

The world is your oyster aboard this impeccable, classic trawler, and so is the interior layout

OUTER REEF 700

Text: Dave Marsh Photos: Lester McCarthy





Foredeck lockers (under the centre seats) are an unusual bonus to find on a trawler



Optional open-plan arrangement shows how the 700 can be transformed inside



The upper helm station



Hardtop ladder is a thoughtful feature, vital for checking the navigation equipment

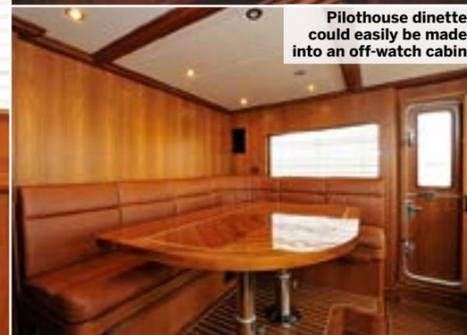


The 700 boasts a trump card which it does not seem to be charging for – full custom build

Unlike its rivals, there's just two steps separating the pilothouse and saloon



Incredibly comfortable Stidd seat (my favourite) is standard issue on the 700



Pilothouse dinette could easily be made into an off-watch cabin



Galley's standard-issue appliances even include a trash compactor

The Solent was eerily calm as we nosed our way out in the Outer Reef 700. We may have been hoping for mountainous waves, swells the size of buildings, and horizontal wind-blown spray – the type of conditions to really tax an ocean trawler, but this disobedient stretch of water dished up an unseasonably calm, chilly day.

Still, there's always an upside. At least flat calm conditions mean accurate speed trials and fuel consumption figures. Sadly, we were thwarted here too, thanks to a sizeable tangle of nylon rope and netting that was later discovered wrapped around the port-side

propeller. So the speed and fuel consumption figures you see overleaf are extracted from Outer Reef's comprehensive trials data. Fortunately, these reveal the 700's true character. The data shows the meagre fuel consumption increasing more than fivefold as the tempo rises from a comfortable cruising speed around 9 knots to the 700's 13.8-knot top speed, the sign of a true full displacement trawler designed for easy cruising at or below its theoretical hull speed of around 11 knots.

SUPERIOR HANDLING

Although our boat had one of the more powerful CAT engine options, it's clear that the standard-issue 503hp CAT C9 diesels are more than man enough to propel the 700 at

the modest speeds it is designed for. It's a shame I can only surmise how the 700 might handle enormous ocean waves and giant swells. But looking at the hull out of the water the Outer Reef's seakeeping character is clear as day. With its knife-like forefoot reaching all the way down to the depth of its full-length keel, the only way this boat is ever going to slam is if it's accidentally dropped from a crane.

What I can vouch for, however, is the low-speed handling. When I brought the 700 back up the Hamble, as we poked our very large nose into Universal Marina, there was a last minute misunderstanding about which way round I should park the 700. Consequently, I was obliged to abruptly end-for-end the

700 in amongst the tightly packed pontoons while contending with a fierce ebb tide. Had the 700 been remotely flighty, or even faintly underpowered in the hydraulic bow and stern thruster department, I'm convinced that I would have been pondering the size of *Motor Boat & Yachting's* insurance excess.

CUSTOMER IS KING

For every leisurely trawler built and sold, I'd guess four or five 30-knot planing boats roll off the production lines. And yet, for those prepared to slow down, there are so many significant benefits to be had. If nothing else, it's impossible to miss what a terrific bargain most voluminous trawlers are compared with their speedier siblings.

If you had the 700's starting price of £1.8 million (ex tax) burning a hole in your pocket, you could get your hands on a Fairline Squadron 65. Fair enough, the Squaddy's 1,015hp CAT engines are twice the size of the 700's modest 503hp CATs. And strictly speaking, in accommodation terms the difference between the boats – both are three cabin, three ensuite head affairs – is not the gulf you might expect. However, once aboard, the 700 does feel like a significantly bigger craft, especially if you wander along the broad covered side decks and around the Portuguese bridge, or stray into the grand engineroom and then aft onto the 700's palatial crew quarters.

Even if the two were close in volume terms, the 700 still has a trump card which it does not seem to be charging for – full custom build. So although heavy, vinylester-skinned glassfibre is the construction material of choice, beyond this the rest of the boat is a free for all. A choice of timbers and joinery styles, fabrics and

Sophisticated air filters help to filter out salty air before it enters the engineroom





The engineroom is simply outstanding and will be deal-maker for many buyers

lighting, countertops and door handles, unique layouts – as long as structural and engineering integrity plus good old common sense is not compromised, only your imagination is going to limit to what Outer Reef can build for you.

OPEN-PLAN PERFECTION

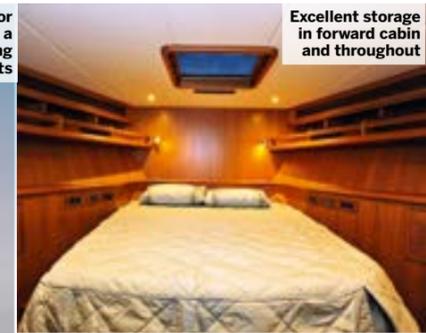
Given that this normally eye-wateringly expensive luxury does not seem to be reflected in this sturdily built boat's price, that is quite some bonus. There are innumerable ways you might consider utilising that freedom, but two in particular stand out. Our test boat had a conservative teak interior that some might even deem to border on old fashioned. It was very nicely put together, but there are myriad alternatives including chic, contemporary



It's impossible to miss what a terrific bargain the voluminous Outer Reef 700 represents

The 700 is made for open water, with a comfortable cruising speed around 9 knots

Stylish granite countertops are standard issue in all the ensuite heads



Excellent storage in forward cabin and throughout

Our test boat had a third cabin with bunks; there's also a crew cabin



Headroom throughout the 700 is generous and joinery can be everything from traditional teak (seen here) to contemporary cherry



Quality fit and finish and owners have the opportunity to customise and design the whole interior

interiors (fashioned by Ken Freivokh) that would not look out of place on a Sunseeker. The other key issue to ponder is the saloon and pilothouse arrangement. Unlike its far more vertiginous Nordhavn rivals, only two shallow steps separate the floor levels in the saloon and the pilothouse.

This allows Outer Reef to offer an amazing open-plan saloon-galley-dinette-pilothouse arrangement which makes other sub-divided layouts look almost claustrophobic.

Each to their own of course, but having cruised on trawlers with this type of open-plan layout, for me it's an entirely one-sided contest. An already good view out becomes panoramically spectacular, the unified space becomes a more sociable one, and it's easier for the crew to communicate. Under way, I always feel safer because the skipper's view out is so much better.

For those who still covet the seclusion of a partitioned pilothouse, for night-time passage-making or other reasons such as crewed charter use, Outer Reef can install a solid sliding screen that runs athwartships (across the front end of the galley) and rises to ceiling height to blank off the major part of pilothouse.

ENGINEROOM EUPHORIA

Outer Reef is not alone in offering exemplary engineering installations, the best of the trawler builders have always inhabited the upper echelons. Still, although not all of the 700's roll call of niceties are unique, it's worth mentioning some of the goodies. Sound deadening rubber flooring, for instance, instead of knee-crippling alloy checkerplate. Big fiddled trays sit over the engines to secure tools and machinery, a reminder that not all service work is carried out in flat calm conditions. Extremely prominent engine stop and start buttons are located beside the engines. Outer

Reef has also incorporated a detail I've not seen before – opening portholes in the engineroom. Unsurprisingly, they have storm shutters as well as their glass closures, but what a great idea, fresh air in the normally stuffy engineroom.

VERDICT

It's a terrific time for anybody contemplating buying a big trawler yacht. However, although the best of the breed offer many of the same benefits – impressive engineering, long-range cruising potential, excellent build quality, and a varying degree of customisation – they do all have their distinct personalities. And so it is with Outer Reef's 700. Its classic, timeless exterior could be the thing that sways you. Or it might be its amazingly competitive price compared with faster mainstream counterparts. Personally, the opportunity to customise the interior of this type of long-distance cruiser to a level approaching a one-off build is the thing I'd find irresistible. **MBY**
Contact Outer Reef. Tel: +44 (0)1489 589194
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THE DATA

SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH OVERALL

71ft 6in (21.79m)

BEAM

18ft 6in (5.63m)

STANDARD FUEL CAPACITY

1,665 imp gal (7,571 litres)

WATER CAPACITY

333 imp gal (1,514 litres)

DRAUGHT

5ft 0in (1.52m)

RCD CATEGORY

A (for 18 people)

DISPLACEMENT

45.8 tonnes (empty)

56.2 tonnes (full fuel & water)

PRICE FROM

£1.8 million ex tax

ENGINES

Twin CAT C9.

6-cylinder 8.8-litre diesels

TOP SPEED

13.8 knots @ 2,500rpm,

198lph, 43.6gph, 0.32mpg,

548 miles

CRUISING SPEED

circa 9 knots @ 1,500rpm,

35lph, 7.7gph, 1.17mpg,

2,024 miles

Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Gph & mpg use imperial gallons.