

# WEEKEND AWAY

The weekend pleasureboating trip has universal appeal, discovers **DAVID LOCKWOOD** aboard the Polish-made Arvor Weekender





**S**ydney is famous for many things including the famous southerly buster. Preceded by hot northerly winds, the southerly rolls up the coast like a steam train and unleashes its fury with gusto. The change is always refreshing, often welcome in summer, but not to be laughed at when you are on the water. In the blink of an eye, the ocean can turn to spume.

Ordinarily, one wouldn't venture out in the teeth of a southerly buster. But it's nice to know that the new Arvor Weekender, based on the company's popular 23-foot hull, has the seaworthiness to get you through the teeth of a southerly buster and back to your berth safely. For it was mid-test that we encountered a terrific southerly with the aforesaid wind and waves.

Arvor? Surely you have heard of the jaunty little cabin cruisers? Diesel shaftdrive? Check. Bowthruster? Check. Walkaround sidedecks? Check. Self-draining cockpit? Check. Lock-up cabin? Check. All these things have contributed to Arvor's success in the 12 years since I drove the very first 20-footer. That was June 1999. But now there's even more sway. Amenities? Check. Whereas the

attraction of Arvors has always been utility, economy and low maintenance, the trade-off has been a lack of comforts. The cabin of the 20, 21.5, 23, 25 and 28-footers has room to stretch your legs but that's about it. Anglers would gravitate but fishwives would swim the other way.

The new Arvor Weekender, released in Europe a few years ago but only now available locally, will arrest that migration. The boat has been designed to assuage mums and dads. In fact, a family of four will feel right at home during their weekends afloat. And at \$115,000, the cute cabin cruiser undercuts a fibro weekender — needs a lot less maintenance — while stacking up very competitively with offerings from Beneteau and, say, Whittley. Both their offerings in this class are outboard and not diesel powered.

### TOUGH NUGGET

Some background. There are now 300-odd Arvors in Australia of which 165 are the 20-footer that was built in Nowra on the NSW South Coast. Sadly, it's now more cost effective to import all the Arvors from their home country of Poland. Meantime, do your research and you will discover the boats aren't all that freely available on



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the second-hand market and those that are for sale have held their value remarkably well. Therein the advantage of a shaftdrive over sterndrive for boats kept in water.

The hull itself is interesting, a kind of gull-wing design, with big running strakes and downturned chines to generate lift. A keel assists with tracking, while also protecting the running gear in the unlikely event of grounding. Thus, the boat can be left to dry out in areas of big tidal variance such as some UK and European fishing ports. Waterfronts with shallow water are another good fit.

Power comes in the form of a frugal 150hp common rail Cummins MerCruiser Diesel engine. You access the dipstick and oil filler under a lounge base in the cabin. This is fine, but accessing the portside of the block appears very tight. A cockpit hatch gives better access to the sea strainer, shaft and bilge. Another hatch lets you reach the steering gear and nearby fuel shutoff.

To counter the effects of prop walk when reversing, whereby the stern pulls in the direction of the (17in x 22in) four-blade propeller 'screw', the builders had the good sense to fit a Vetus bowthruster. All the running gear, including the 1.5in shaft, appears up to the task and, moreover, the longevity of the boats underscores such things.

Interestingly, the Arvor Weekender on trailer weighs about 3500kg. While its 2.78m beam means the boat would likely require some kind of towing permit, it's not beyond the realms of possibility if that fits your charter. That said, the shaftdrive setup is, as we have stated, perfect for long-term in-water use with an annual application of antifouling.

### DECKED OUT

As with most Arvors, you get a moulded swimplatform — big enough to sit on — with fold-down ladder and cold-water shower. Hot water is an option I'd consider. An auxiliary bracket is provided in case you want to fit an outboard, for which you'll need a remote fuel tank, which seems a hassle to me. After all, single-diesel wheelhouse cruisers made from timber have been gadding about for decades without auxiliaries.

The transom also has moulded fender holders, twin rodholders, and upholstered rolled cushions for back support when sitting on



BOATTEST



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the moulded cockpit seats that are made more comfortable with the supplied clip-in cushions. The cockpit itself is, as mentioned, self-draining so you can leave the boat on a mooring without worry during downpours.

The dedicated dinette lives in an underseat cockpit hold and should be assembled for an alfresco lunch. I would add an extended canopy for shade. After which, the table may be lowered and the setup converted to a sunpad for the afternoon siesta. Tie a line to the big toe or put a rod in the nearby holder. I can also see myself setting crab traps and checking them from a little roll-up tender or kayak.

As with all Arvors, walkaround sidedecks backed by bow and



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**[HIGHS]**

- › Great value for money
- › Low maintenance and frugal cruising
- › Terrific utility for family, fishing and fun
- › Good balance of outdoor and indoor areas
- › Enlarged cabin with amenities for weekending
- › Strong brand with good resale value and local support

**[LOWS]**

- › Tight engine access
- › High light levels in the cabin
- › No opening portlight in head
- › Chemical toilet because there's no holding tank
- › Needs dedicated house battery

THE WEEKENDER IS JUST PERFECT FOR THAT BIG BAY, BIG RIVER OR HARBOUR SORTIE WITH A SPOT OF FISHING AND FAMILY FUN



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cabin-top rails mean you can access the foredeck safely. Unlike some Arvors, however, this is a symmetrical cabin layout with equal access along either sidedeck.

Although a windlass is bundled with the boat for push-button anchoring, one might head forward for no other reason than to perch on the deck with a drink or fling a lure at a school of passing fish. I will add that I was collected from a wharf for this test. Thankfully, the split bowrail and good deck access made that uneventful.

Meantime, while the cockpit is, of course, big enough to fish, it's smaller than that on the Arvor 230 based on the same hull. That's because this Weekender has a bigger cabin. After all, this is the raison d'être for this boat. The idea is that you will spend at least a night ensconced within and at no time did I feel cramped or claustrophobic during a test spent largely indoors to avoid the aforesaid brisk southerly buster.

**IN THE CABIN**

Besides full headroom, you get plenty of shoulder room around the internal dinette with L-shaped

lounge seating for four that converts into a double bed. If you elect to sleep up here, expect an early wake-up call when the sun pipes in through the windows.

But that's the best time for fishing anyway. When seated, while cruising or kicking back, you get to enjoy great views out these same windows. The huge skyroof adds to the open feel. There's a clip-in cover to help cut light levels and an opening hatch and small helm window to help with ventilation.

The galley to starboard has a sink under the flip-down helm seat, Waeco 12V fridge, solid servery with fiddles, and lockers for crockery. Future boats will be bundled with a metho rather than gas stove. However, I'd still fit a gas bottle and rail-mounted barbie to make my Weekender complete. The boat could also do with a dedicated house battery. As it is, there's a dedicated battery for bowthruster and a shared engine-start and house battery. At least the engine has a decent 100amp alternator.

The primary sleeping arrangement comes via a vee-berth with infill that makes a double



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in the bow. There's an additional adult-length single berth to port running back under the saloon sole. It's about the size of some aft cabins on 30-foot cats. So it is possible for a family of four to weekend aboard.

The private head compartment is a boon. There's a small moulded sink, 100lt of cold water aboard and roughly amidships, plus storage space for personal effects. However, there isn't a holding tank so a portable toilet is fitted. And there's no opening hatch, though there is a vent.

**PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

It was about then that a brilliant southerly buster turned the harbour into foam. White horses were galloping as the rain began to fall. These weren't the kind of conditions in which you would mount your sortie. But it was good to know the Arvor has the seaworthiness to get you home.

I trained the bow on the melee and put the boat to the test. I'm not going to say it was dry running, but at least in the cabin we remained that way while maintaining 13.5kts cruise at 3400rpm for 21.8lt/h. With an application of tab, the boat's forefoot cut the water and I didn't hear too many harsh thuds.

Then I swung the wheel, called on the wipers and made a dash for it back downwind, gaining an extra 1 to 1.5kts speed for the same revs. But with more time, I might have run for cover and hunkered down in this back-to-basics Weekender. Add a bottle of wine, a wheel of brie, some music and break bread with friends or family. The cabin accommodates such things to a great degree than any previous Arvor. 🍷

**Facts & figures**

**ARVOR WEEKENDER**

**AT THE WHEEL**

The Arvor Weekender starts to plane at 2800rpm before running freely at 3000rpm and 11.1kts. A touch of the Lenco trim tabs assists at low speeds but once up and running the boat's lift is such that it runs naturally flat. Having a few adults in the wheelhouse and some chain in the lockers helps that attitude, too. Idling, the boat seems to run a little downhill from the weight-forward distribution.

Top speed was 20.4kts at 4000rpm, with a smooth cruise, and much lower noise levels, at 3400rpm. This returned 14kts for about 21lt/h. With a 135lt tank, your range is more than 80 nautical miles at that speed leaving a safe reserve. However, pull the reins back to 2800rpm and at 8.5kts your using 10.1lt/h. You can almost half that again at 2000rpm and 6.3kts for 5.8lt/h. Of course, the Weekender is a boat in which you're more likely to access a nearby beach by day then gad upstream to a bolthole for the night rather than spend your weekend running. And when Sunday comes around you can relax in the knowledge the shaftdriven, diesel-powered Arvor is easy to put to bed and raring to go next weekend.

**PRICE AS TESTED**

**\$115,000** w/ MerCruiser QSD 2.0L sans trailer or antifouling

**OPTIONS FITTED**

None. The boat is bundled as a turnkey package including bowthruster, VHF radio, windlass, and more. You'll need to add combo GPS-depthsounder.

**PRICED FROM**

As above

**GENERAL**

**MATERIAL:** GRP (fibreglass) w/ glass-encapsulated Oregon sub-frame  
**TYPE:** Moderate-vee planing hull w/ gullwing shape on tunnels aft  
**LENGTH OVERALL:** 7.65m (inc. platform)  
**HULL LENGTH:** 6.95m  
**BEAM:** 2.78m  
**DRAFT:** 0.85m  
**DEADRISE:** n/a, but flat aft  
**WEIGHT:** Approx 2300kg w/ CMD QSD 2.0L

**CAPACITIES**

**BERTHS:** 4 + 1  
**FUEL:** 135lt  
**WATER:** 100lt  
**HOLDING TANK:** Chemical toilet instead

**ENGINE**

**MAKE/MODEL:** Cummins MerCruiser Diesel QSD 2.0L  
**TYPE:** Inline four-cylinder diesel w/ common rail injection  
**RATED HP:** 150 at 4000rpm  
**DISPLACEMENT:** 2lt  
**WEIGHT:** Approx 250kg  
**DRIVE (MAKE/RATIO):** Shaft (Twin Disc TM 485A / 2.4:1)

**SUPPLIED BY**

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 Phone: (02) 9319 5222  
 Web: www.collinsmarine.com.au; www.arvor.com.au

**tradeboat SAYS...**

The Weekender is just perfect for that big bay, big river or harbour sortie with a spot of fishing and family fun. Thanks to its low-maintenance finish, you can save by keeping the boat on a swing mooring rather than marina pen. And with a shaftdrive, you know you're away without worry. The Arvor brand has an established history here and high resale value, too. Last but not least, this is the quietest Arvor I've ever driven thanks to the increased amount of soft furnishings in the cabin. I'm betting this is a big winner for it's a natural fit in this pared back climate.

Details: Collins Marine, phone (02) 9319 5222, see www.arvor.com.au.



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