

# SHOOT STRAIT

With its bright orange paint job demanding attention, Stabicraft's all-new 1650 Fisher is very hard to miss. But Matthew Jones from our NZ sister publication *Trade A Boat* reckons this no-nonsense boat has plenty of other standout features to excite.



## WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: 15kts westerly  
Sea: Pretty rough





*On the plane...*

- ✓ Like a sports car on water
- ✓ Seriously capable adventure platform
- ✓ Comfortable bolster seats
- ✓ Large bait station with drink / tackle holders
- ✓ Large live-bait tank (not fitted on test boat)

*Dragging the chain...*

- ✗ Little protection from the elements as tested (options available)
- ✗ Throttle a little touchy in the rough with 100hp outboard

Far left: Great visibility seated or standing. Left: Handy fold-down rear seats have non-skid surface for extra safety. Below: New Game Chaser Transom increases displacement aft and sharpens stern entry.

Sometimes fancy names for features are just that — jargon marketers use to baffle their unsuspecting customers into believing they're actually useful. Not so with Stabicraft. The manufacturer's clever new features, with names like Game Chaser Transom and Arrow Pontoon, are actually darn useful.

What better place to test these clever new tricks than New Zealand's Foveaux Strait, the infamous stretch of water running between Land's End in Bluff to Stewart Island? From my experience, there's only one thing certain about heading out into Foveaux: the weather makes up its own mind and you'd best be prepared.

I met Stabicraft's NZ marketing coordinator Tim van Duyl, and sales guru / test-boat owner Adam Marshall at dawn on a bleak, rainy morning at the Bluff boat ramp. I was dressed in shorts, T-shirt and sandals, and covered from head to toe in sun block. But it wasn't just the five different weather forecasting websites that were wrong; at least half a dozen locals had told me how beautiful Waitangi Day was meant to be in the deep south. Not on this occasion.

## “The sporty steering wheel is fitting given the boat's sports-car-like performance”

Unfazed by the lacklustre conditions, we launched the Chrysler Orange Stabi and our much larger 9m camera boat and plotted a course to Ruapuke Island, some 14NM away across the strait, for the photo shoot. On leaving Bluff, conditions were eerily calm but quickly deteriorated as we left Land's End in our wake.

After a stomach-testing 45-minute trip we took what shelter was available at mystical Ruapuke Island to shoot the photos before dropping a few lines and instantly hooking up on blue cod.

With a couple in the bin, Adam kindly handed over the keys and it was time to put the 1650 Fisher to the test. Having seen how the Stabicraft lads had driven her I had no reservations about this boat's capability.

### SERIOUS FUN

Sitting comfortably at the helm, the sporty steering wheel (now standard

on all Fishers 1650 and above) is fitting given this boat's sports-car-like performance. A flush-mounted Lowrance HDS7 fishfinder / chartplotter dominates the dash, and throttle and controls fall easily to hand. Visibility is good either seated or standing and looking over the 'screen, and an Ultra-flex cable system provides smooth, responsive steering.

Try as we might, there wasn't enough white-cap-free water during testing to fully unleash the maximum-rated 100hp Yamaha four-stroke to record full performance figures, but Adam tells me it's capable of 40kts (75kph).

With conditions picking up I had the choice of making the trip back in either the enclosed 9m hardtop camera boat or having some serious fun driving the 5m Stabi through a confused 1-2m swell, with 15-20kts of wild westerly whipping through. Tough choice, but I'm glad I went with the Stabi.

With 100hp bolted on the back there was plenty of power to take control in the rough. Sometimes more than enough as it turned out, and it was easy to accidentally give it too much and take off. The Game Chaser Transom seemed to like this approach, however.

Through the crappiest parts we were averaging 17kts (31.5kmh), and once through the worst it managed 25kts (46kmh) in full control. Sure, there was the occasional bang as we collided with a couple of nasty green ones, and we copped a fair bit of spray in the face without the optional bimini top and clears fitted. But there aren't many (if any) 16-footers I'd feel safe using to cross Foveaux Strait in those conditions. Overall, the ride was good and this hull was solid, safe, predictable and rewarding at all times.

### DESIGN SMARTS

Back on dry land, it was time to take a closer look at the design. There have been two fundamental changes to this all-new, all-aluminium Stabicraft, the first of which is the new Arrow Pontoons.

“By cutting the pontoon angle back we've basically changed where the



shoulder meets the water, which has softened the ride quite dramatically. We've already had great feedback," Tim explained.

The second major design improvement is the aforementioned Game Chaser Transom, which increases displacement aft and sharpens the stern entry for backing up on trophy winners. It also improves the way the boat rides and aids manoeuvrability in reverse. When you're backing down you can turn the rig on a boat length, and when chasing bigger fish you're much less prone to the back end of the boat digging in, an aspect of the design Stabicraft is very happy with.

The additional aft displacement also boosts stability, caters for heavier four-stroke engines and increases gear-carrying abilities. In fact, the Game Chaser Transom has proved such a success the plan is to standardise it throughout the range within the next couple of years.

In addition to the older fibreglass bonnet, a lot of thought has gone into the sharp line of the new alloy cabin top.

"It's about intersects," Tim said. "I don't like to sound like a Mazda car designer, but it's all about forward motion and all the lines follow each other. It has made a big difference to the look and is proving to be a hit with our customers."

As a manufacturer, Stabicraft is constantly striving to innovate and improve by listening to staff and customer feedback.

"It's hard to get excellent stability without sacrificing ride," Tim said. "But with the design changes we've made we think we're getting bloody close to achieving both."

One past gripe I have had with Stabicraft Fishers is that only two plastic rod holders have been standard, and gear stored in the front "dump zone" was at risk of getting wet. But in the case of

the 1650 Fisher, I am pleased to report Stabicraft has gone to four aluminium rod holders, and four drink / tackle holders are included in the standard package. In addition, the dump zone in the bow now has a solid bulkhead to prevent any water on the floor running forward and wetting your spare undies. Very nice.

The excellent bait station, with its large filleting-friendly top and well-placed handrails, adds a further two rod-holders and two drink / sinker holders and comes as standard. The area underneath can be used for dry, easily-accessed storage (as tested).

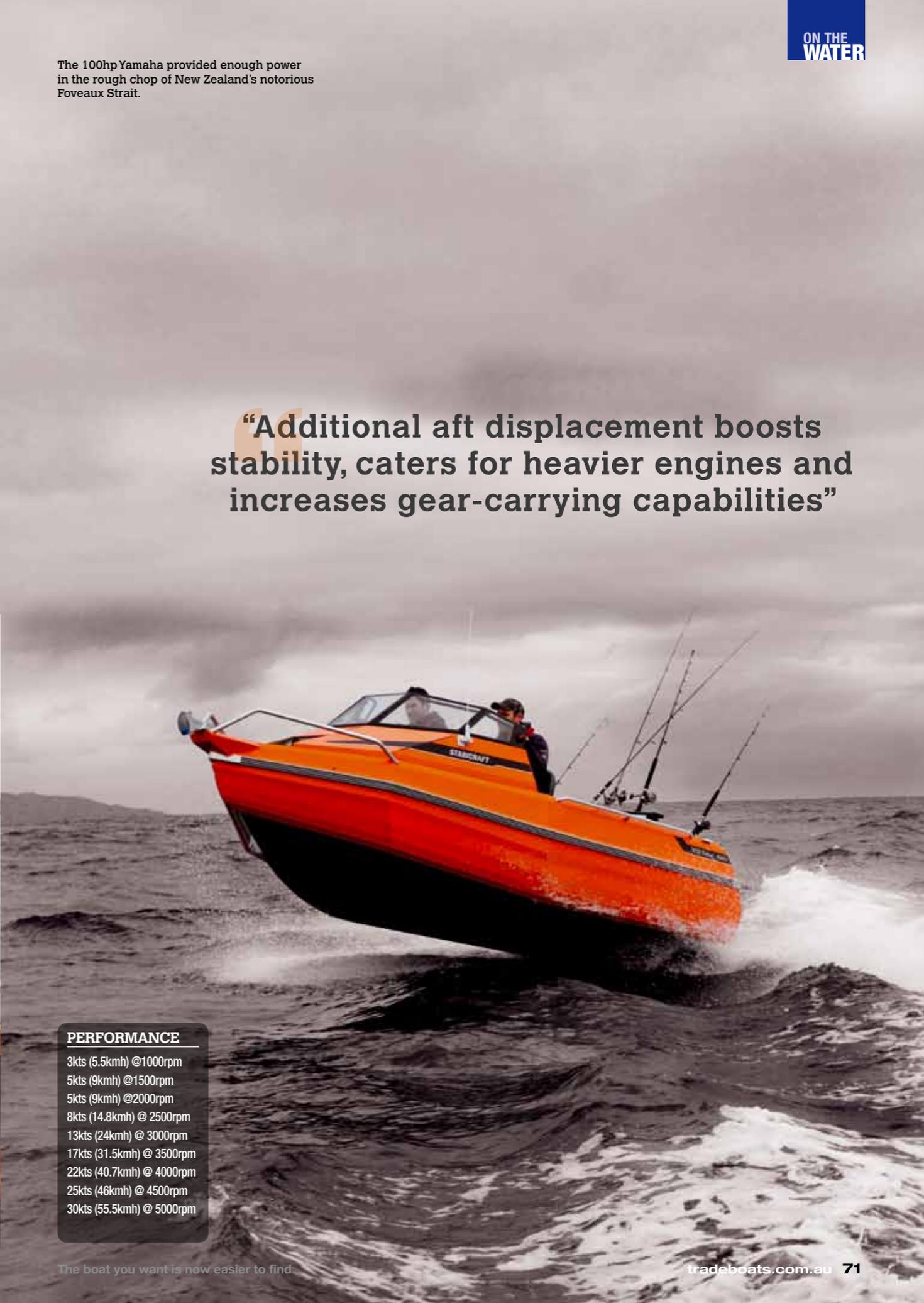
A 66L live-bait aquarium can be accommodated under the bait board without sacrificing storage space for batteries and oil tanks. If watersports are on the menu, the bait station lifts off and a ski pole fits in, but you can't have both so you will have to choose between the tank or the ski pole.

The 100hp Yamaha provided enough power in the rough chop of New Zealand's notorious Foveaux Strait.

**"Additional aft displacement boosts stability, caters for heavier engines and increases gear-carrying capabilities"**



Standard bait-station with handrails will be a very welcome addition for the fishos.



**PERFORMANCE**

- 3kts (5.5kmh) @1000rpm
- 5kts (9kmh) @1500rpm
- 5kts (9kmh) @2000rpm
- 8kts (14.8kmh) @ 2500rpm
- 13kts (24kmh) @ 3000rpm
- 17kts (31.5kmh) @ 3500rpm
- 22kts (40.7kmh) @ 4000rpm
- 25kts (46kmh) @ 4500rpm
- 30kts (55.5kmh) @ 5000rpm



Above: New Zealand's Ruapuke Island is a haven for blue cod, and the boys managed to reel a few in.

The centre-piece of the scratch-resistant glass windscreen folds back to allow safe walkthrough access to the anchor, and an optional stress-free winch makes anchoring even easier.

In the interests of safety, the transom has no doors, but the fold-down, non-skid rear seats act as a secure step into the cockpit.

All Stabicraft boats are built to order, and one of the benefits of dealing with a quality-focused and thoroughly professional manufacturer like this is that the options list always allows plenty of choice. As long as you know what you want, they will build it for you.

### THE WRAP

Pontoon boats may not be everyone's ideal platform, but after thoroughly testing this capable, versatile pocket rocket, and taming some very confused and rather rough water in the process, the new Stabicraft 1650 Fisher gets a big stamp of approval from me.

The stability and safety of pontoons in these conditions certainly outweighs any hardening of the ride, and in my opinion the 1650's new Arrow Pontoons and Game Chaser Transom have definitely improved this aspect. As an avid fisherman and diver, I'd happily own one. 🐟

### TRAILERBOAT RATES THE STABICRAFT 1650 FISHER

1 Fun factor	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
2 Innovation	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
3 Design and layout	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
4 Quality of finish	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
5 Handling and ride	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
6 Stability at rest	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
7 Ergonomics	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
8 Standard equipment	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
9 Value for money	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
10 X-Factor	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟
<b>OVERALL</b>	🐟🐟🐟🐟🐟

## TRAILERBOAT RATES THE STABICRAFT 1650 FISHER

### HOW MUCH?

**Price:** NZ\$54,500 (approx. AUD\$45,00)

**Options fitted:** Full paint (including stipple coating inside pontoon frames); 100L in-floor fuel tank; stainless steel SARCA fairlead; battery compartment hatch; graphics; solid rear boarding ladder; removable

ski-pole; Ocean Bolster seats; external gunwale handrails; cabin carpet lining; tube floor matting

**Priced from:** NZ\$35,290 (approx. AUD\$29,275)

### GENERAL

**Type:** Pontoon  
**Material:** Aluminium

**Length:** 5m  
**Beam:** 2.15m (external); 1.65m (internal)  
**Weight:** 460kg (dry)  
**Deadrise:** 17.5°

### CAPACITIES

**People:** 5  
**Rec. HP:** 60  
**Max. HP:** 100

**Fuel:** 100L  
**Water:** N/A

### ENGINE

**Make/model:** Yamaha  
**Type:** 100hp four-stroke  
**Weight:** 174kg  
**Displacement:** 1596cc  
**Gear ratio:** 2.27:1

### MANUFACTURED BY

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