



MODERN BOATING

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GENESIS 360 Targa

New Zealand won a name very early as a producer of class fibreglass products and the name still holds good. One of the country's most conspicuous builders, certainly to Australians, is Genesis and they are carrying the baton well. Their latest product to land in Australia, the 360, has a finish as close as I have seen to flawless.

The 360 was developed from the successful 335 (five of them live in Australia) and draws a lot of its inspiration from big brother 400. Like the 400 it is available in open as well as Targa styles, but does not have the larger boat's flybridge option. The general layout of the Genesis 360 Targa is familiar territory — there are enough Mustangs and Bayliners and others around in a similar mould. However, this New Zealander does enough that is different — and, perhaps even, better — to make us sit up and pay special attention.

Here is just one thing that is special, perhaps unique. This is the only boat I can recall where it is possible for somebody to sit in the lower deck saloon and actually see through the side portholes. Downstairs is laid out in generally familiar style, but achieves a particularly spacious feel. Part of this is due to the abundant natural light through deck lights and ports and part to the less than normal visual barrier to the aft cabin. Not so much a cabin as an extension of the saloon, it has U-shaped seating that converts to a double bed.

Sleeping or sitting is what you would do in there, although headroom might be tight for tall people. A problem that would not arise if you had children onboard as they would claim it for their own. Fair enough, because the 360 is basically a family cruiser, although two couples could weekend in some comfort. The master double bed is sited right forward as usual. An interesting option, not taken on the review boat, is to locate a single bunk above it to starboard. Aft of the bed, to starboard, is the dining and sprawling area. A curving lounge — you can elect for leather — faces an elliptical table set diagonally.

Setting it that way makes plenty of floor space for the comprehensive port side galley. The bench top is made from Corian, and cooking arrangements give a choice of microwave or gas. Turning the cook top gas taps off automatically closes the solenoid-powered valve on the upper deck gas bottle — handy. A 12V fridge and a sink round off the domestic arrangements. The bathroom takes up the rest of the port side. Not a large compartment, but everything fits in without crowding. The shower is full-sized, there is a vanity unit, and an electric toilet evacuating via a Lectra/San onboard treatment plant.

There are abundant cupboards set usefully high and top hinged and, naturally, a cocktail cabinet. Almost the whole interior has been fitted out using curved surfaces, and owners can choose from four veneers and a range of fabrics to create a custom interior. Three steps and a sliding door link the interior with the cockpit, and link is the right word since the living facilities are shared between the upper and lower decks. And, inevitably, far more time is going to be spent up topside.

The Genesis Targa has the hardtop that makes as much sense for Australia's climate as it does for New Zealand's — although the reasons may be different. It has a big pair of tinted sliding hatches in it for those who want the sun, and fabric covers for those who don't. The side windows slide open, again in deference to meteorology. A lot of sports cruisers look unbalanced with a hardtop, which is possibly why on many of them it is not an option. The Genesis carries it off well, partly a result of the lowish deck, but mainly through good design.

Plenty of deck area is left unshaded, though and there are enough seating options in the standard layout to suit anyone's fresh air and sunshine preferences. Either side of the cockpit's rear, seats fold out from the bulwarks. An L-shaped lounge ahead to starboard, plus a folding table join in to make a dining room matching the functional open-air galley. Despite the downstairs galley, Genesis clearly accept that cooking is more popularly done on deck — especially in summer — and they have gone for al fresco more whole heartedly than most. The central piece of transom — there are doors either side of it — is the outdoor galley.

A sculptured lid covers a Magna gas barbecue and a sink, and you use them whilst standing on the boarding platform. A great touch to have you facing the guests as you cook, and a barbecue is about as sophisticated as most of us want to go. There are sockets in the lid to take a bait board and this makes a handy serving area. Other nearby aids to gracious living are an ice maker, a refrigerator and drink holders practically everywhere. Ahead on the portside is another L-shaped lounge, but facing inboard and forward, also with its table at the right height for apres fishing cocktails.

Another nice piece of social positioning, having the guests more or less facing the helm seat. This makes its own contribution to "matiness" by being an easy two seater. The helm seat is on a raised section of deck, improving the view and giving height to the after cabin. It faces a dash featuring trendy carbon fibre inserts, and with plenty of surface area for additional electronics. The engine gauges are set at a higher level below the windscreen — where you have a better chance of actually looking at them — and sounder, GPS, radio and so on are a small drop of the eyes lower.

It is a driving position that feels good to use: minor controls fall easily to hand, and wheel and throttles are just where they should be. So are the driver's feet, and footrests are often given less thought than they deserve. The cockpit deck and the boarding platform are teak laid. There is nothing twee about this: it looks the part and is a joy to walk on — a mile in front of carpet. Every bit of it gets used and right aft it ends as a top-class boarding platform.

The tender is stored on edge at the rear of the platform using as neat a system as I have seen. A stainless steel hoop rises from the board, and the tender's upper gunwale is secured to its top by a tensioning screw. The lower gunwale fixes to the platform by sliding clips that allow it to bob up and down in the water once lowered. You get steadiness for boarding, and you are saved from the maddening overnight bumping that tenders specialise in when secured by painter. Also you can padlock the tender to the boat, removing another overnight worry.

Under way the sensations stay good. After several weeks of appalling weather the trial day was almost too good; a low swell and a gentle sea from an equally gentle breeze. Still, why not try out boats in the kind of weather you like to use them in? The Genesis tracked immaculately through the canals and restricted speed areas of WA's Mandurah on the way to the ocean. In the good, or bad, old days we would have had an interesting passage over the bar, but the sand bypass system has changed all that. What we got was a demonstration of urge from the combined 460 horsepower of the Volvo diesels and of a transition-less move onto the plane from the Genesis. Trim felt naturally good, and progress to the maximum speed of 38 knots took no time worth mentioning.

With half full tanks on top of a light displacement of five and a half tonnes, the boat had presence.

Nothing skittish but a pleasure to play with; tight turns at speed and the like were done with the style of a sports boat, but none of the drama. Engine noise barely rose with the speed and the hull absorbed all the sound from the ocean. Suits me. This first Australian 360 was bought by Brian Sharp from Mandurah, who has plans to get plenty of use out of it. He has always been a keen fisherman and that will keep on happening with the Genesis.

It lives in a lifter at the bottom of his waterfront garden so he wastes no time in driving to a marina. With the extra capability his new boat has over the old 30 ft aluminium boat, he intends spreading his wings a bit further. With his three mates, he will be fishing the offshore waters all the way up to the Abrolhos Islands. The Genesis' accommodation will earn its living in the islands, but will get a workout closer to home as well. All the creature comforts will attract his wife and grandchildren to a spot of cruising and less single-minded fishing. Sounds like a perfect career for the Genesis.

Words and Photos: Mike Brown Modern Boating Magazine

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