

1980 Mariner 31 Diesel Cruiser

Mariner's latest fibreglass sports cruiser is yet another success story - and now it is available with high performance diesel engines, its only previous weakness – fuel efficiency – has been completely resolved.

In an industry where success stories are few and far between these days, Mariner Cruisers are clearly outstanding.

For several years Mariner Cruisers has been a most successful builder of big pleasure boats in Australia, largely as a result of their willingness to come to grips with the latest fibreglass technology with the attendant cost-efficiency benefit. In plain English, what that means is this – Mariner Cruisers were almost the first boat manufacturers to realise the day of the handbuilt timber cruiser was over, as far as regular production was concerned.

Nowhere did this apply more strongly than inside the cruiser where, for many years, even after the successful introduction of fibreglass boatbuilding techniques, it was considered normal practice for the boatbuilder to engage highly skilled “chippies” to fit-out the interior of the cruiser. Not so Mariner Cruisers. They could see no reason

to use these highly skilled tradesmen to produce the interior furniture (bunks, cupboards, etc.) when a fibreglass mould could be made and the furniture installed in a tenth of the time, over and over again.

Although we can scarcely pretend to be happy about the passing of an era of handbuilt cruisers – it would be less than realistic to expect any boat builder to continue producing luxury cruisers when the task of finding skilled tradesmen is almost as difficult as finding the timber itself.

Cost is another vitally important factor: fibreglass furniture moulding is one of the main reasons luxury cruisers in Australia have remained competitively priced; to purchase a 31ft twin screw diesel motor cruiser for around \$66,000 in 1980 is indicative of the success boatbuilders have achieved in maintaining their product's competitiveness.

With this background in mind, we accepted Mariner's invitation to conduct a full test report on their latest cruiser, the Mariner 31, powered by two of the popular Pro-46 Volvo diesels.

The Mariner 31 was first released at the 1979 Sydney Boat Show, and has been on permanent

back-order ever since. There has never been one in stock, and from present indications, this situation will continue for some time in the future. Next to their evergreen Mariner 26, the Mariner 31 is their most successful model.

As we learned a long time ago, the Australian boating public is remarkably astute when it comes to boat buying – and when a manufacturer's product is this popular, it has to be pretty damn good.

Not surprisingly, we were right on both counts.

Design

The Mariner 31 is a six berth, fibreglass sports cruiser having a centreline length of 9.45 metres (31'0”), a maximum beam of 3.48 metres (11'6”) and a draft of 0.79 metres (2'7”). It has a maximum freeboard forward of 1.68 metres, and 1.04 metres at the transom. Head room throughout the main cabin area is just over metres (6') to be precise, and the craft has an overall height of 3.96 metres.

To these basic statistics we should add it has a fuel capacity of 409 litres (2 x 45 gallons) and a fresh water capacity of 250 litres (55 gallons).

Layout on the flybridge is excellent, with a central helmsman's seat and two flanking seats for the crew.

A stylish cruiser by any standards, the Mariner 31 is a good combination of comfort, size and manoeuvrability - it can still be handled by one person.



ABO RETRO BOAT TEST:
Unchanged, as first published, written and photographed by Peter Webster in 1980