

Quintrex has revived the famous CruiseAbout name for its all-new, family bowrider with fishing benefits. Test report JAMES HILL.



Quintrex 530 CruiseAbout

Bowriders have been fronting our waterways for several decades but it's only since the Quintrex Freedom Sport that these craft took off in Australia. The Freedom Sport gave Aussies two things we really like; a practical tinnie hull and an interior that quickly converts to fishing needs.

These days there are lots of imitators of the Freedom Sport concept but Quintrex still sets the pace when it comes to dual-purpose bowriders.

And Quintrex has done it again with its all-new bowrider range called the CruiseAbout. This is an old brand name that Quintrex last used back in the 1970s for its family runabouts but it perfectly describes what these new bowriders are about – relaxed cruising!

At the official launch in autumn I had the pleasure of being one of the first to test the 530 CruiseAbout. This is my pick of the bunch because of the price and easy towing size, however, there are five other models as well – 490, 510, 570, 610 and 650.

All the CruiseAbouts follow the same theme of comfortable interior with bow lounge, dual pedestal seats and rear folding lounge. And while the basic concept is no different to the Freedom Sports, they supersede these boats do offer a fresh new styling that the average boat buyer will like.

These new bowriders feature a sporty style with smooth topsides and

a lower, sleeker looking windscreen. You only have to glance over these new Quinnie boats to see they're going after the buyers who might have previously only gone for a US fibreglass bowrider!

The benefit of the new CruiseAbouts is not only slick looks but also a big, high volume hull that suits our Aussie boating conditions with lots of wind and chop on summer days.

The new CruiseAbouts also sport a neater pod transom, high quality automotive grade seating and slick paint finish with lots of roto-moulded plastic, including the whole dash area.

Family boaties will like the way these boats suit a wide range of watersports like fishing, diving, diving or water skiing. Yep, even a ski pole is a dedicated option on these family-friendly boats!

Our test boat was rigged with a 130hp Evinrude ETEC so it's no surprise it rocketed out of the water to a maximum speed of 37 knot speed. She cruised easily at around 30 knots and felt really easy to handle at speed.

We love the roomy interior and the way you can use all the boat from bow to stern for seating, sunbaking, fishing and other aquatic pursuits.





The windscreen and passageway door ensures you can shut the bow cockpit off on the cooler days and still use the boat in the 'between seasons' time of year. However, there's no doubt the real forte of this boat is summer weather cruising and speeding to bay beach where you and the family can have a swim, relax and enjoy lunch.

The ski pole option lets you tow the kids on skis, tube or a wake-board. Or you can let the kids play ashore while you and the wife enjoy the comforts of the sun lounges bow and stern.

And if you want to get serious about fishing just leave the rear lounge seats and their folding and bow cushions at home and take the drop-in casting deck. The latter turns the bow cockpit in a large and very effective casting deck.

The CruiseAbout comes standard with single rod holders aside and a Lowrance Mark5X Fishfinder. However, you can fire up the fishing stakes a bit more with factory optional transom berley bucket, raised cutting board and a live bait tank.

Afterwards, I priced the boat through Sydney dealer, Hunts Marine. Over this summer they were doing the Evinrude 130hp ETEC package for \$45,400. Alternatively, with the Evinrude 115hp ETEC the price goes down to \$44,700. Either way you get a neat, ready-to-go craft with bimini canopy, factory trailer, rego and inshore safety pack.

Design: The 530 CruiseAbout features the new Blade hull that Quintrex now uses on all its runabout and bowrider models. The Blade is also seen in the new offshore Triton fishing models but in this instance the hull has a more moderate Vee to suit faster planning and estuary boating.

The Blade incorporates a bow hollow below the waster, but the topside sections are fuller and the bow entry runs further back to create a sharper entry. This means the boat releases the bow spray further aft and this provides a cleaner, smoother ride in most water conditions. Dimensions of this model are length 5.33m, beam 2.25m, and hull depth (keel to deck) 104cm. Hull weight is 590kg.

The topsides feature the new smooth-look panel that's a distinct feature of the new Quintrex range. There is only one chine pressing in the topside and this gives the impressive the CruiseAbout is a more modern generation boat than the previous Freedom Sport it replaces.

The smooth topside also enables the Quintrex factory to offer buyers the optional of a full vinyl graphic wrap around the topsides. This is something you can order when the boat is built as an alternative to the standard paint job. Not that there's anything wrong with the paint choices. The CruiseAbout offers a range of attractive topside

colours including the bright Ocean blue of our test boat plus black, burgundy, red, deep purple, light grey, teal blue and even sunflower yellow!

Also helping to add a bit of excitement to this new CruiseAbout range is a lower, curved windscreen. The transom landing deck has also been shortened, which not only improves the overall appearance but also means an added 18cm in length to the cockpit space. And talking about the cockpit, the CruiseAbout comes standard with a self-draining cockpit so any water coming aboard goes out the stern scuppers.

The outboard well has also been enlarged so you can get full tilt on the new generation of big cowl clean-tech motors like the Evinrude ETEC.

Like all Quintrex models, the bottom is left unpainted and the hull features multiple 'ribbed' strakes and a small keel to help protect the bottom on the trailer, or beach.

Structurally, the CruiseAbout is quite sturdy with 2mm topside panels and 4mm bottom panels. The hull gains quite a bit of added strength too from the raised floor structure and closed-in cockpit sides. The latter feature a moulded plastic sides and foam buoyancy so the CruiseAbout meets the ABP Level Flotation standard. This means the boat floats level when flooded and with sufficient buoyancy to support the crew inside the boat. This is a great safety feature and one I'm sure boating parents will appreciate.

Estimated trail weight of the test boat was 1250kg including full tank of fuel, trailer and extra accessories like the bimini. This puts the 530 CruiseAbout comfortably within the towing range of vehicles like the Mazda 6 sports wagon (1500kg), Subaru Forester (1400kg) and the Holden Captiva (1700kg).

Performance: Right from the moment I slipped into the low driver's seat and gripped the slimline throttle I really enjoyed this sporty, new Queensland bowrider.

With a moderate Vee stern sections and a fairly light hull the 530 CruiseAbout jumps out of the hole like a banshee and is fun to drive.



Admittedly, it helps to have the Evinrude 130hp ETEC on the transom, however, I suspect the 530 would still be hauling good speeds with the Evinrude 115hp ETEC, which is the next motor down.

The driving position is very comfortable though some boaties might find the seat position a bit low to the floor. That said, it's great to have a driving seat down near the centre of gravity because you feel more in control of the boat, plus more secure.

Interestingly, the Blade hull performs with virtually zero bow lift, which makes for better control and vision. She also holds the line nicely at speed and there is virtually no side drift in fast turns.

And while the boat feels comfortable from the driver's seat there's an added flip-up bolster, which allows you to sit higher and see over the windscreen. This feature would be pretty useful in some docking situations, or when searching for fish school activity.

The passenger and rear lounge are comfortable spots to sit when the boat is operating in typical estuary conditions. In calm lake or river conditions you could even have some passengers up front but it's not something I would recommend in choppy waters.

I really like the added comfort of the front/rear lounges especially with the extra padding in the backrests. I also like the grab handles being positioned around the inside of the windscreen and also for the front and rear lounges.

We were using the boat in typical summer coastal boating conditions. There was a bit of wind-blown chop about and at times the water was quite bumpy. However, the bowrider tinnie delivered a pretty comfortable ride. What's so good about these Quintrex boats is there's plenty of hull volume and plenty of freeboard so your ride is



pretty dry and you rarely see spray on the windscreen.

At-rest stability is pretty good too and while cockpit freeboard is reduced by the self-draining floor it's fine for inshore bay/estuary boating and fishing.

Power: The 530 CruiseAbout is rated for single long shaft outboards 75hp-130hp and the factory package comes with Evinrude ETEC motors.

Depending on the dealer there may be other motor brand choices but in the main you'll be offered the Evinrude package, probably with either the 115hp or 130hp V-4 ETEC.

I was certainly impressed with the performance of the big 130hp ETEC and reckon it's your best choice if you had any mind to pull skiers or wakeboarders. Apart from developing a powerful 1726cc displacement this motor gives better low-end speed than a four-stroke and is therefore ideal for towing.

We didn't get fuel economy figures but my feeling is the ETEC 115hp or 130hp will return pretty good fuel economy especially when running around the sweet spot of 4000-4500rpm. The CruiseAbout has an in floor tank of 95-litre and that should be OK for most day trips.

Steering is non-return mechanical, which seemed to work fine with the bigger size motor. Hydraulic steering is a factory option but I wouldn't make it a priority unless you want really light, finger-tip steering.

Deck layout: In true Quintrex style the CruiseAbout comes with proper anchor and deck gear to suit coastal boating. At the bows is a short 'snubby' bowsprit with bowroller and a split bowrail so the anchor can rest at-the-ready.

The bow also has an open-top self-draining anchor well, split bowrail and LED navigation lights. Basically, this means you can anchor the boat when fishing on the bay or the estuary.

Behind this is the bowrider cockpit with comfortable wrap-around lounge that can take two adults comfortable or four kids. The rolled backrests extend above deck height and provide lots of comfort especially if you were relaxing in the sun.

Under the bow seats are moulded bins for stowage, made from the same rotoform plastic used in the anchor well to help reduce anchor noises.

A carpeted hinged door in the companionway effectively stops wind

draught blowing back into the cockpit and divides the two cockpit zones. You also have a centre-opening windscreen to close off the bow area and there's an optional bow tonneau cover so you can keep the front seats dry from spray.

Behind the windscreen you find moulded dash modules on both the passenger and driver side. The passenger side dash gives you a lockable glovebox and area to mount the optional Fusion MSRA200 stereo sound system. The driver gets a moulded dash with raised instrument cluster, two-tone sports wheel and recess for the sounder. The latter could also take a larger sounder/GPS chartplotter if you wished to upgrade to something a bit better than the basic Lowrance Mark5X.

I like the way the throttle is recessed into a special side moulding and the helm seat is adjustable for comfort.

The moulded coaming sides and carpeted floor gives the cockpit area a very neat, classy finish that further gives the impression of a modern car. The only drawback perhaps for the keen fisherman is the side pockets are bit small. The toe-under recess is also a bit squeezey for fishing the sides. However, I don't think this is a big issue for a boat largely being used for inshore lure fishing.

A feature I really like is the front seat foot-wells with cargo nets that would suit stowing the life jackets (PFDs).

Another great feature of the cockpit is the large in-floor ski locker, which can take full-length water skis. There is also a second rear hatch that could be used for catch, or as a wet locker stowage area. Note, the side moulded panels also include recesses to take the speakers for the optional Fusion sounder!

Cockpit accommodation is rounded out by the rear lounge, which can be folded to give you a comfortable stand up fishing space. The wrap-around padded backrest becomes a natural leg cushion when fishing in this situation.

Behind the lounge and under the rear deck is a raised oil bottle/battery shelf. I noticed we only had one battery fitted to the test boat but I strongly suggest you'd want to get dual batteries so you always have one dedicated for motor starting!

The transom comes with a folding telescopic ladder and a there's a transom door option that would be really good for family boating.

Verdict: Quintrex goes to the head of the pack again with this clever, stylish bowrider. The CruiseAbout continues the same dual-purpose theme of the Freedom Sport, however, in a boat package that looks more sophisticated and better suited to today's boat buyer.



At the same time, the 530 CruiseAbout takes nothing away from its fishing credentials and, indeed, it remains potentially a great inshore fishing platform. Not so much an open water fishing platform but a craft that's excellent for fishing our coastal waterways, lakes and bays.

I think the beauty of the CruiseAbout is the ability to change with the needs of the buyer. You can start out doing mostly family recreational pursuits but over time can graduate to fishing with the kids and then eventually, to more serious fishing missions with the mates, or grown up kids.

The stability and freeboard of the 530 CruiseAbout makes her a very good choice for our coastal style boating. The bowrider is great for summer cruising while the hull can get you back even if the wind kicks up the white caps in the afternoon.

And if you're going down the full family cruising path think about options like the bimini, bimini extension, transom door, stereo sound system and removable cockpit table. All these items help to create a boating environment in which you can enjoy the boat more fully on weekends.

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BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Evinrude 130hp ETEC, single-axle braked trailer, rear lounge, transom boarding ladder, deluxe seating, Lowrance Mark5X sounder, bimini with envelop cover, under floor locker, 2 rod holders, inshore safety pack, rego. Price \$45,400 from Hunts Marine NSW ph 02 9546 1324.

SPECIFICATION CHART

Brand	Quintrex	TABS	Savage	Crestliner	Stacer
Model	530CruiseAbout	5100Marquis	454Beachcomber	1700 SeaHawk	539Baymaster
Material	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy
Style	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider	bowrider
Length	5.5m	5.1m	5.4m	5.2m	5.3m
Beam	2.2m	2.3m	2.3m	2.2m	2.3m
Rated power	130hp	90hp	115hp	140hp	130hp
Power as tested	Evinrude130	Yamaha80	Evinrude115	Mercury115	Evinrude115
Hull weight	590kg	525kg	590kg	590kg	560kg
Fuel capacity	95L	110L	95L	125L	95L

STAR RATING

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

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