

High praise for Cruise Craft Explorer 685



Boat Review
by FRANK 'FRANKO' OOSTENBROEK

MANY people have asked me which of my two CruiseCraft 685s I like the most, so I have highlighted some of the areas that appeal to me.

I have been very fortunate to have owned two CruiseCraft 685s and have to admit that I love them both.

Before purchasing my first CruiseCraft, my wife Sheila and I searched everywhere for a new boat.

We looked at everything from a 28ft Black Watch to a 34ft Caribbean but finally chose the Cruise-Craft 685 Outsider.

This boat was by far the best value for money and still provided us with everything we needed.

Although we would have preferred the luxury and size of the Black Watch, the maintenance and mooring fees would have been too exorbitant for our budget and that was without the cost of fuel.

One of the salesmen suggested that if you are worried about the petrol costs you shouldn't buy the boat, so we didn't.

We also looked at Haines, Savage, Whittley, Noosa Cat, and Kevla Cat and as much as we were really impressed with the quality of all these boats, the Cruise-Craft offered us everything we needed for a fraction of the price.

I loved my CruiseCraft Outsider.

In fact so much that I had over 1000 hours on the motors in just five years and believe I would still own the same boat if it hadn't been for a slight problem with one of the motors.

Please don't misunderstand me, as my twin counter rotation 115hp Yamaha 4-strokes would still be humming if it wasn't for a slight oversight during the last servicing.

Although I won't elaborate on how and why the motor disintegrated, I would like to state that it was not due to anything that Yamaha or Wynnum Marine did, in fact, it was most probably because I hadn't taken it to Wynnum Marine for the service.

That aside, the cost to rebuild my motor or to purchase a new one would not have been financially worthwhile.

After I purchased the Outsider, I did rave on about the quality of service and after sales service that Wynnum Marine offered.

Well I am afraid that this is a continuation of that rave because it was

Wynnum Marine who came to my rescue.

After the inside of my motor had been obliterated, I visited the other dealers to see what they would offer me, but I was dreadfully disappointed when they all but insulted the value of my prized possession.

With my tail between my legs I drove into Wynnum Marine where Darren Nichols offered me a deal that I couldn't refuse.

My 685 Explorer is now 12 months old and it really is fantastic.

The first things I noticed were that the cabin was wider but shorter which means that the controls and seating have moved forward.

The cabin still offers more than enough room for a very comfortable night's sleep for two people either in a double bed or two singles.

The extra room in width means that the parcel shelves are almost twice as wide to accommodate all the bulky items.

The cabin is also equipped with an option to insert a panel to fill in the centre area, converting the sleeping area into a double bed.

This also creates a large area underneath the panel for extra storage.

All of the electrical wiring and connections have been protected from the weather and salt by an access panel which can quickly be removed for servicing.

The cabin light is the only feature that is a bit disappointing as I believe that the whole lighting system on the boat should be fitted with LED technology, but I understand that CruiseCraft cannot change the system without jeopardising their CE Certification.

The 310 litre stainless steel petrol tank has also

been shifted forward, which moves a considerable amount of the weight to the front and the hull has been completely foam filled, making for a very safe, quiet and smooth ride.

The big difference I noticed between the two boats was the perfect balance of the Explorer.

Although rated to 300hp, my 250hp Yamaha was more than enough to get the Explorer out of the hole and moving quickly.

In fact at full throttle in calm water the speedo nearly reaches 80km/h.

The quality and reliability of Yamaha 4-stroke motors is such that it is rare to have one fail, so I decided to stick to just one motor.

Obviously you need to have the motor serviced on a regular basis, especially if you are travelling offshore.

My typical day starts at Spinnaker Sound Marina with up to four people on board.

The trip to Hutchison Shoal normally takes me just over an hour at a comfortable 4600rpm.

Now that the warmer months have arrived, I spend most of the day trolling anywhere from around Hutchies to a depth of 300m, in search of dolphinfish, marlin, wahoo, mackerel and tuna.

Apart from a few short stops for lunch and the odd cuppa, the motor doesn't stop and about 1pm we head home at a reasonably quick pace.

It is rare that I use more than 140 litres of unleaded petrol for the day and 10 hours of driving.

One of the really thoughtful features is the massive glove box.

I have wanted one of these for years.

It is big enough to fit everyone's phones, wallets, car keys, handbags and more and keep them totally dry.

Thank you to whoever designed it and thank you for listening to my endless requests.

There are two large kill tanks (long enough for any mackerel or wahoo) towards the back of the boat and an extra tank for drinks and foodstuffs between the seats.

The cockpit area is enormous and allows plenty of room for four people, and there are two beautifully finished side compartments for easy access to the gaff and tackle.

Side compartments have also been lifted high enough to offer a good toe-hold in rough weather.

The transom area at the rear of the cockpit is fitted with a double floor that has been raised up by about 4cm.

The top area actually stays dry and provides a clean location for all the batteries and deck wash pumps while the bottom section allows the water to pass into the bilge.

This area is vastly improved compared to my Outsider and also offers a very large freshwater tank for the shower facilities, rather than the two bladders that were fitted to the previous boat.

There are also many other standard fittings like the extendable canopy, rocket holders and spotlights which are fitted to both models.

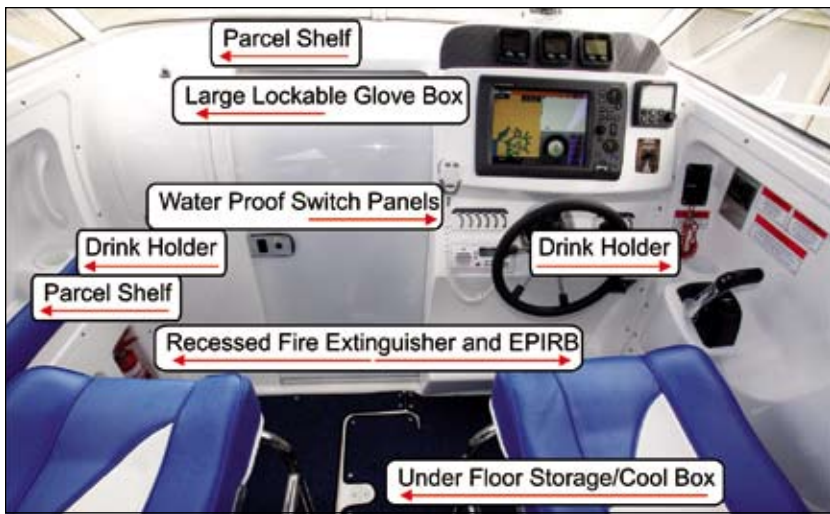
I don't think you really appreciate any boat until you have had the time to use it and I can honestly say that I prefer my CruiseCraft 685 Explorer.

And apart from the lack of LED lighting I cannot fault it.

I have been caught out in wind in excess of 40 knots and massive swells while coming back from Fitzroy Reef.

And although there were times that I feared for my life, my Cruise-Craft brought me home safely due to the outstanding capability of the hull design.

I just love it. ⚓



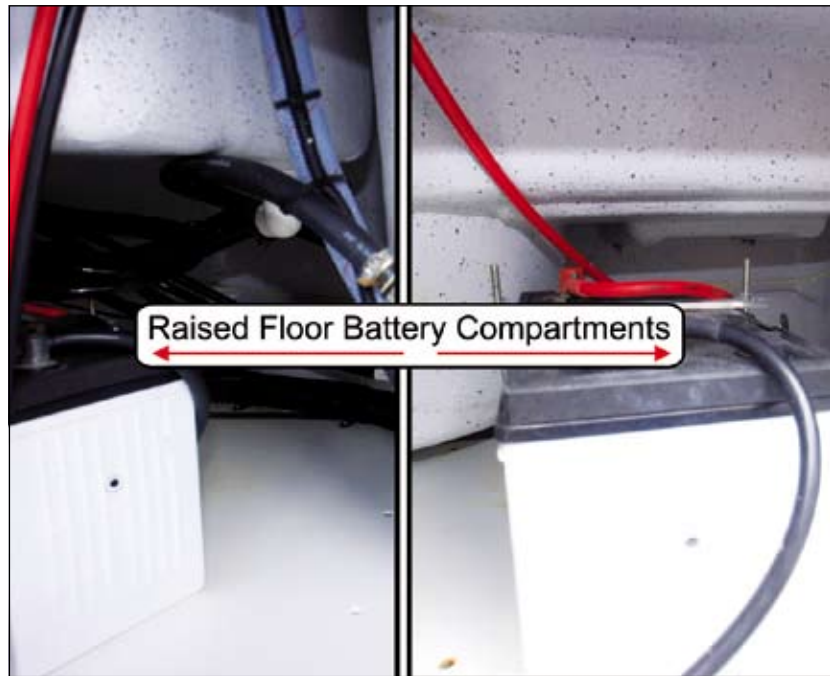
Helm area of the Explorer 685.



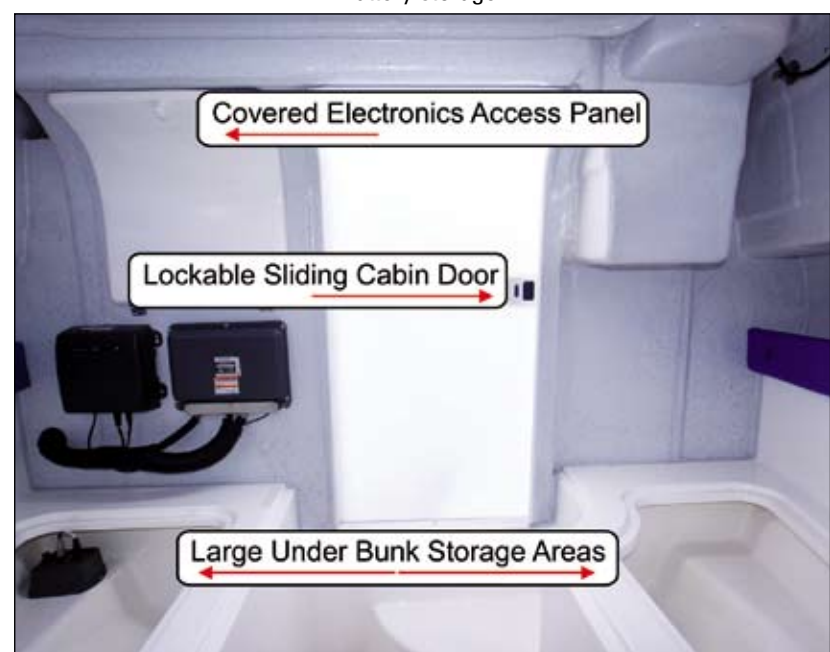
Cabin area with forward access.



Looking to rear of boat.



Battery storage.



Cabin layout.



Recessed areas for fire extinguisher and EPIRB.