

Haines TRAVELER Family TC 165

Built by Australia's foremost fibreglass trailerboat manufacturer, the Haines Group, this neat little surprise package is especially suited to the requirements of today's retirees for whom one of the most important considerations is getting the best value package with a level of quality that will see them through the fun years ahead with grace, comfort and safety.



Report by Peter Webster
Pics by the F&B camera cat team

Buying a boat around \$30K is amazingly complex, with a vast array of craft available in this range. Today's boating consumer can purchase pressed aluminium boats of just about every configuration, countless imported, entry level boats from some of the biggest manufacturers in the world (Bayliner is an obvious example) plus hybrids where aluminium and GRP is mixed - or "cylinder" type boats just in case you want something completely different.

Of the hundreds of boats available there are some golden rules consumers should always follow if they're going to protect their investment in the long term.

For example, although Brand 'A' might be cheaper in the short term, from the point of view of today's retirees (or at the other end of the scale, a young family investing in their first boat) the issue of initial purchase price whilst important, has to be taken onboard with the likely resale price in years to come.

Case in point is this disarmingly simple Haines Traveler TC165. At first glance, it's just another 5.0m cuddy, and we all know that there are dozens of these craft on the market - and especially from many of the fringe GRP players on the edge of the main game.

That's why it's so important for boat buyers to look beyond the price tag when purchasing a new craft today.

Armed with the wisdom of hindsight, and nearly 4 decades of experience in the industry, the writer can observe with some accuracy that in terms of resale value, only the top, big name brands really survive.

The Duck Craft 17 might be \$2000-\$3000 cheaper than this package, but then it doesn't have the name "Haines Traveler" on the side, either.

Having a boat built by the Haines Group (that is to say, John Haines and his sons John Jnr and Greg Haines) simply adds value to the overall package both in the short term and of course, in the long term as well.

Why is this so? A person coming into the industry for the first time is entitled to ask this question - and whilst many of us have long recognised Haines's skill in this area, and the integrity and reputation his boats have earned over a near 40 year period - that doesn't mean a hell of a

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lot to somebody who's only been in Australia for 10 years, or has only just discovered the world of boating.

Put simply, of Australia's very complex and wide spread industry, the twin ranges produced by the Haines family (Haines Signature and these Haines Travelers) are recognised throughout Australia as the premier brand of fibreglass trailerboats.

Why? Well, they've earned this reputation because they hold together for decades, they perform superbly, they are extremely safe and they represent terrific investment value - far above (for example) many of the popular pressed tinnies made by Australia's plethora of "me-too" pressed aluminium boat builders.

Needless to say, when the Haines factory phoned F&B to ask if we would like to test a new TC165, we jumped at the opportunity. Because the TC165 is such a practical package in such a hotly contested part of the marketplace, we couldn't say no.

Sadly, over the last couple of years, I

reckon the GRP manufacturers (and I would round them all up together in a bundle) have just about thrown in the towel with the promotion and development of new small fibreglass boats. Most Australian fibreglass manufacturers are today psyched out about the impact of the pressed aluminium brigade, let alone the flood of US imports.

Whilst the writer is very aware of these issues, I would submit the TC165 as a classic example of how Australian GRP manufacturers can not only take the fight up to the enemy, but they can win - and win quite easily, too.

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Design

The TC165 is remarkably close to one of Australia's all time great small fishing boats - the Seafarer V-Sea. The original version of this (no longer in production) was sold by the thousands - and the reasons it did so, have not changed since the Fry family launched the first V-Sea back in the early 1970's.

More recently of course there's been a number of "classics" from John Haines himself. One could identify the original Haines 16C in this league, which in turn, is matched today by the upgraded (and recently re-released) Haines Signature 493.

The TC165 is of this same ilk. Newcomers to boating are not always aware of it, but there are quite a few significant steps through the sizes of boats, and around 16'-17' has long been

