



Off the Trailer

A tale of two boats

Arvor's 690D and 675 Sportsfish provide different answers to the same question.

And both are correct.

The design and philosophy of Arvor boats is rather unique, and it's probably why they have done so well in Australia. The style is reminiscent of European North Sea professional fishing boats – which is, indeed, where they originated – and the practicality shows through with fully enclosed wheelhouses and large, open cockpits.

The hull designs are exceptionally seaworthy and other aspects of their antecedents are apparent in features such as safe side-decks, big, self-draining scuppers and the ability to quickly fit emergency steering tillers. The latter may never be needed with today's reliable engineering and systems but, if nothing else, it's reassuring to see that the builders still consider such 'what if' factors and allow for them.

The external styling is hardly streamlined, but it has real appeal in its sturdy and businesslike appearance. Anyone who understands what 'seaworthy' truly means will appreciate the Arvor look. A quick tour onboard will also show the benefits within the



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spacious wheelhouse of excellent visibility and efficient ergonomics.

500 AND COUNTING

Peter Collins, of Sydney's long-standing Collins Marine, saw the potential for the Arvor approach quite some time ago. He has since sold more than 500 of them here, including around 200 of the Arvor 20 that he has built locally. Arvor itself has expanded considerably over that time and now has manufacturing plants in a number of European locations all using the latest technology, facilities and materials.

This time around we were fortunate to have two newly released models for a side-by-side comparison, which highlighted both similarities and variations, to give prospective owners very interesting choices. Both boats are primarily serious fishing platforms, but also excellent day or weekend cruisers and make fine family boats. Both could also be either moored or trailered and are in the same mid-\$80k price range, so budget considerations don't affect the choice.

The 690D is a 6.88m diesel-powered, shaft-driven boat that cruises at around 15 to 19 knots (28 to 35km/h) and tops out at around 22 knots

(41km/h). It's more likely to be moored or kept in a marina and offers all the simplicity of operation of an inboard diesel. Pricing starts from around \$84,500.

The 675 Sportsfish is a 6.55m outboard-powered design and cruises in the 20 to 25 knots (37 to 46km/h) bracket with a top speed of 33 knots (61km/h). It would be easier to trailer and offers that extra speed for those who favour fishing spots further away. Pricing starts from around \$84,150.

A trailer for either boat is around \$11-12,000, and there are various extra cost options for

The Arvor 690D is right at home running through the swell and chop of typical Aussie offshore waters.

By Graham Lloyd



Above: The wheelhouse layouts are similar for both boats with full protection and excellent visibility. This 690D had a chartplotter/fishfinder and trolling valve on the dash. The forward cushions of both Arvors extend to double-berths with infill sections.

Below: Both Arvors have large open cockpits ideally set up for fishing. The 690D has a single fold-out lounge whereas this 675 Sportsfish had two lounges and a provided table slots into place to suit.



space is likely to be more of a consideration as both cockpits have plenty of room for moving around and for any form of angling activity. The latter is clearly the dominant design approach, with rodholders, livebait tanks, integral tackle drawers and stacks of storage lockers prevalent in both Arvors. The layout is spot-on for fishing, too, with wide side decks, right-height gunwale support and foot-work space below.

Continuing the fishing theme, both boats have quick and safe access to the foredecks, with recessed walkways alongside the cabins. These are well below the gunwales and protected by effective guardrails. It's only when it is pointed out that you notice that the cabins are actually slightly offset to port, so that the starboard walkway is wider and that little bit easier to negotiate. That's another very thoughtful touch from Arvor that again emphasises the real-world input in their design and build processes.

The anchoring and mooring arrangements are good on both boats, with excellent deck hardware, anchor lockers with appropriate capacities for chain and line, and safe and easy facilities for handling mooring duties. The 690D has a power windlass as standard, while that's optional on the Sportsfish.

Moving aft to the transoms, the two boats are obviously different, with the 675 having a Mercury FourStroke 150 EFI outboard in an engine well and a boarding platform to starboard. The 690 has a much larger full-beam boarding platform, with a bracket for an optional auxiliary outboard. Both boats have drop-down swimladders and entry ports into their cockpits.

The latter have non-slip fibreglass soles, with hatches that lift on gas-assist struts above very generous underfloor stowage. The 690D has a raised section that also lifts for excellent access to the Mercury diesel and its systems. The 690 has a single lounge seat that folds out from under the starboard gunwale, while the 675 has twin lounges – one across the port side of the aft deck and the other in the rear port corner of the cockpit.

The 675 also includes as standard a demountable table for the cockpit that slots into a floor bracket positioned to suit the two lounges. It would be easy to find a fold-up table for the 690D to set out drinks and snacks, or for some

electronics and accessories, while both boats can be fitted with dual helm set-ups (wheelhouse and cockpit). There are other versions – smaller and larger – of both boats, so if the style appeals, there'll be an Arvor to suit.

COPIOUS COCKPITS

Mainly because of the amidships engine location, the shaft-driven 690D has a larger cockpit and smaller wheelhouse than the 675 Sportsfish. In practice though, the variation in wheelhouse



extra work space. Both Arvors have cutting/baitboards.

VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE

While personal preference between inboard/diesel and outboard/petrol power will probably play a big part in anyone deciding between the two boats, the other major differences are in the wheelhouses/cabins and how the two boats drive and perform.

Both wheelhouses are spacious and have top-class helm positions. Being fully enclosed, they offer total protection so skippers can drive their craft comfortably in any conditions. An often overlooked joy of boating is cruising when it's raining – but that only works when you're snug and dry, with good visibility and effective screen wipers. The Arvors are brilliant in this regard, and are also as good as you can get in this size of boat when offshore in rough conditions.

Both helm stations are to starboard, with large panels to accommodate engine gauges and navigation electronics; the panels are moulded in a non-glare black and sweep across to port with recesses for storage and a drinkholder for the skipper. The tall, near-vertical curved windscreens are key factors in the good visibility, aided by large side windows with slide-open panels for ventilation. Overhead hatches that also slide help further with light and air. Headroom is very liberal and that, plus all the light that flows into the wheelhouses, makes you feel you're aboard larger boats.

Both craft have cushioned areas in the lower forward sections of the cabins, with in-fill panels that extend aft with other cushions to make up double berths. A clever aspect of the in-fill panels are sections that hinge into place in front of the helm seat to provide a higher footrest 'false floor' when seated to drive; but fold them away and you have a better set-up with more headroom for standing to drive. The seats are adjustable fore and aft and have flip-up bolsters for either a higher seated line of sight or for good 'bottom bracing' when standing.

The 690D has twin seats side-by-side to starboard while the 675's two seats are on opposite sides of the cabin. The 675 also has a double lounge behind the helm seat and opposite that is a mini-galley with a fridge/freezer plus a storage locker with a small sink and cold water supply. The 690D has a similar sink (but no water supply) and a little workbench area. Both boats come with single-burner butane camping stoves.

An option for the 675 is a flushing toilet with overboard discharge or alternatively a portable toilet could be set up in either boat. The 675 had curtains fitted around the cabin windows for a degree of privacy, and it wouldn't be hard to do the same for the 690D.

Both the Arvors had full-depth stainless steel-framed glass bulkheads across the back of the wheelhouse, with sliding doors to seal off the cabin space. From each cockpit, a step down into the cabin made it an easy transition and, with

The 690D has a portside entry from the boarding platform plus a large livebait tank with see-through panel and handy tackle storage drawers.



the door open, it was no problem to converse between the two areas of the boats.

EASY DRIVERS

Although the two Arvors are quite different in their speed and handling, I found that both were



Above: The Mercury FourStroke 150 EFI has pride of place on the Sportsfish transom with a neat boarding platform and cockpit entry to starboard.

Right: Both boats have extensive storage capacity under the cockpit sole, and the 690D has clear access to the Mercury diesel and its supporting systems.

easy and enjoyable to drive. There's a degree of extra exhilaration with the 675's additional power and performance, but the 690D has a sure-footed feel that's also appealing.

Both boats have steering that is light and to which the hulls respond quickly. Neither banked all that much as tighter turns were negotiated, although the 690D has a near full-length keel to protect the rudder and prop so that gave a slightly more secure feeling and would help with directional stability in a seaway.

On the other hand, the 675 Sportsfish has a deeper vee hull, which gave a slightly softer ride and still handled well in turns. We ran both boats across the Heads of Sydney Harbour in a typical wind-blown chop on top of some mild incoming swells and both were a delight to handle. It's true I enjoyed the extra punch and faster acceleration of the outboard-powered 675, and that could well allow finer placement in rougher waters or when crossing a bar, but it's only when driving the two boats one after the other that you'd really notice the difference.

The 690D still has plenty of grunt – a lot more torque, of course, from the diesel – and it would be a rare skipper who would find it wanting in any respect. Running before the swells in both boats was no hassle at all, and heading into the sets and plunging through some larger waves sent spray sweeping away to each side; any that reached the screens was swiftly dealt with by the wipers.

The 675 was a bit more manoeuvrable going astern with the prop-angle steering being a benefit, and that might make a difference in some higher-action fish fighting situations, but again that would be a rare situational advantage.

In short, the long heritage of Arvor, in generally far worse northern seas than recreational anglers in Australia would encounter, shines through in the way the boats perform.

This particular 690D's dash panel was better equipped than the Sportsfish's – although that's just a matter of preferences and options as both could be set up the same. In this case, in addition to typical engine gauges and switch panels, the diesel boat had been fitted with a seven-inch Simrad colour display combination GPS chartplotter and sonar fishfinder, which certainly added to skipper information and enjoyment. Radar and an autopilot can be added, too.



As well, there was a trolling valve controlled by a large red knob. Because the 115hp Mercury diesel runs the boat at around four knots (7.5km/h) at idle revs, the trolling valve can be progressively opened below 1200 rpm, reducing oil pressure in the transmission. The result is a certain amount of slip to slow the boat to more desirable trolling speeds, even down to half a knot or so.

In addition to the dash panel, the forward overhead internal mouldings of the wheelhouses comprise three angled panels that are ideal for mounting additional electronics, such as radios or stereo systems. It was good to see Arvor had provided easy access behind the panels through removable sections on the undersides of the mouldings – marine engineers would be most happy to see that, and to find ready accessibility behind the main dash panels to all the wiring and steering hydraulics.

Arvor has done a great job of 'getting back to basics' in these boats; they have everything you could want for fishing, especially offshore, and for cruising around and relaxing, but there's nothing superfluous to add to maintenance costs. It's all easy-care and easy-clean; the overall design and packaging is extremely practical. Yet both boats stand out with their distinctive 'pro fishing' seaworthy styling.

Recessed side decks, good guardrails and first-class anchoring arrangements are hallmarks of Arvor. The 690D has a favoured-spot seat in front of the cabin.

There's more to both boats than we've had space to cover here, so visit arvor.com.au for more information. 

SPECS:	ARVOR 690D	ARVOR 675 SPORTSFISH
Hull Length:	6.33m	6.30m
Overall Length:	6.88m	6.55m
Beam:	2.54m	2.54m
Weight (dry):	1600kg	1585kg
Capacity:	6 persons	7 persons
Fuel capacity:	90lt	200lt
Water capacity:	n/a	32lt
Power:	QSD 4-cylinder 2lt diesel 115hp	FourStroke 150 EFI 150hp
Transmission:	Shaft drive	Outboard
Base prices from:	\$84,500	\$84,150
Prices as tested:	\$87,800	\$84,992
(prices subject to exchange rate)		
More information: arvor.com.au ; phone (02) 9319 5222		

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