

# The pick of the bunch

Challenger Boats' chief Tony Hawker personally rates the 650 the pick of their bunch.

After a quick spin around Tauranga Harbour in the latest fully optioned version, Black Ice, I tend to agree.

It seems to be an ideal compromise (well, as close as any boat can be) being small enough to trailer well and handle at the ramp; yet big enough to fit the family, their gear and perform well in testing conditions.

While the big brother, the 720 Hardtop, is king for the serious fisho – with total weather protection and longer waterline for even better handling – but all that comes with extra weight for towing; you know when you're hooked up to a 720!

The 650 on the other hand still offers plenty of protection all round with its curved screen, soft top and there's always the plastic clears to zip in between, if the weather and sea gets really gnarly. Those days fortunately are mostly few and far between for the average family boating excursions.

So apart from the iconic strakeless hull, flawless finish and the benefits of local design and build, what else is there to attract the potential buyer to a Challenger 650 over the huge array of competition out there?

Well for starters, they've some very ingenious new features.

Tony has sourced an angled bezel for the steering system, which sets the wheel up perfectly for the helmsperson. This means the dash can be more or less vertical for space savings, yet the controls all feel "right."

We test drive a lot of boats that seem to set up for a hunchbacked camel with dislocated limbs. Not so, the new 650 which puts everything in the right place, with great

visibility all round and controls and gauges seemingly in a very comfy ergonomic fit.

Also new and innovative is the "Kiwi Drum Winch" a drum system which has been developed with Marine Direct. This falls into the category of being so simple, you wonder why no-one's done it before.

Challenger have strengthened the f'ard bulkhead and added the winch system which solves the problem of insufficient height in the bow section for a standard capstan to work. We've all seen the drama of the chain piling up in a pyramid and the resulting jams.

The winch system also eliminates the sometimes troublesome chain-to-rope transition, simply winding one over the top of the other. And its all very compact.

With 10 metres of chain and 100 metres of rope all neatly rolled on the drum, it's a tidy and effective system. The test boat featured a Kewene anchor with its own purpose-built tilting fairlead to ensure it

beds home snugly. Best of all, the skipper can see it all from the seat.

The cabin space, with its wide opening, has to be seen to be appreciated. There's enough useable room for a cosy overnigher or week-ender. The cabin is large enough for a toilet under the infill.

The cockpit is has equally impressive space for the size of the boat and features a full length underfloor locker, ideal for dive and ski gear.

Powering the test boat is the Suzuki 175 four stroke, the maximum recommended horsepower for the Challenger 650, providing more than enough smooth and quiet power. Combined with hydraulic steering it was a delight to handle.

Tony says the boat has topped out at 63 mph. We found it cruised nicely at 30mph at 4000 rpm. This combo would have brilliant torque for skiing and towing water toys, or carrying a load of divers and their gear – or just going really fast.

*continued...*



## Specifications

LOA: 6.50m

Draft: 0.38

Approx tow weight: 1,850k

Beam: 2.38m

Deadrise: 18.5 °

On galvanised tandem axle multi roller braked trailer with spare wheel

# Finished in a gleaming black

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Otherwise a 150 would easily power the 650 for most people's purposes.

All up, the boat as tested is a lovely example of the locally inspired and produced Challengers. This one has all the bells and whistles; trim tabs, electronics, electric trailer winch and shows just how well any of the Challengers can be set up.



Finished in gleaming black hull sides and polished stainless, Black Ice is a credit to the Challenger team and its owner.

List price for the basic boat (without outboard) and braked tandem trailer package start at \$49,837 for the 650SE and the hardtop 650SE for \$61,337.



**NEW 7.2m trailerable inboard diesel!**

**SPECIFICATIONS:** LOA 7.20m | Draft 0.38 | Beam 2.45m  
**Approx Tow Weight** 2,600 kg | **Engine** 220 HP Cummins  
 Inboard Diesel | **Deadrise** 18.5°



**STANDARD FEATURES INCLUDE:** Hydraulic steering  
 Aster Freedom winch with warp, anchor & chain  
 Rocket launcher/handrail | 215L under floor fuel tank  
 Large bait station/ski pole combination | Curved front  
 windscreen | 2 x pedestal swivel Softrider seats | Full  
 dashboard instrumentation (trip computer) | Trim tabs  
 (auto return) | Teak trim | Double batteries & switch

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