

Home Away from Home





US-based Outer Reef Yachts has set up in the Australian market and will use the new 63-foot trawler as its spearhead launch. *OCEAN* stepped aboard the boat to discover that this comfortable passagemaker could have what it takes to find a home in the Antipodes.

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In the calm of Refuge Bay in Sydney’s Hawkesbury River, walled in by high sandstone ridges and steep, gumtree-riddled cliffs basking in the golden afternoon sun, the Outer Reef 63 seems very much at home in the tranquillity of its surrounds. From the broad brushstrokes of its gracious trawler-style hull through to the special interior touches, like the cosy walnut brown leather armchairs in the saloon and satin teak details of the pilothouse, the Outer Reef 63 exudes an inviting and friendly quality. It’s an immediately endearing yacht which, you get the impression, could very quickly begin to feel like home.

This brand new 63-footer is the first Outer Reef yacht to officially go ‘on the market’ in Australia, although two yachts have previously been sold to eager Australian customers who got in before a local agent could be established. The Fort Lauderdale-based company has been making inroads into the trawler category in its home country since 2000, winning

plenty of fans in this competitive segment. Built on a dedicated Outer Reef production line at the Tania boat yard in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, which has been producing boats for over 40 years, Outer Reef yachts are built to a balanced equation of quality build and affordability.

After the company recently made a move into the UK market, the Outer Reef 63 model is now set to be the pointy edge of the wedge for the company’s planned expansion Down Under, and for that purpose this particular yacht seems like an ideal choice.

Back on the water, we were only 40km north of the Sydney CBD but, as the locals like to say in these parts, ‘a million miles from care’. It’s a well-worn cliché but a fitting analogy for the sensation the Outer Reef 63 inspires. Moving through the yacht the words ‘easy to live aboard’ seem to roll naturally off the tongue. It’s not hard to imagine taking life at a more leisurely pace aboard this boat, cruising comfortably between



islands in the Whitsundays at 8 to 10 knots, or dropping anchor to whittle away the hours with a good book on the aft deck or up top in the spacious pilothouse.

The classic trawler look lends a certain ageless character to the Outer Reef which many will find appealing, particularly anyone who has suffered the creeping sorrow of watching a 'very now' yacht with time take on a horribly dated look. To the untrained eye it would be difficult to place within any particular period and it's hard to imagine the look ever really going out of style.

There are various aesthetic cues harking back to an earlier era of boat building. A particularly telling detail is the bow, with its subtle wood planking effect, which at first glance had us questioning, surely it's not a wooden hull? The hull is in fact made by the most modern of techniques, vacuum compression, but no doubt we were asking the kinds of questions

intended by its designers.

The high bow, wrap-around side decks and Portuguese bridge add to the impression of a traditional passagemaker, but there's nothing out-of-date about its performance. The semi-displacement hull is a modern, seaworthy design and meets some of the most stringent standards and international performance benchmarks, including the European Union Category A rating for yachts expected to encounter Force 8 winds and seas exceeding 18 to 20 feet. This is, after all, a bluewater and coastal cruising motor yacht which could easily take you from Sydney to Auckland.

The hull's optimum speed is 10 knots, but throttle back a little and this 63-footer cruises with greatest efficiency at around 7 knots with a range of up to 2,900 nautical miles (with the additional 1,100-litre fuel tank, bringing total fuel to 4,920 litres). With just 4'10" draft, it's also ideal for cruising some of the shallower waters of the Whitsundays and the South



The main saloon looking forward to the galley and pilothouse.

Pacific, and Outer Reef has designed it with the cruising couple in mind.

“This is the largest boat I have driven by a good 10 feet and I was a bit worried at first,” admits Andrew Coffey, the Australian agent for Outer Reef Yachts, who accompanied *OCEAN* during our time aboard.

“But I have found that the bow and stern thrusters do make it much easier to dock and manoeuvre than I expected, and while you always have to take it easy at first and get used to a larger boat, I have been pleasantly surprised with how easily it handles.”

As a new model in the Outer Reef range, the 63 is essentially an extended version of the company’s 58-footer with the extra five feet devoted to a new stern cockpit, which has been slotted in between the aft deck and the swimming platform. Apart from creating a visually appealing stepped effect to the yacht’s profile, this flexible space can fulfil any number of handy functions, acting as a dedicated fishing area, a storage space for a tender, canoes or surfboards, a place to dry off after a swim or simply as a space to plonk a deck chair to soak up some rays. An added benefit of the aft cockpit comes in the sealed door which provides safe access to the engine room while underway, plus there’s a generous under-floor storage space. It’s an intelligent addition to an already great yacht and one that will definitely appeal to the outdoors lifestyle of your average Australian consumer.

The yacht is boarded on starboard via the swim deck, with entry proceeding through the aft cockpit and up a few steps to what is dubbed

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the ‘California deck’, an open dining and entertaining area with a settee with two built-in seats, all under the shelter of the overhanging bridge deck above. All outdoor decks have been painted in a cream colour, which retains a light feel but reduces the potential for glare from the standard white decks. A pair of wing doors on either side provide protection from wind and sea spray and if the weather really turns foul, the whole area can be enclosed by clears (an option not installed on this boat) ensuring this space usable at all times.

Entry to the main saloon is through a single hinged door, which may seem out of step with the growing Australian preference for yachts that open up completely at the rear for a seamless transition between outdoor and indoor living spaces. However, this being a genuine passage maker, Outer Reef has opted for the most watertight solution as standard, but offer an option of a wider opening door.

The carpeted saloon is comfortable and uncomplicated, with four large windows capturing expansive views and allowing the sunlight to stream in. An L-shaped lounge curves around the aft port corner and is matched to a foldout table which converts from a tidy little coffee table to a dining table. Facing the lounge on the starboard side are two stately leather armchairs – an optional addition for this boat, but a very nice one.

At almost every point as we move through the boat, Coffey lists off the myriad possible options Outer Reef offers. The design process for an Outer



Clockwise from top left: Black granite benchtops and modern LG appliances adorn the galley; the pilothouse is not merely an afterthought, but one of the nicest spaces on the yacht; a twin-berth is located to port; the master bathroom is bright and spacious; the master stateroom has a very private feel.

Reef yacht is a close collaboration between buyer and builder, he says, and there's enough scope for customising the interior to satisfy the most fastidious of owners, from the smallest of details to complete layout changes.

Moving up two steps from the saloon into the galley, the options list continues to grow. Black granite bench tops, stainless steel LG appliances, teak panelling and teak and holly floors have been selected for this yacht, but options abound for owners to select their own combination of benchtop and wood. Outer Reef offers cherry, mahogany and maple, but as Coffey points out, "if we can get a hold of the wood we can build it." The galley is open athwartships so the cook can converse with guests in the saloon, and the forward wall can also be removed (at the build stage) if the owner would like it to open into the pilothouse as well.

Moving forward through the galley takes us into the spacious expanse of the pilothouse, with a raised L-shaped lounge and table in the rear port corner with a great view over the bow, sealed doors on either side, which can be opened with the top half only if required, and access to the staircases to the lower deck and pilothouse.

Burled teak with a silky satin finish has been used for the broad dashboard fascia creating a stunning focal point, only topped by the superb helmwheel in made of teak with inlaid holly accents, which screams out to be held. A comprehensive suite of Raymarine electronics is spread out nicely across the dash and there's a generous chart table and drawer to port, under which is easy access to the switchboard and a larger storage space. In fact, the availability of storage space on this yacht is one of its most impressive characteristics and further underlines its suitability as a

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long-range cruiser. There are drawers and cupboards in virtually every available place where they could be considered convenient.

Moving down the gently spiralled teak staircase to the lower deck, the 63 has a two-head, three-stateroom layout with a double VIP room forward with ensuite, a guest double bunk room to port and the full beam master stateroom with private ensuite. Down below, the faint hum of the twin Northern Lights gensets is barely discernable, and certainly nothing to be worried about.

The theme of ample storage space continues on the lower deck with plenty of smaller cupboards and drawers in all the bedrooms. All downstairs doors have been fitted with clever magnetic latches so that the wooden doorframes are protected and kept in pristine condition. There's also a ducted vacuum system hidden in a cupboard and a concealed LG washer/dryer.

The lower deck is split across three levels, and steps down into the master stateroom, located amidships. This very private owner's room features an ensuite with shower and granite benchtops, plenty of cupboard space including what could be used as a drying cupboard, and a conventional clothes wardrobe. The small windows located behind the bedhead are masked by translucent Shoji screens to diffuse the light for a soft aura. While it's not the brightest of staterooms there's a sense of privacy and a feeling that one could catch up on some much-needed sleep at any time of the day.

Through the aft bulkhead is an access door to the engine room, which has generous headroom – enough for a six-foot tall person to stand without stooping. The mechanical components are spread out enough so there's a

good deal of room to work on the twin CAT C-9 turbocharged diesels, gensets or bowthrusters. Moving aft through the engine room brings us to a utility room housing the air conditioning unit and providing even more space for storage. It would be particularly useful for swimming or diving equipment as the sealed rear door opens onto the aft cockpit.

The flybridge can be accessed from the pilothouse via a teak staircase or from California deck by climbing up a vertical ladder and through a hatch. Up top, there's a Stidd leather helm chair matching the one in the pilothouse, this one in beautiful white leather. Up here there's a stainless steel helmwheel and a full suite of electronics to control thrusters, autopilot and the searchlight.

Behind the helm is corner lounge and table to port, but it's behind the covered area that our attention was drawn. Moving aft is the area usually reserved for the tender, which on the day of our visit was empty but for the 1,200lb davit crane in the corner. With no tender to absorb all the room you can really appreciate the true size of this space – there's almost room for a cricket match up here! Or perhaps just one hell of a great party.

“One reason why the flybridge is so large is that the helm is so far forward, which leaves all this space behind for an entertaining area or to store the tender, which can be lifted up over the rail with the davit crane,” explains Coffey. “It's just the style of this particular boat, but the benefit is also that you get better vision forward.”

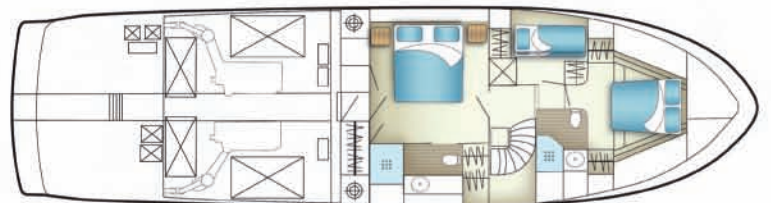
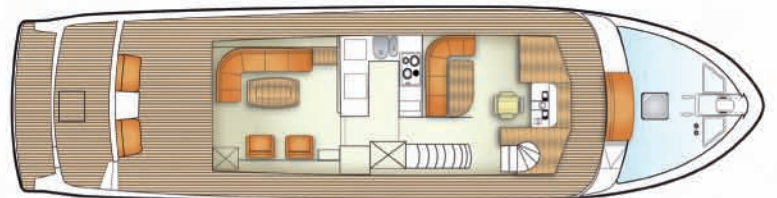
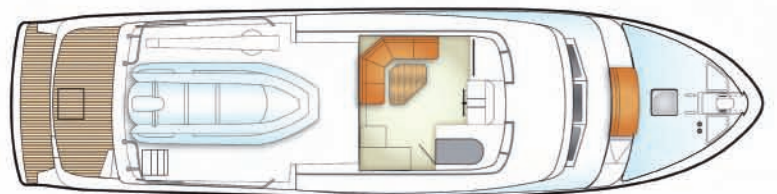
The three-burner built-in gas barbecue is big enough to feed an army and the neat enclosed sink makes this a functional cooking area. It's an ideal spot for entertaining larger numbers, and with the afternoon drawing on, the sun making its way for the western horizon, it would sure have been nice to stick around a quiet beer, or maybe some cocktails with friends on this upper deck. But while the sun was setting on our time with the Outer Reef 63, it's perhaps just the beginning of a bright day for the brand in Australia. ○

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Outer Reef Yachts	BUILDER
Taiwan	COUNTRY OF BUILD
Outer Reef Yachts Design Team	DESIGNER
Chaucer Chen	NAVAL ARCHITECT
Outer Reef Yachts Design Team	INTERIOR DESIGNER
2009	YEAR OF BUILD
19.23 metres (63'1")	LOA
5.23 metres (17' 2")	BEAM
1.25 metres (4'10")	DRAFT
42 tonnes	DISPLACEMENT
Hand-laid FRP, PVC core sandwich and vinylester barrier laminate	HULL
Hand-laid FRP deck/house and flybridge with PVC rigid foam sandwich	SUPERSTRUCTURE
2 x CAT C-9 Acert diesels	ENGINES
503hp (each)	OUTPUT
Stainless steel shafts with Nibral props	PROPELLERS
16 knots	SPEED (MAX)
11-12 knots	SPEED (CRUISE)
4,921 litres (1,300 gallons)	FUEL CAPACITY
2,900 nautical miles	RANGE
1,135 litres (300 gallons)	FRESHWATER CAPACITY
378 litres (100 gallons)	GREYWATER CAPACITY
16hp hydraulic bow and stern thrusters	BOW THRUSTERS
Northern Lights 16kW (60Hz)	GENERATORS (MAIN)
Raymarine	NAVIGATION ELECTRONICS
Owner's stateroom, guest stateroom and twin bunks	OWNER AND GUESTS (BERTHS)
from US\$1.84 million, plus duty and GST	PRICE





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