

NORTHBANK 500C

Northbank are a well-known locally built boat that come with a great reputation. Here we take a close look at the 500C

■ By Shane Schwarz



Northbank boats are synonymous among South Australian boaties and have had a hearty following ever since the first Port Adelaide hull was built around 1996. In summer you will find a Northbank boat at nearly every boat ramp around SA and most likely it will be the prodigious 500C cuddy and justifiably so as I doubt there is a better all-rounder for our local waters.

Slipping the new 500C into the water, the maroon deck stripe on this boat, really highlighted the smooth flowing lines which is that unmistakeable Northbank style. If that didn't hint at the brand, the new decals hit you straight in the face like a cold front. They are bold and look magnificent on the shiny white gel coat, leaving no question as to what it is.

At a total length of 5.2m (including bowsprit) I find the 500C a great size. Its cabin is smallish, but this helps to increase the deck space, which I will get to later. The low profile cabin can fit under a 2.1m garage which is extremely handy for lots of city dwellers, and it has plenty of

room for dry storage with mid height cabin pockets and also storage under the bunk cushions. The best feature is certainly the walk through windscreen set-up. Having this kind of system means getting to the anchor well is a cinch, with plenty of room to move about as well. There is enough room and strength in the dedicated anchor well to bolt in a Stress Free winch if needed. A small step helps if you really need to stretch out to the bowsprit, but at all times it felt safe and secure. The hatch rattled a little on the review boat, but it would take seconds to attach some foam

tape or something similar to stop this. I seem to spend a lot of time standing up whilst at the helm, so being an average height guy, I found the windscreen height and bimini set-up to be terrific for a smaller sized boat. The bimini also came fitted with a front clear, which was not particularly needed on the test day, but no doubt would come in handy in the cooler months.

The dash layout paralleled the style of the boat, clean and simple, but functional. A small fascia atop the dash was fitted with a new Vessel View 4 which really



raises the bar in marine gauge systems. A 7" Garmin unit could also fit in here, or the traditional analogue gauge systems that it was originally designed for. A flat horizontal surface below this also means you would be able to bracket mount a sensible sized sounder/ GPS unit. Either side of the steering wheel is a great place to fit radios and a brand new GME GX400 27mhz radio was fitted. Very comfortable swivelling seats embroidered with the Northbank emblem finishes off the cabin nicely.

The deck space in the 500C would be perfect for two-up fishing, but three would still be more than comfortable. This one was not set up with any particular purpose in mind, so as standard it also comes with a set of rear quarter seats which would be ultra-useful when using the boat for a weekend up the Murray skiing, or just a simple cruise down the coast. With that in mind there is certainly enough room for four persons to cruise in comfort. The centre floor piece is covered with marine carpet and also houses a large 115 litre underfloor bin forward of the fuel tank. Considering this is only a 5m boat, this may save you bringing a large esky onboard, taking up valuable deck space. The foam filled hull either side of the bin would ensure ice, drinks and fish will keep relatively cool. Batteries fit under the transom with a bilge well right in the centre aft. The engine well is quite skinny to try and open the deck space so a small fold down gate keeps water out, but helps the engine trim height while travelling to and from your destination. In



turn this increases deck space, so quite a clever use of space.

The new Mercury 4-stroke engines are really setting the benchmark for four-stroke performance. Gone are the old black anchor days, I think everyone should sit up and take notice, because this engine turns this boat into a rocket ship!

The new generation of Mercury 2.1 litre engines feature an inline 4 cylinder single overhead cam powerhouse with a computer controlled Multi-Port Electronic Fuel Injection system, and boy does it work! Acceleration was exhilarating with one person on board, and I feel it would easily pull a single skier out from a deep start if needed. In fact I would dare to say the maximum 90hp is certainly not necessary the 80hp would suffice for most occasions, but if you are looking to get into the water sports, the 90hp would have to be a consideration.

Of course newer generation 4-strokes are terrific on fuel, and this was no different. At a cruising speed of 24 knots the engine was purring at 4000rpm sipping on 15 litres per hour, while at 35 knots and 5000rpm it was using 25 litres per hour, which is good going in anyone's books. The new Vessel View 4 which was fitted is an awesome piece of kit, and I really liked the ECO mode which easily helps you get the best fuel economy possible out of the 60 litre underfloor tank. The Vessel View 4 is something I would opt for if going a new Mercury because not only is it awesome for fuel management, you also have complete control of your engine's parameters at your fingertips.

The review boat was fitted with an 18 pitch stainless Vengeance prop which could be a little over propped, however being a brand-new engine we were not





South Australia often dish up. A pair of strakes each side of the keel also help the boat get out of the hole more efficiently and of course help grip in turns. I also loved the stability at rest in such a small boat which is due to the combination of the amount of weight in the hull (using a traditional wood and fibreglass bearer system) and the wider chines towards the stern. This all makes for a safe, great riding boat which sits nice and still at anchor which has stood the test of time.

Overall the 500C is quite an attractive package, and while it would be primarily a great fishing boat it would certainly suit other uses such as water sports and cruising.

This boat retails for \$40,990 as tested which includes the boat, Mercury 90hp 4-stroke and Dunbier braked single axle trailer, bimini front clear, safety gear and registrations. Adding some electronics and a few personal touches and the Northbank 500C is great value for your hard-earned bucks.

For more information on the model range go to: www.northbank.com or for retail sales contact Christies Beach Marine on (08) 8387 6411. ↪



able to get wide open throttle readings. My guess is a 70km/h boat pretty easily and I bet if you wanted to experiment with props you could attain more hole shot, or more top end speed to suit your particular requirements. Steering was very light and the boat felt very nimble and easy to turn in fast and slow situations.

The hull is a true tried and tested 19 degree deep V hull with a moderate flare at the bow making for a good ride in choppy seas, something the gulf's of

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