

Boat Review



SURTEES 800 TRAILERBOAT PERFECTION

The technology packed into trailerboats has been growing in recent years, but the Surtees 800 has provided yet another leap forward. NZ Fishing News' Editor Ethan Neville headed to Whitianga to put Surtees' latest offering through its paces and was blown away by what he found.





The Surtees 800's sharp entry into the water makes for a smooth ride.

Over the last couple of years working at *NZ Fishing News*, I've had the opportunity to get out on a fair few boats, so it's not often that I'm surprised by what a vessel has to offer. When I stepped off the Surtees 800 onto the Whitianga wharf, however, I was genuinely in a state of bemused awe.

We were on our way back from Red Mercury Island and the wind had done what it usually does on sunny summer afternoons: ignored the forecast and started blowing. A solid chop had to be navigated, which on your standard alloy boat can often mean a lot of banging, bouncing, rattling and, quite literally in my case recently, a quick trip

to the chiro. I shouldn't have been worried. We cruised at 25 knots on the Surtees 800, and we even shared a quiet brew to finish the day – on my personal boat, this results in either spilled beer or chipped teeth. It was smooth riding at its very best, and certainly beyond anything I had encountered before on a trailer boat. So, when I got on to dry land, I was as mystified as I was impressed – this boat was something else.

The day had started "late" by fisher's standards. With the Surtees crew coming up from Whakatane and me shooting down from Auckland, we'd decided 10:00am was a reasonable hour to launch. I met Surtees GM Cliff, Marketing Manager Isabell and all-rounder

Kris at the ramp, along with their videographer Geoff. They informed me that *Ka Awatea II* (the name of this particular Surtees 800) was the first one ever built, and that owners Stu and Ngaire Fairweather had kindly allowed us to borrow it for a couple of days (a big thanks to Stu and Ngaire!). After all our gear was loaded and the boat prepped, we started the short trip out to meet NZ Fishing Media team members Grant Blair and Josh Williams, who were providing the photo boat.

While everyone got settled and Cliff slowly moved us away from the marina, I took my opportunity to give the boat a thorough inspection. This started at the stern, and I was immediately impressed by the grab rails –

yes, this may not seem like an exciting place to begin, but every keen angler will tell you how often these come in handy. There is ample space to fish from on the stern "boarding platform" ("fishing platform" would be my preferred name – it would certainly be pole position when straylining on anchor!), and it also provides the ideal space to land bigger catches. Two of the grab rails easily convert into boarding ladders at either side of the outboard, which Geoff put to work later that day while getting some underwater footage.

The transom took my attention next. The impressive black/white aesthetic is hard to miss, and there's also no shortage of features. Two livebait tanks are built in – one each side of the



There is no shortage of fishing space on this vessel.

transom – and these conveniently sit under two panels which slide down to provide access to the boarding platform. The bait station takes centre position on top of the transom, and it comes

fitted with five rod holders, as well as a storage drawer underneath (the perfect place to store salty tackle throughout the day). Beneath the drawer is where I found the two batteries hiding,

both of which have isolation switches. Finally, slick-looking tuna tubes are built into each corner of the transom, ensuring all the fishing-bases are covered. By the time I'd taken all of this

in, we were nearing the harbour entrance, so it was time to move forward before Cliff opened the throttle. I looked for a grab rail – of which there are many (yes, I was impressed) – and prepared myself to hold on. Again, I needn't have worried. There was a small chop, but it felt like we were riding on silk. The jet-black Suzuki 325 four-stroke got us out of the water quickly, and we were soon cruising at 25 knots. Surtees deal with most major outboard brands in NZ, so it is up to the owner to take their pick. Stu and Ngaire have a soft spot for Suzuki, and it was hard to fault their choice. The recommended HP is between 300 and 450, so the 325 pushed us along comfortably. However, 325 is a lot of HP for one motor, and the trade-off with this model is the noise. It's powerful, but certainly not the quietest engine on the market.

We soon caught sight of Grant and Josh aboard the photo boat and made our way over. The introductions and running shots



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The crystal-clear water at an inshore island off Whitianga provided the perfect scenery for a cast.

were quickly taken care of after a bit of boat swapping, and then it was finally my time to get on the helm.

Before I opened the throttle, I did ask Cliff for a run-through of the controls and electronics. They were, as expected, impressive. The 16" flush-mounted Garmin chartplotter/sounder unit is unmissable. This was my first time using this model, but it was extremely intuitive and had all the features you'd expect of a top-of-the-line fish finder. Beneath the screen were a long row of labelled switches, controlling

everything from window wipers to the bilge pump. The trim tab controls are accessible and easy to use, even for someone like me who doesn't have this luxury on my personal boat. Of particular note are the bow thruster and power steering controls – yes, you can choose how heavy you want the steering to be. While I opted for the "middle" setting, I can see how the lighter setting could be helpful when docking. When combined with the bow thrusters, there'd be no mooring, dock or wharf that'd be too difficult to manage with this boat, which Cliff

clearly demonstrated at the end of the day.

With the basics out of the way, my impatience was growing, so I pushed the throttle into gear and slowly got us up on the plane. The water had glassed off and the path forward was effortless. I started to adjust the trim as we gained pace (force of habit), but Cliff said I didn't need to worry. Sure enough, the nose came down and we were soon humming along at 30 knots, balanced and without even the slightest bounce. "Balanced", in fact, is probably the adjective

which describes the Surtees 800 best. As I pulled the craft port and starboard at pace, we made the turns with ease – never once did I feel anything but in control. And I should note that the sharp entry Surtees hulls are famous for did not compromise stability at rest. When I came down off the plane and let my own wake roll under the boat, the rocking was at a minimum and certainly far less than I was expecting when you consider the ease at which this hull cut through the water.

Once I was satisfied with the boat's handling and pickup, I



Left: The fridge is a nice addition for those who want to spend nights on board the boat. Right: The sink and stovetop are two more fantastic inclusions for those who like their finer comforts.



cruised us into one of the many islands off Whitianga for a quick flick of the rod. It was then that I finally got familiar with the rest of the boat's fishing capabilities.

The cockpit is just how I like it: big, flat and empty (in other words, lots of fishing room). Four adults could easily fish at once, and the forward platform provides another fantastic casting point for at least one other angler (two if it's calm). The fully welded tread plate floor was what I'm accustomed to, but those who like their finer comforts may opt for a full SeaDek covering. The

wide gunnels do come covered with SeaDek out of the box, and these are fitted with drink and rod holders. Their height was also ideal for thigh support when jigging or getting bent over the rails by big fish. I'm a huge fan of upright rod storage that's out of the spray zone, and that's exactly what Surtees have provided on the inside of the gunnels – not that there's a 'spray zone' on this boat. Besides Geoff who chose to go for a swim, not one of us got the least bit wet the whole day.

Moving forward, two IceyTek split lid bins fit snugly under

the passenger seat (these come standard with the boat). The passenger seat itself offers a variety of options: lean the back rest forward and you have a backwards facing bench seat; lean it back and you've got yourself booth-style seating with a table between; lay both passenger seats down and you've got yourself another bed for the night. If overnighting is on your 'to do' list, then you'll also love the fridge, sink, stovetop and toilet. The squabs in the forward cabin provide comfortable sleeping for at least two more, so

overnighting with three to four adults wouldn't be a problem at all. Two tinted glass doors can make this cabin enclosed, which is great for keeping wind, salt and bugs out of the sleeping areas. You can also tick the lighting box with Narva internal touch lights and Hella roof-mounted navigation and rear facing LEDs covering all your bases. Finally, the underfloor tank is 500L, which means an overnight journey to most offshore islands (I have my favourites in mind: Barrier, Mokes, and Mayor) won't be a problem. Back to the fishing...



Left: The booth-style seating provides a comfortable place to eat your catch. Right: Two split-lid Icey-Teks come standard with the boat.




The purple underwater lights were striking at first light.

Rod holders are everywhere: 13 on the rocket launchers, five on the baitboard, four on each gunnel and four up front for those casting off the bow – that’s a grand total of 30. There are also mounts for outriggers ready to go, which the current owner has already put to good use. When you take into account the fishing room, casting space, livebait tanks, tuna tubes, tackle storage and state of the art sounder, I really can’t think of anything Surtees have missed.

The fishing on this day was slow – although Josh did manage

one 60-odd-cm snapper on the photo boat – and before long we started making our way back to port. This was when the chop stood up, but the famous Surtees “sharp” hull shape lived up to its reputation. The 6mm hull ensured we didn’t feel every bang or slap – not that there were many – and we arrived back at port comfortable and dry. I should note that this boat has an Anti-Roll Lock Shut-off Gate that retains the ballast water and makes the ride more stable, but we didn’t even need to utilise this feature.

Surtees have been making boats for a very long time now, and this is overwhelmingly evident in their latest design: every box has been ticked, every detail thought of. As a kiwi fisher and boatie, I stepped off the boat without any real complaints or suggestions – nothing has been overlooked. It is a true testament to NZ design, and it was an absolute pleasure to helm. If you’re in the market for a boat that covers all your fishing bases in comfort and style, then the Surtees 800 should be at the top of your list. 

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	8000mm
Hull thickness:	6mm
Recommended HP:	300 – 450
Under floor fuel tank:	500L
Height on trailer:	3200mm
Beam:	2700mm
Sides:	4mm
Deadrise:	20 degree
Top sides:	4mm
Cabin:	3mm
Approx. tow weight:	3400kg
Boat Price as tested:	\$318,000



No detail has been overlooked – Cliff shows off the shower.



All the controls at your fingertips when you’re driving the Surtees 800.

NEW 800



FISHING ADVENTURES JUST GOT BIGGER

A battlewagon built to fish or a family adventure machine, the new 800 offers the best of both worlds. Featuring bi-fold window and doors, the cabin can be fully enclosed for overnighting and lock-up security. Open them right up and you get unrestricted access to a massive fishing platform and all the action. The foredeck delivers even more fishing space and a bow-mounted

ladder makes boarding easy – from the rocks or the beach. Of course, the new 800 has all the Surtees iQ that's made the name famous, including stabilising water ballast technology, two fully sealed safety buoyancy compartments and the signature non-pounding super deep V hull. The new Surtees 800 Game Fisher has arrived. Let the games begin!



Large bi-fold window and doors create fully enclosed shelter for overnighting and lock-up security



Dinette with flip-flop seats, galley, head, sleeping room – creature comforts galore



Bow fishing, beach access, there's even a bow thruster for extra manoeuvrability