



# Arvor Weekend 700

This is a very rare craft by Australian boatbuilding standards. It is a comfortable, stable, soft-riding, very well priced, 7.0m (23') weekend GRP cruiser. Even more amazing, it is happily *diesel powered (gasp!) with shaft drive . . . . .* but wait, it gets even better . . . read on!

## Arvor Weekender 700

**I**t's doubtful if any other production boat in Australia has had quite the media attention this Arvor Weekender 700 has received since it was released in Australia in September, 2011. All the major marine outlets, magazines and blogs have featured the craft, and without exception, have written glowing reports about it.

It's not hard to see why - we make nothing like this pocket cruiser in Australia. Despite the local GRP boatbuilders crying 'foul' over overseas boat imports, DIY projects and anything else they can blame for their own failings, the local GRP boatbuilders could, but don't, build anything like this Arvor Weekender 700.

Co-incidentally, the writer was working with the Arvor's importers (Collins Marine, in Sydney) on this project in the exact week it was confirmed General Motors (Holden) will cease manufacturing in Australia in 2017.

With the ensuing howls of protest at GM's decision, between

the lines, some serious questions were being raised, and answers weren't necessarily being put forward.

For example, why haven't more Australians bought more Holdens and Falcons over the last couple of years when the fully imported Japanese Mazda 3 became the biggest selling single model car in Australia? How could GM and Ford - and Mitsubishi before them, get it so wrong, we all wondered? All sorts of people, from unions to politicians, motoring experts and talk-back jocks, pointed fingers and tried to sheet home the blame on just about anybody left standing in Canberra.

And here we have a very modern, but quite conventional 23 foot boat with a beaut 4 cylinder, turbo diesel and shaft drive, charging into the market without any local competition whatsoever.

Like the car industry, Australian boat builders have clearly lost the plot, and in this feature, we're going to be looking at a very good example of how far off the page they've gone.

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*How impressive is this? There are many combinations of the seating, with the table (in or out) plus the sun lounges the girls will adore, but then the skipper can strip it all back and get down into some serious fishing space. Storage lockers galore, and note several could easily be re-worked into fish bins and a live bait tank set-up. Note too, lift-out door giving the mob access to the beaut full width swimming (and inflatable or tinny) platform.*



## Arvor Weekender 700

### Standard Equipment

#### Cabin

- 5 berths • Cabin lights • Cabin Cushions • Opening portlights

#### Cockpit

- Sun lounge • Cockpit cushions • Picnic table

#### Hull and Deck Design

- Anchor locker • Bow roller • Self bailing cockpit

#### Helm

- Analog Speedometer/Tachometer • Fuel gauge • Trim gauge • Hydraulic steering • 12v electrical socket

#### Engine

- Mercury QSD 150 hp four cylinder turbo diesel with common rail injection

### Standard Equipment

- Galley Sink and Tap • Stove • Enclosed WC
- Lavatory Sink • Cockpit Shower • **Bow Thruster**
- **Trim Tabs** • Hydraulic Steering • Bilge Pump
- **Electric Anchor Windlass** • Bow Roller • Pilot Console • Navigation Lights • Swim Ladder
- Anchor Locker • Speedometer • Tachometer
- Fuel Gauge • S/S U Bolt • VHF • AM/FM CD Player • 12V Outlet • Compass • Windscreen Wiper • Storage Lockers • Side Storage Compartment • Rod Holders • Cabin Lights

### Specifications

Overall Length .....	7.48 m
Length of hull .....	6.96 m
Overall beam .....	2.78 m
Bridge clearance .....	2.20 m
Total height .....	3.02 m
Displacement (approx) .....	2271 kg
Berths .....	5
Max power (Mercury QSD) 150 hp (110 kw)	
Draft .....	0.85 m
Water tank .....	100 l
Fuel tank maximum capacity .....	135 l
Fuel tank type .....	Integrated
Maximum number of people .....	7
CE category .....	C

In its standard form, with the exceptional inventory of equipment (shown here in the panel on the left) the Arvor Weekender 700 is \$119,500 incl GST. A dedicated trailer can add \$12,000-\$17,000 depending on the trailer's construction, braking systems and quality. There are various other specialised options (air-con, eutectic refrigeration, electric toilet, etc) Collins Marine are happy to co-ordinate for the purchaser.



## F&B TV:

(Tablet/Phone users: If video does not play, press here to change formats)



Above: Brisbane-based Crawford Marine's Matt Hodson presents a very good Aussie video they produced (on Moreton Bay) which apart from showing off the Weekender very nicely, also reminds us that although this rig is over-width (2.78m instead of 2.5m) it is easily towed with a standard overwidth towing kit - flags, signs and flashing lights, as it is only about 3.5t all up.

The Arvor range is not some orphan brand an opportunist has brought in from Thailand, China or the Middle East – Arvor is part of the multi-national Brunswick Group (read Mercury Marine) and is a wholly owned subsidiary of that organisation.

It's built in a Brunswick factory in Portugal, fitted with an American Mercury QSD diesel (the one we had in our Quintrex 670 Project boat, actually) and it's been designed by world ranked naval architects and built to EU Certification, which is a far higher standard than anything we have in Australia – especially for recreational craft.

We don't even have a recognised, and enforced, formal boat building construction and performance standard, never mind anything as rigid and empowered as the European Union recreational boating Standard(s).

It's important to make this determination from the outset because sometimes boating consumers are swayed by some of the very slick, smooth-talking salesmen in the industry who have honed the "Yes, but . . ." technique of knocking their competitors to a very high art indeed.

Over the years we've seen some very good craft suffer badly at the hands of the "Yes, but" technique and the writer believes it's important to establish from the get go, that this is not some aberration from south east Asia, but a product from the world's biggest boat builder and one of the biggest engine manufacturers on the planet.

It's imported, distributed and proudly serviced by Peter Collins and his team at Collins Marine in Sydney, the guys responsible for selling Arvor diesels for many years, to about 150 very happy owners. So don't let the rebuttals or "yes, buts" influence you this time – follow your heart, check this out carefully, because without exception, it is one of the best products we've seen on the Australian waterfront for many years. (Continued Over)





## Arvor Weekender 700

### Design

It's actually a very simple but effective design that we've seen in countless variations of over the years. It starts with Vee-berths forward, comes back to a helm station in the saloon on the starboard side, with a convertible dinette to port, the private head (toilet) just ahead of the helm to starboard. Behind the helmsman, a very nice galley arrangement is opposite the dinette.

Stepping out of the cockpit there's a marvellous variety of seats and seating arrangements around a central table (see pics). Alternatively, all that can be shot away, and the boat converted into a more pragmatic fishing machine as distinct from a sit around and soak up the vitamin D platform!

There's a great swimming board right across the stern to encourage the youngsters to sit out there whilst they enjoy their ice creams, or scrunch their watermelon without getting the pips and drips all over the saloon.

Essentially, it's what everybody likes to call a "semi-displacement" cruiser and whilst there's technically no such animal in the world of naval architects, it's actually not a bad description of what it is and does.

The 150hp Mercury diesel will spin the rig up to a pretty easy 20 knots flat stick at 4,000 rpm, but it's working overly hard at that point and it's smarter to bring it back to 14-15 knots at 3,400 rpm using approx 20-21 litres/ph, at which point it sings along very sweetly. This is not a fast boat, but neither is it a slow one – it is truly planing properly at these speeds, zinging along in such a way that the ride is quiet, stable, comfortable – and everything most outboard trailerboats are not.

For the record, it is planing properly in the 11-12 knot range, so for long distance travel, the trick would be to sit around 14-15 knots where there is a definite 'sweet spot'. With the standard 135 litre fuel tank, this suggests a day to day range of around 85nm which is okay for local stuff, but insufficient for many parts of Australia.

It's not a big deal – in those areas, the writer would be looking

to include a couple of Vetus (flexible rubber) wing tanks for those times when the rig is heading out to the 'Reef. Or making the run along the coast from Sydney to Port Stephens, etc. Or Carnarvon north to Coral Bay inside the Reef . . .

*Hey – it's that sort of boat!* A whole new world awaits the lucky owner, but they'll need to carry a bit more 'go juice' than the Europeans would ever need.

The Arvor Weekender is surprisingly quiet in the saloon but more than anything else, the whole rig is just extremely pleasant to use. It's the sort of craft where it is quite practical to walk over to the galley and put the kettle on (it even has fiddles on the burners!) and make a cup of tea as you cruise up the Hawkesbury.

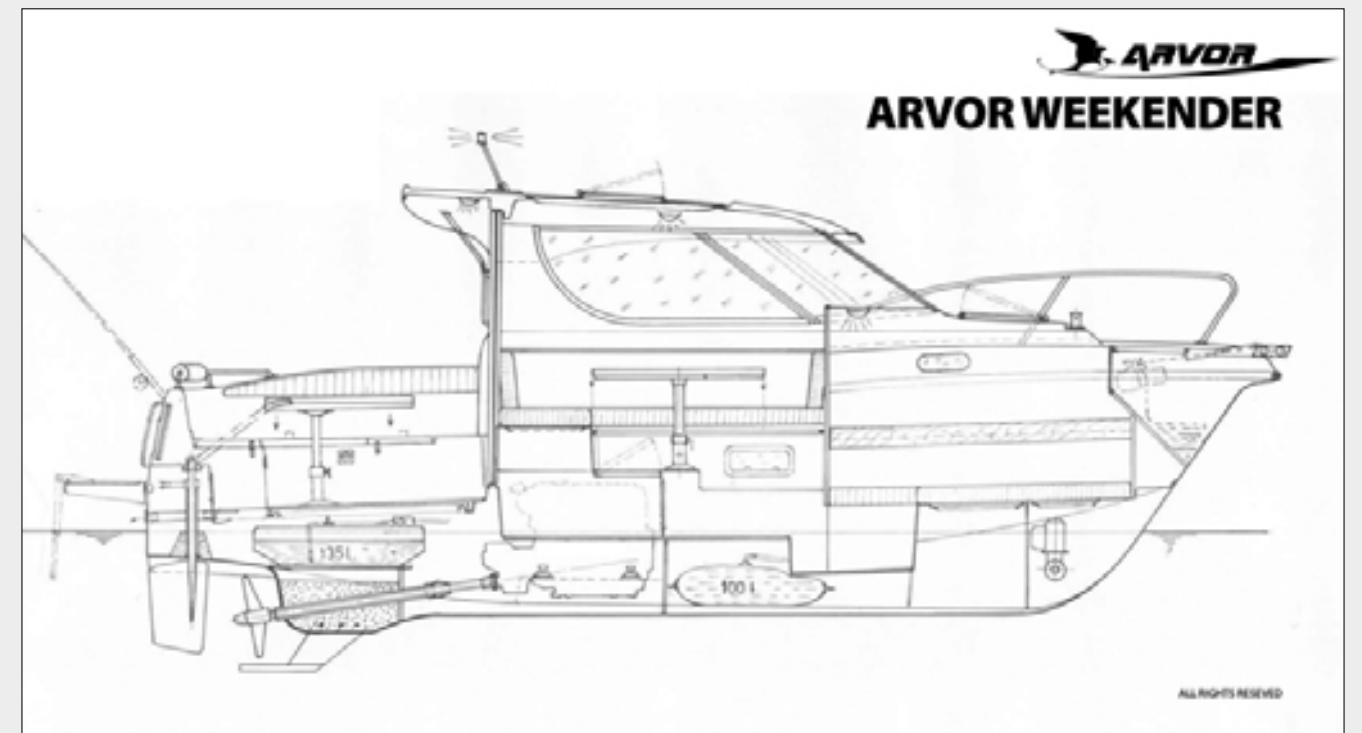
Obviously, if you encounter the odd Riviera wake along the way, the skipper will have to pull back and steer across into the Riv's wake a bit more carefully, but in terms of general running around, stability at anchor and just being a nice place to be, the Weekender certainly takes home the prize for being the most family and women-friendly boat in this class the writer has seen for a long time.

**Time Out:** *Just for the record, there is an Arvor 23 fishing version which has a much shorter cabin and a much longer cockpit, but the same mechanicals and the same sweet hull, so for the more pragmatic fisho not that interested in running up and down the Hawkesbury with the family and friends, the Arvor 23 is definitely worth inspecting from a strictly fishing point of view.*

*Once again, it is powered by the 150hp Mercury diesel, with a smidgeon more top end speed to boot because it's a little bit lighter – but given that the boat will probably be full of mackerel on the way back, the difference is certainly a bit academic.*

### Construction

Built to EU Certification standards classification C, with a people rating of 7, this is a particularly well built craft with a pedigree that exceeds anything we're building in the recreational



boat industry in this class or size range.

No doubt that will have a few of the local GRP manufacturers jumping up and down (again) but the answer is really fairly simple – fellas, when you have EU certification on your locally produced boats, you will have every right in the world to jump up and down and let the world know you are now building to a standard that exceeds anything that we have in Australia. But right now, the writer is fairly certain there's only a handful of pressed aluminium boats (from Quintrex) that have achieved EU certification, and in the fibreglass world, the Markham 3800 Flybridge Sportsfisherman. This is, I believe, the only production recreational GRP craft that has ever made the cut into full EU Certification.

*(Thankfully, the big 3800 is now in the safe hands of the Noosacat people, in the wake of the collapse of the Markham cat boat building business last year)*

So construction wise, there's not a lot to be found wanting in this craft – it's as good as anything we can produce and better than most.

### The Engine Room

Well, this is a shock isn't it? Damn, there's not an outboard to be seen anywhere – and isn't that just great?

Here is a comfortable, roomy, 4-5 berth cruiser with a diesel engine that will run all day at around 20-21 L/ph for its 14-15 knots, and that puts a whole new spin on fuel economy, doesn't it?

Actually with the boat ticking over at around 8 or 9 knots, a very pleasant speed I might add, it's only using – *wait for it* – about 8 litres of diesel an hour – so in terms of using the craft to run out into the bay for an afternoon's fish or a cruise with the grandkids to their favourite swimming beach, the cost is absolutely negligible – and that is good news, especially for the grand parents.

Conversely, if the rig is used for a fairly serious passage (which it is more than capable of doing) from (say) Broken Bay up to Port Stephens, a run of about 7-8 hours, it will use round about 80-90 litres of diesel and that is a pleasing figure.

Similarly, it will run from Port Hacking up to Sydney Harbour for the fireworks on New Year's Eve on its ear. It's the sort of craft where you won't come back that night – most skippers will just simply stay at anchor in one of Sydney Harbour's exquisite anchorages under the cliffs in the Middle Harbour arm, and go home the following day.

It's that sort of boat. It allows you to think in terms of weekends on the water, and not just a couple of hours banging around the bay and then having to go home because you have to attend to things such as toiletries, cooking, eating, drinking – in the Arvor Weekender, all of this happens in-situ.

The Mercury 150hp diesel engine is driving a 4 bladed propeller (you'll see the undercarriage quite clearly in the excellent video that Matt Hodson made for this Arvor Weekender) and this is shaft driven, which today needs to be mentioned specifically because it's so unusual to find a boat of this size with a shaft drive set-up.

Not just any old shaft drive set-up either – they've done a very good job providing a heavy duty, under-prop skeg to ensure that if we do park it in a sand bank (the writer does this frequently around the Gold Coast) no harm is done; one just backs out with as much grace as 'one' can muster! The point is that the boat is designed to take the ground all over Europe so our best efforts here to bury it in the mud will not worry it one bit.

Again, the sheer pragmatism of having an inboard shaft drive diesel in a cruiser like this, also means it can be anti-fouled perhaps once a year in most places, and there's no deterioration or fouling of the stern drive leg, or any degradation of an outboard. The boat itself can just be left on a mooring unattended, without covers, because the cockpit is completely self draining, the cabin is lockable and everything is just as it should be for a boat that's going to be left on a mooring or on a berth at the bottom of the garden.

### Handling & Ride

For a boat built for work in the North Sea and the English Channel, it will come as no surprise that the Arvor 700 Weekender is easily capable of looking after its crew in any

conditions we're likely to encounter in Australian bays, coastal harbours, rivers, etc.

Not that anybody willingly or intentionally goes out into conditions that are unpleasant, but weather changes CAN spring up, and these days they seem to spring up with less notice and more fiercely than they used to years ago.

Whether it's to do with climate change I don't know, but there certainly seems to be a higher level of intensity in the sort of storms we can encounter these days through the summer – especially the ones like the southerly buster that come in with very little notice.

Conversely, the writer would also make the point that we have never had such wonderful access to accurate weather forecasting as we have these days, so even if the storms are a bit more intense, the upside is that the forecasting is also infinitely more accurate, timely and so easily accessible off our smart phones, iPads etc, let alone regular maritime bases available 24/7 through VHF.

So the issue of being "caught out" in a storm is not quite as severe as some would have you believe, because it is possible to get such good forecasts these days, and with a boat like the Arvor Weekender 700, with a just modicum of common sense, let alone some basic boating experience, just anybody could drive this boat through any really bad harbour conditions without fear of getting into any sort of trouble.

Inboard diesels with separate rudders handle differently to outboard craft, and certainly quite differently to stern drives, but the writer would remind readers that just about every fishing boat in the world is a displacement inboard, shaft drive, single engine set-up with a separate rudder so we're not talking about something revolutionary here, are we?

In fact, it's almost the reverse, this is the traditional way of steering and powering cruisers, but with one beautiful twist the old timers hadn't thought of – this boat has a Vetus bow thruster as standard equipment! *How good is that?*

Thus equipped, there's nowhere you can't back and fill, or go sideways or drive the bow in or out from the wharf – it's almost unfair to be this simple and effective. With all the agony taken out of it, where's the drama gone? What are the grandkids going to learn if you don't need them to push off from the wharf? How will your wife ever get to know how to tie a bowline if you don't need her to do anything as you come alongside a wharf?

Fair dinkum, I dips me lid to the Arvor people for such initiative and thoughtfulness they've had in providing a bow thruster in a 23' inboard diesel – way to go!

### Fitting Out

In the same vein, go back to page 36, where we've listed the standard specifications and features.

It is the best fit-out list the writer has seen on anything that didn't cost half a million dollars – and even then, some of the rigs in that league aren't as comprehensively fitted out as this one.

There's no doubt Collins Marine have ticked all the boxes in the options chart, the standards chart and fitted absolutely every extra they could find as standard equipment for the Australian models – and what a boon that is for the inbound owner. Not only are all the basic decisions taken out of the process – everything is

integrated and installed properly, and that is worth thousands and thousands of dollars down the track.

Until you've had half a dozen boats you won't appreciate the writer's enthusiasm for this extraordinary list of standard equipment. I kid you not, to put this on after-market wise, would cost *thousands of dollars* – and that would just cover the first two items – the previously mentioned Vetus bow thruster, let alone the Lenco electro-hydraulic trim tabs or the 12v anchor winch. But have a look at the rest of the fittings – it is all *standard* equipment.

But wait – it isn't perfect! (*That's almost a relief!*)

There is one thing the writer would absolutely insist on fitting, and that would be a rear cockpit awning – one of the strutless kind that was invented by Craft Covers for Riviera a few years back, with a 1.0m extension that slides out almost to the level of the back transom. This would provide shade for those incredibly hot, still

summer days we get, but at the same time when the boys are seriously fishing, you just push back in the last metre of so of the awning leaving about 1100 - 1200mm in situ off the hardtop.

It would also (then) provide a perfect base for the zip-in midge screens that are just about mandatory in 'remote' parts of Australia – like the Gold Coast!

### Accommodating The Family

This is a genuine 4 berth cruiser with two forward on the Vee-berths, two more on the convertible dinette – but there's a fifth 'quarter' berth underneath the dinette seat, accessed from the portside Vee-berth.

This needs a little bit of thought and work to make it better for Australian summer conditions, but the writer is not sure that anyone would actually sleep there, anyway. Access is across the port side of the Vee berth, so it's hard to figure that two adults would be happy with somebody behind them that has to 'come out' and cross over their berth to go to the 'loo, or do anything from the quarter berth position.

That said, the quarter berth (which is what it is properly called) does provide an extremely useful storage area, a safe play area for the very little ones, and for the blokes, it's one of the best potential tackle lockers I've seen in a while – because you could have an array of rods safely stowed in there on Erskine hangers, safely out of the way, but quickly accessible.

It's thus a bit of a bonus. Whilst not strictly adding to the accommodation, it certainly does add to the utility and convenience of the cabin and saloon structure. (*Remember, you can't have too much storage on a boat!*)

Importantly, the writer would like to make the point that the Weekender 700 is an absolutely delightful set-up for a couple, especially if they would like the option of a having couple of extra convertible berths on the dinette for the grandkids, when required.



This is a boat you could happily (and safely) take a couple of youngsters out for a 'sleep-over' with the oldies, and everybody would have a fantastic time.

There is enough separation of the spaces for everybody to get along just famously, with Gran having a very good galley to work with, and the kids and Pop having the dinette to sit around for the evening meal or breakfast, whilst they plan their attack on the local fish population that night in the moonlight . . . or in dawn's early light . . .

This is a boat that will work very well in almost any family situation but for a couple, young or old, it's an absolutely first class set-up.

### Application

Well, this is possibly one of the most canal-friendly boats the writer has seen in many a year, especially as you don't need half a million to buy it, and it can be put on the jetty at the bottom of your garden for around the \$120K mark. As an investment, that is not too bad at all, especially as this boat will hold its resale extraordinarily well.

It's the sort of craft that if looked after and kept in mint condition, you'll still be looking at getting \$90s for it in 4-5 years time – such is its inherent integrity of design, manufacturing quality and engineering.

There will *always* be a demand for a comfortable, diesel powered, easily-handled weekender. Investment wise, it is probably one of the safest investments in the marine world today.

In terms of application, it screams family, fun, grandkids, retired couple, gentle fishing, a chilled chardonnay, a cold beer, crabs off the dinghy towed behind – it's a very desirable 2014 craft to just potter around the bays, estuaries and rivers exploring, enjoying, lazing about and soaking up the atmosphere of our beautiful waterways.

### Conclusion

Impressed? Of course we were – in recent years, the writer has mentioned endlessly the need for replacements for the classic Mariner Pacer 22, the Mariner 25, the numerous Savages in the 22' and 24' class; boats we had in the 1970s that disappeared in the 1980s as the outboard tsunami swept through, and we started losing some of the founding values that boats like this instilled in our boating world.

The Arvor Weekender 700 is a very fine pocket cruiser.

I'm sure it will have its critics and there are issues that need further work – the *standard* toilet system, for example, is currently restricted to a chemical toilet set-up which is passable, but not really satisfactory for the older folk and families who are going to love this boat to bits, and want to spend long weekends and holidays on board, as well as the odd day trip here and there. Fortunately, Collins Marine have sorted a unique Aussie electric toilet option (complete with a proper holding tank) they're hoping the factory will install in future models – but in the meantime, the customer at least now has a genuine choice.

The 135L standard fuel tank capacity is fine for normal harbour and bay use, but poor for the explorers and/or genuine cruising folk, and this also needs to be addressed by the designers in the longer term.

I'm sure there are also going to be issues of ventilation that could require a bit of sideways thinking further down the track,



**A couple of interesting shots (Above) The transom 'pocket' shape (lowers the draft, gives better water flow for the prop, straighter tracking) and (Below) at rest with a couple of blokes forward. Off plane vision is excellent.**



but these are the sort of issues that only become apparent when you've lived in and on the boat for a couple of weeks at a time, at which point everybody is able to offer criticisms or lists of ways boat can be improved.

In considering this craft now, the object was not to critique the craft (as such) especially when circumstances preclude us from spending a decent amount of time aboard it. To live with it, fish it, steam it along the coast, and do all those sorts of things that in a perfect world, we would like to do.

Instead, we've opted to bring the craft to your attention at this stage, highlighting its best characteristics and features, and concentrating on the potential it offers Australian boatowners – especially owners with their own waterfront jetty at the bottom of the garden.

For countless boatowners and retiring folk who are downsizing from Bertie 35s, big Mariners, Rivas, etc, this is probably the perfect fall-back position in every sense of the word.

### ABM

**For more information contact:**  
Collins Marine Pty. Limited.  
**Ph: 02 9319 5222**  
[www.arvor.com.au](http://www.arvor.com.au)  
[peter@collinsmarine.com.au](mailto:peter@collinsmarine.com.au)  
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