




*The French have typically come up
with a boat that is slightly left of centre.
We test Arvor's new 250AS...*





A Boat FOR ALL OCCASIONS

By Mark Rothfield



Most boats can be neatly pigeon-holed with labels like traditional, modern, sporty or sturdy. But not the French-built Arvor 250AS – it is all of those adjectives, and more, in a unique kind of a way. It's also a contradiction; a chameleon.

The 25-footer can't simply be defined as a fishing boat, for it has a distinct cruising bent as well. It is neither a planing nor a displacement craft; rather a semi-planer. Call it a walk-around by all means, but not a centre cab because the coachhouse is offset.

If I had to define it, I would call it an all-rounder, with 'baby boomer special' as a subhead.

There are twelve 250s on Australian waters, adding to the 110 Arvor 20s sold. It's a fair number for a craft that floats in its own niche, with importer Peter Collins saying that most of his buyers are retired guys and wives, who are attracted by both the ergonomics and economics.

The 2005 edition of the 250 has an unchanged hull and motor configuration that delivers exceptional fuel efficiency and seaworthiness, but elsewhere the design changes are significant.

ARVOR 250AS

As mentioned, the cabin has been offset to offer a generous walkway on the starboard side, rather than having two relatively narrow paths on either side. Hence the 'AS' tag (for asymmetric).

It's a style that initially confronts with its audacity, especially when viewed from front on, but it is founded on safety and convenience. In Europe, it has been a huge success, pushing delivery dates to Australia out to several months. Prospective buyers here have apparently either not noticed the difference or they've been comfortable with it.

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Also contributing to freedom of movement, the 250's cockpit floor is now entirely flat – gone is the old raised engine hatch, replaced by a flush-fitting moulding. It offers a truly massive working area and remains fully self-draining, the scuppers emptying through recesses in the stern platform.

Beneath is a 220hp six-cylinder MerCruiser diesel spinning a straight shaft. There is ample servicing access and Collins Marine adds a dripless shaft seal to eliminate all moisture in the bilge. Being a single-screw boat, a bow thruster is now fitted as standard.

Storage is another strong point. European laws demand a liferaft locker in the transom, however in Oz you could use the handy recess for fenders, diving gear or an inflatable tender. The test boat had its fenders stored in a moulded starboard-side quarter seat.

A large livebait tank is also incorporated in the transom, along with recessed tackle trays. Unusual features are the coaming-mounted stainless steel rollers and teak pads – rarely would you use them for fishing nets; crab traps or racing buoys perhaps...

Height from the floor to the coamings is about 800mm, almost waist height, which confers a great sense of security. That said, it's very difficult to reach the water. For seating there are two timber-slatted bench seats that fold down. A canvas awning extends the sun protection over the cockpit and, cleverly, can be taken off and stored beneath the coachroof overhang.

Access to the cabin is through a large sliding door, and the aforementioned versatility comes into play once inside. In dayboat mode, you have a two-person helm seat, a settee to port and a dinette with circular table in the vee. For overnighting, you lift off the settee cushion to access the sink and single-burner stove (a combined stainless steel unit), then you remove the table and put a bunk infill in its place.



ARVOR 250AS

The head compartment – housing a portaloop – forms part of the helm moulding. There is room to sit, but certainly not to read a newspaper. Nor is there a handbasin.

The dashboard is fairly compact, too, squeezing in the oil, temp, tacho, volt, fuel and engine hour gauges (no speedo). A marine radio and stereo mount on an overhead console, while a GPS plotter or sounder will reside forward and slightly to the left of the dashboard. The throttle was too close to the wheel for my liking.

I preferred to stand and drive while doing tight manoeuvres because the hull turns completely flat through turns, but when seated a footrest gives support. The hydraulic steering is very light, and also positive once water flows over the rudder.

“The cabin has been offset to offer a generous walkway on the starboard side”





The running surface has a conventional vee shape for two-thirds of its length, but then a tunnel kicks in. The prop is tucked up inside the scallop and gains further protection from a keel. In France, of course, there are 10-metre tides and grounding is a daily occurrence.

Idling in gear at 750rpm brings 4.3 knots, 1000rpm about 6 knots, and 1500 sees 8 knots; the Arvor still in displacement mode. From 2000rpm upwards, you enter the realm of semi-planing, though there is no perceptible hump or bow lift – the hull simply accelerates.

At 3000rpm, you've got 21 knots and engine noise becomes noticeable in the cabin, as is the occasional slap of waves as the 2.7-tonne hull lands. There are no soft surfaces to deaden the sound; only fibreglass, timber and glass, the combined effect of which is that the sound is actually amplified. I'd be inclined to install some clip-in carpet.

The MerCruiser diesel revs out to 3600rpm, showing 26 knots on the GPS. That's plenty fast enough if you need to avoid a storm but, for mine, optimum speed was 2500rpm, which saw the big Arvor loping along at 15 knots, with low noise levels.

Because the hull rides so flat, it needs the high topside height to keep spray at bay. On our test day, Sydney Harbour had been chopped up by a 20-knot wind and heavy boat traffic, but I must say the Arvor was exceptionally dry.

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ARVOR 250AS



Attesting to the vessel's seakeeping ability, one Queensland owner picked up his 250 in Sydney then immediately coastal-hopped back to Brisbane in 2-3 metre swells. His fuel chart made interesting reading – 22.36 litres per hour at an average speed of 20 knots. Just over a litre per nautical mile is excellent going, producing savings that will soon justify the purchase cost of the diesel.

The Arvor 250AS is priced at \$138,000 – more than twice that of the 20 (\$68,000). Of course, there is much more in it than 1.5 metres extra length – the 25-footer is half a metre wider, weighs twice as much and has three times the horsepower. It's the difference between a trailerboat and a genuine all-round cruiser.

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