

Quintrex's gamble on a sterndrive sports boat has proven a huge success with family boaties. Test report and photos by James Hill.



Quintrex 560

Horror of horrors – sometimes even the keenest of fishing enthusiasts has moments in their life when fishing has to take a back seat.

Like the time kids come along and when workload buries any chance of meaningful fishing trips with mates. For those times the answer to still keeping in touch with the water and keeping everyone happy including the wife is the Quintrex Freedom Cruiser.

Quintrex has really hit on a winner with the Freedom Cruiser range since it launched them two years ago.

The Freedom Cruisers combine the smooth, inviting looks of the imported bowriders with the practicality and keen pricing of an Aussie tinnie.

Not only do mums and kids love the deluxe seating and rolled backrests but you can actually still go fishing! Yep, that's the good news about Freedom Cruisers. You can still keep the option of fishing if you feel the urge to have a crack at the bream or snapper.

In true Quintrex fashion they come with like side rod holders, side pocket rod racks and even a Lowrance fish-finder (sounder). The bow cockpit even converts into a casting deck if you get really keen. So if young Johnny or Jessica wants Dad to teach 'em how to fish, it's not a problem.

And, yes these boats cover all the other basics for general fun like transom ski hooks included as standard. This year Quintrex is also offering these boats in a Fisher version - two folding quarter seats in lieu of

the full-width lounge. This package also provides a live-bait (port side) and berley bucket out back.

However, I still rather like the standard Cruiser, especially after taking two versions, the 560 and 530, for a spin.

These boats handle beautifully thanks to their three-litre MerCruiser power plants and make excellent bay-cruisers. On a nice day, even in winter they're a great way to get your water-fix without too much drama.

The 560 Freedom Cruiser is the best choice for room and gives you the added attraction of better pedestal seats and a couple of moulded in-floor lockers. Meanwhile, the 530 Freedom Cruiser is a great choice if you want a smaller, easier rig to handle and park at home.

Attention to detail is what sets these Quintrex apart from the rest of the tinnie opposition. They feature attractive, two-tone colour schemes and some of the best-quality upholstery



Freedom Cruiser

I've seen in trailer boats for some time. Moulded sides also incorporate level foam flotation and give you neat side pockets, stereo speakers, rod racks and cup-holders.

The deep, robust alloy hull is also a better bet than many of the imported US boats for our windy coastal waterways. Many of those fancy bowriders seem better suited to lakes than our vigorous waters!

Throw in the keen pricing of these Freedom Cruisers and thrifty fuel consumption and you can see why they're walking out of showrooms. Still interested? Well read on.

Design: Versatility might be the key to these new Quintrex boats, but it's also their stylish looks and colours that are winning family hearts and minds.

Our black 560 Freedom Cruiser sure looked a treat on the trailer and was quite big too with an overall length of 6.06m.

And there's no skimping on features either. You get snub bowsprit for easy anchoring and a wide duckboard at the stern for easy landing.

The powerful hull provides a generous hull depth of 130cm and beam of 2.38m, all nicely enhanced by soft-clinker side panels and smart, curved windscreen and fastback transom.

Don't forget Quintrex's award-winning flared bow design with wide spray-deflecting chine edges. The deep vee entry this hull creates flows back into a much flatter Vee transom that ensures the boat planes easily and doesn't chew through fuel.

Stepping aboard is easy via that large transom duckboard and you get a folding ladder and passenger grab rail as well.

A padded top over the engine cover creates a great stern seat and makes it easy to access the cockpit.

My only quibble is the lack of walkway to the cockpit – over time I can

see some wear and tear on the lounge upholstery. That said the rear lounge with its curved shape is a great feature of the boat and definitely the best seat in the house!

The rest of the cockpit also impresses with moulded sides, fully carpeted floors to the bows and proper walk-way door to stop cold wind and spray blowing through.

All-up boat weight is 985kg so trail weight is approximately 1600kg fully loaded. That puts the 560 Freedom Cruiser within the tow range of cars like the Holden Commodore, Falcon or Toyota Aurion as well as soft-road SUVs like the Mitsubishi Outlander.

It goes without saying the 560 Freedom Cruiser is easy to garage with a low parking height of 2.16m. Parking length is 6.75m.

Performance: It was one of those crisp, but sunny days Sydney can turn on every so often as we took the two



Freedom Cruisers for a spin. Being a mid-week day it was just the opportunity to enjoy the tranquillity of Pittwater and the estuary system beyond.

With no urge to return to the office we took our time testing these two Freedom machines. We mightn't have had the picnic hamper and esky of cold ales but that didn't stop us spending a few delightful hours exploring Pittwater.

From the outset both Freedoms slipped onto the plane effortlessly and quickly. There's no doubt the lower placement of the MerCruiser motors really helps to keep the boat level and fast out of the hole.

At full bore they are a comfortable ride, even when we headed across the open swell at Broken Bay's entrance. The driving experience is enhanced by power steering and you also have a really comfortable pedestal bucket seat to relax in.

The modern helm dash gives you a full array of electrics including cockpit lights and a smart-looking sports wheel.

Like all sterndrive boats there's a slight tendency to wander at low speeds, but otherwise driving these boats is child's play.

Then there's the issue of motor noise. Stern drives always have a more 'throaty' sound compared to outboards. In the case of the Freedom Cruisers, Quintrex designers created an engine box-within-a-box arrangement and it works pretty well. However, I did find motor noise more noticeable at idle than travelling at speed.

Meanwhile, the bowrider certainly gives you great carrying capacity with seating for up to seven people – adults or kids.

Also the bow cockpit is as comfortable as it looks thanks to high, well-padded backrests. However, may I suggest a skipper should be careful about carrying passengers up front especially when travelling at speed.



Alternate rear lounge configuration



Even on calm days you never quite know when you're going to hit one of those hard-to-see watery speed-bumps. So be careful, especially with kids.

And talking of comfort, the high windscreen provides very effective wind protection. This feature was most

appreciated by our team on a cold winter's day.

Power: The power choice in these boats is pretty simple. Black three-litre MerCruiser or a black three-litre MerCruiser!



Actually you can have the bigger 4.3-litre MerCruiser package for a price, however considering the following GPS speed results, I think most buyers will be happy to go with the standard motor:

3500rpm 22 knots
4500rpm 29 knots
5000rpm 34 knots

Obviously you can knock a knot or so off those speeds with a full crowd aboard, but otherwise they are pretty acceptable for inshore cruising.

And talking of power, the 560 Freedom Cruiser comes with a 95-litre fuel tank, which is a little bit on the light side but again probably OK for most inshore trips. The good news is that average fuel usage is as little as fifteen litres an hour!

Deck Layout: In true Quintrex fashion you get a comprehensive array of deck hardware from stainless steel bow roller to bow grab rails, self-draining anchor well and navigation lights.

The anchor well is moulded in plastic to reduce anchor chain rattle. Likewise there are plastic stowage wells in the cockpit floor and side pockets.

Attractive moulded helm and passenger dash panels also give these boats a superior appearance over other tinnies. I particularly like the neat, car-like glovebox and smart multi-tier instrument panel with motor gauges offset for easier viewing.

The Freedom Cruisers also come standard with easy Turn Key Starting Technology for easy starting every time.

There are a few other clever touches like the stowage lockers under the bow seats and cargo nets under the helm/passenger dash panels for the life jackets (PFDs).

And it's pleasing to see such good passenger safety touches like side grab rails and a windscreen grab rail.

Standard features across all models include an easy-to-access central ski hook, handy drink holders and deluxe bow cushions and backrests. They also come with a factory-fitted VHF marine

radio and a rubberised non-skid surface on the rear duckboard.

Verdict: Quintrex has scored another winner with the Freedom Cruiser family. Importantly these boats are bred for Aussie conditions and don't preclude some fishing activity.

For those times when fishing takes a backseat in your life and family needs are more important, these Freedom Cruisers will make sense. Backed by Quintrex's strong resale value, dealer network and value-for-money pricing, they are always going to be a safe bet to buy.

Quintrex also makes the buying process that much easier with a ready-to-go boat package which includes custom trailer and a full range of factory accessories. Of these accessories, I'd suggest you tick the box on the CD stereo, bimini sun canopy and tonneau cover.

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BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

560 Freedom Cruiser/MerCruiser 3.0L

Boat supplied with 3.0-litre MerCruiser, single-axle trailer, tie-downs, power steering, deluxe bucket seats, deluxe rear lounge, sun lounge, Lowrance X52 sounder, navigation lights, ski hook, tie-downs and drink holders. Price \$36,048 excluding freight and dealer delivery charges, further information Quintrex Boats ph (07) 5585 9898.

SPECIFICATION CHART

Model	Quintrex 560Freedom	Stacer569 Sports	TABS Marquis610	Savage SL540	Silver Hawk540
Construction	Alloy	Alloy	Alloy	Alloy	Alloy
Configuration	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider
Length overall	6m	5.7m	6.4m	5.4m	5.4m
Max. beam	2.3m	2.4m	2.5m	2.2m	2.1m
Depth	130cm	137cm	-	115cm	95cm
Gauge-bottom	4mm	4mm	5mm	3mm	4mm
Gauge-sides	2mm	4mm	4mm	2mm	2mm
Rated max. power	135hp	135hp	200hp	140hp	100hp
Power as tested	MerC135	MerC135	Yamaha175	Mercury115	Mercury90
Hull weight	985kg	1114kg	900kg	580kg	520kg

STAR RATING

Finish	★★★★★	Helm Set-up	★★★★★
Fitout	★★★★	Fishability	★★★★
Ride	★★★★	Safety Features	★★★★★
Dryness	★★★★	Value for Money	★★★★★
Handling	★★★★★		

*Data ESTIMATED by the TBF team when accurate information is unavailable. Maximum star rating 5 stars.