

Lap of luxury

DARRYL HITCHEN
goes upmarket as he
puts the classy Luhrs
37 Open through its
paces.



On the water, the Luhrs 37 is a striking vessel.

IT was something of a surreal experience to step aboard the magnificent Luhrs 37 Open IPS Sportfisher on a typical breezy summer afternoon. I'd only just returned from a few days camping on the Blackwood River near Augusta, where we'd chased some of those wily black bream in my little Quintrex 340 Explorer. Something about comparing apples to oranges was ringing a bell as I stepped aboard this magnificent sportfishing machine!

One of the things that I regularly notice when out on the Swan River is

the limited amount of outside room and deck space that many of the big cruising/fishing boats possess. Some of them have virtually no deck space at all, while many others have a reasonable sized cockpit area before you come across a set of sliding doors leading inside to a cavernous lounge or salon area. By the time you put a table and chairs in the cockpit area to entertain, there's virtually no fishing room left to speak of.

It's always struck me as odd that there is only a small outside area for living and entertaining on many of these boats, which are from 9-15m in length. As Andrew Clarke from Latitude 32 Marine explained to me: "Many boats in this class have huge inside salons that are most often only used to store your bags in, and then everyone proceeds to live in the cockpit area and on the fly bridge of the boat."

When you're out on the water it makes

sense to me that you'd want to enjoy the breeze in your hair, the fresh salty air in your nostrils and the uninterrupted views that come with being outside. As long as you've got plenty of shade cover and protection from the elements that is. Step up the Luhrs 31 Open.

IPS SYSTEM

The Luhrs 37 IPS Open is the first in the Canyon series of boats produced by Luhrs, which combines both the serious offshore capabilities traditionally found in shaft-driven boats with the fuel efficiency, manoeuvrability and performance of the Volvo IPS system.

I've read about these unusual looking drive systems, but this was my first experience seeing them in action. The Volvo IPS is a completely integrated system which includes the marine diesel engine, steerable drive units (or pods) and twin counter-rotating forward facing props. They also have an integrated through-water drive and exhaust, which keeps noise levels down, and electronic shift and throttle for ease of use.

In layman's terms, these IPS systems do away with the classical shaft drives



The helm position offers unrestricted viewing.



Big uplifted bow and Carolina flare are features of the Luhrs design.



The recessed walkway makes it easy to get to the bow.

of more conventional boats. They look like the leg section of a stern drive that's been bolted onto the bottom of the hull backwards. According to the manufacturer's specs, their benefits over a shaft-driven engine of the same horsepower include up to 35 per cent better fuel efficiency, 20 per cent higher top-end speed, 15 per cent faster acceleration, up to 50 per cent less sound and diesel emissions, and much better handling and ease of manoeuvring.

They also have a 'joystick' option that increases responsiveness and makes their turning circle even tighter using the twin screws, which Andrew demonstrated as he easily got the big Luhrs in and out of the pen with a minimum of fuss. He also explained that Luhrs had maximised the advantages of the IPS pod system by designing and building the entire boat around the pod drives. This meant moving the engines aft to where the pods are located to maximise the forward

living space, and locating the fuel and water tanks farther forward to even out the weight distribution.

LAYOUT

The big Luhrs is in reality a massively big and incredibly well set-up centre cabin or walkaround vessel, which are impossible to beat from a fishing perspective in my experience. It offers all the advantages of a walkaround configuration plus sleeps up to six adults in comfort. Places like the Abrolhos immediately spring to mind!

Starting at the transom, a marlin board or swim deck and ladder gives easy access in and out of the water before leading into the spacious self-draining cockpit area where all the fishing action takes place. The cockpit then steps up onto the raised helm deck to create a fantastic user friendly outside area that is well protected by the glass windscreen,

all-round clears and a fibreglass hard top. The area can be fully enclosed if the weather happens to turn nasty, and there is even a dedicated heating and cooling system if you need it.

Above the hard top is the 'half tower' set-up, with its own set of controls and instruments, identical to those fitted down below. A bench seat with comfy backrest allows the skipper to either sit or stand while driving and there's plenty of room for a couple of people to enjoy the spectacular views from up there. Up forward, access to the bow of the boat is made easy by a shallow walkway that runs around the outside of the helm deck area in between the cabin and a sturdy bow rail.

COCKPIT

A massive and uncluttered self-draining deck area perfect for game or sport fishing offers plenty of room



The main bed in the forward salon doubles as a couch before folding out to a comfortable queen-size bed.



The workstation cum bait-rigging station on the back deck.

to fish four or five people in comfort. And there's the option of either adding either a large in-built kill tank or a removable ice box to store your catch. Padded coamings around the inside of the cockpit, with plenty of room to tuck your feet under, create almost the perfect platform for fighting big fish. Add both fresh and saltwater hoses and you're ready to clean up as you go.

Forward of the cockpit on the port side is a terrific workstation that contains a large bait freezer with a cutting board on top and a plumbed sink, while on the starboard side there's a massive 130-litre circulating live bait tank that would hold an awful lot of herring if you ever want to fish the Rottne FADs!

HELM DECK

Forward of the cockpit is the stepped-up helm deck and outside cooking/living area, which has seating for up to eight people. It's this area that takes the place of the traditional inside lounge or salon area of many traditional game boats. To my way of thinking this is a much better way to go, providing an abundance of fresh air, plenty of protection from the elements and easy access to the cockpit when you need to get into the action.

The helm station itself offers fantastic unrestricted viewing while underway and a comfy skipper's seat that can fit a crew member as well. The test boat had a comprehensive Raymarine electronics system within easy reach which included a GPS chartplotter, colour sounder, radar and auto-pilot, all linked together. Andrew explained that

the Luhrs 37 can be fitted out with other brands of electronic gear such as Furuno depending on the client's preference.

On the starboard side, behind the helm area, is the outside galley station complete with stainless barbecue, fridge, workbench and sink, as well as a cupboard that houses the air-conditioning unit for this area of the boat. On the port side under the seating area is a massive step-down tackle storage area where you can keep all the rods, reels and tackle you'll ever need, plus an ice-making machine.

FORWARD CABIN

Stepping down from the helm area via a ladder takes you into the spacious salon area of the boat that includes a second galley area, two separate sleeping areas and the bathroom/toilet. A spacious fridge, oven/microwave and cooktop on the port side make up the inside galley. Straight ahead of the stairs is the main sleeping area and queen-size bed, which doubles as a comfy couch. Around to the starboard side is a built-in sofa with plenty of storage underneath. Luhrs designers have removed the bulkhead between the forward cabin and the salon, which helps to open up the space below and makes it feel bigger than it actually is.

Immediately aft of the ladder on the port side of the boat is the well-appointed head (bathroom and toilet area), while to starboard is the second or mid cabin. Inside this cabin are two single beds laid out in an L-shape to make use of the available space, with full standing headroom in the middle of the cabin.



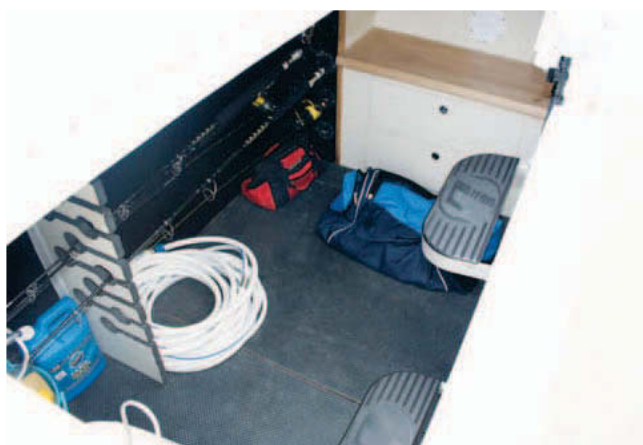
The outside lounge area on the helm deck still offers plenty of protection.

HULL

The Luhrs 37 is a big, heavy boat with a hull length of a little under 11 metres and a dry hull weight just over 10 tonnes, indicating that there is plenty of glass laid down in the hull. The boat features the classical Luhrs design of a big uplifted flared bow, known as Carolina flare, which helps create the exceptionally high forward freeboard. The high gunwales then taper off towards the transom of the boat and roll slightly inwards in what is termed the Jersey sheer line. The very distinctive appearance of the Luhrs almost gives the impression that it needs another couple of feet added to the stern to make it look properly balanced, but Andrew ensured me that these classic hulls are very well regarded for their sea-keeping qualities. The hulls are built to last and come with a standard five-year hull and deck warranty.

PERFORMANCE

Steaming out of Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour into the teeth of a brisk sea breeze, the 370 took the choppy conditions in its stride, which I guess is what you'd expect in a boat of this size. Once clear of the heads Andrew put the throttle down and the twin Volvo IPS 500s (which are actually 370hp each) soon had the big girl up onto the plane at around 2200rpm, before we settled on a comfortable cruising speed of 22 knots at just under 3000 revs. With the big Volvos revving out at around 3600rpm, the Luhrs has a top speed of 32 knots, which is bloody quick for a boat of this size.



The walk-in tackle storage locker under the portside bench seat.

According to our figures, 2700rpm will give you a cruising speed of around 20 knots and at this speed the boat will burn between 75 and 80 litres of fuel per hour. This will give you a range of just under 500 nautical miles from your 1500-litre fuel tank, which is plenty to get you up the coast or out to the Abrolhos for a few days. Back off the throttles to around 2100rpm and a cruising speed of 12 knots and your fuel usage almost halves to around 35 litres per hour, while at trolling speed the Volvos are quite miserly and use only around 20 litres per hour.

ELECTRONICS/POWER SUPPLY

The boat runs both 12 and 240-volt electrical systems, so you've got plenty of power to keep you at sea for extended periods of time if that's your game. A 9kW Kohler gen set comes complete with sound shield and keeps your 240-volt appliances running when you need them, while also supplying

power to keep your battery bank topped up to run all your 12-volt equipment. There's separate cooling/heating units to supply both the lower and helm decks, radios, stereos and extensive lighting throughout, including some underwater transom mounted 'squidding' lights.

The list of features that come standard on the Luhrs 37 is almost endless and I'm not going to list them all here, but in reality it comes with pretty much all the bells and whistles you could imagine. And if you do want even more bling, then the options list is almost as long again!

SUMMING UP

The Luhrs 37 IPS Open is a mighty fine looking vessel that's been designed with both the hardcore fisher and family man in mind. The huge deck space and large outside living area particularly appealed to me, as did pretty much everything else on the boat. There's heaps of room to chase marlin out at the Trench or tuna and spaniards at the

Abrolhos, and you can live in luxury while you're doing it.

The man behind bringing Luhrs boats to WA, Andrew Clarke, first came across their distinctive looking designs while working on luxury charter boats in the Florida over 25 years ago. He liked what he saw in a professional tuna boat built by Luhrs and has been a fan ever since, eventually leading to him import them a couple of years ago. To say he's passionate about these boats is probably an understatement and I can't really blame him for that.



The Luhrs 37 looks good as it handles.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Boatt: Luhrs Canyon Series 37 IPS Open
Length overall: 11.84 metres
Hull length: 10.82 metres
Beam: 4.42 metres
Headroom: 1.93 metres
Clearance height in water: 4.88m
Cockpit area: 7.43 sq. m
Displacement (dry): 10,206kg
Fuel capacity: 1514 litres
Water capacity: 380 litres
Holding tank capacity: 98 litres
Pricing: \$499,000 for the review vessel

PROS

- Great sea-keeping properties
- Walkaround configuration allowing easy access around the boat
- Large uncluttered cockpit area
- Spacious outdoor living area on the helm deck
- Very comfortable living quarters
- Two galleys and plenty of fridge/freezer space
- Huge walk-in tackle storage
- Tuna tower for spotting fish

CONS

- Can't think of any apart from the price!

Review boat supplied by Latitude 32 Marine; 0407 400 872; www.l32.com.au