid-30kts at full revs, which would fall short of the performance with outboards, but is reasonable progress over the ocean on all but a few glassy days a year.

Handling is precise and predictable and the boat manoeuvres safely into sharp or sweeping arcs assisted by the powerful grip of the duoprops. There was no swell to test the boat's rough-water capability but over the wake of some bigger boats it gave the impression of being soft and capable.

Equipped with a list of options designed to entice the serious fisherman the price as tested totals \$189,000. Options include the radar, Garmin electronics, electric winch and a set of 14ft Top Shot outriggers and the upgraded Volvo Penta.

Without all the fruit and with a 300hp Suzuki it would be \$140,000 on a trailer. That's really impressive and it's surprising the brand hasn't yet migrated across the border to the eastern states. It would be great to see it as a contender at next year's Australia's Greatest Boats to show the competition what a fair dinkum Aussie warhorse can do. ■

facts & figures

Northbank 750 Hard Top

PRICE AS TESTED
\$189,000

OPTIONS FITTED

Volvo Penta diesel sterndrive, electronics package, trim tabs, outriggers, swimdeck, radar, winch and more

PRICED FROM

\$140,000 w/ 300hp Suzuki

GENERAL

MATERIAL Fibreglass

TYPE Monohull

LENGTH 7.67m

BEAM 2.45m

WEIGHT 1650kg (hull)

DEADRISE 21°

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE 7

REC. HP 220 to 400

REC. MAX HP 400

FUEL 400lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Volvo Penta C4

TYPE Four-cylinder turbo-diesel

RATED HP 260

DISPLACEMENT 3700cc

WEIGHT 558kg

GEAR RATIO 1.85:1

PROPELLER Duoprop

MANUFACTURED BY

NORTHBANK FIBREGLASS BOATS

Lonsdale, South Australia

SUPPLIED BY

CHRISTIES BEACH MARINE

19 Sherriffs Road, Lonsdale, SA, 5160

PHONE (08) 8387 6411

EMAIL sales@christiesbeachmarine.com.au

WEB christiesbeachmarine.com.au