



TRADER – A – BOAT Australia March 2005

By David Grandville

‘Passion Not Fashion’

They may not be the prettiest craft, but New-Zealand-built boats can handle the sort of rough conditions only a Kiwi would be crazy enough to brave. David Granville finds that the Genesis 400 Targa Saloon is no exception.

Most sportscruisers in Australia generally ply the protected waterways like Sydney Harbour or the Gold Coast Broadwater; few venture into the open ocean at all. In New Zealand however, many of the bays and harbours can be just as rough as the ocean, so the boats need to be built tough.

An island nation surrounded by water, it's not surprising that New Zealand has embraced boating as a way of life. Over the years I have tested several boats with Kiwi pedigrees and while some of them aren't the prettiest boats in the world, there is a common denominator to most of them - seaworthiness in the face of rough waters.

Anyone who has spent any length of time fishing or cruising out of NZ's ports will tell you that the weather can be absolutely atrocious. Not just rough, but cold, windy, rainy and some days just downright ugly. With so much water and so little land the only option to combat the weather is to build boats that can handle it. That's where the Genesis 400 Targa Saloon comes in to play. Rather than let a gale warning ruin your weekend on the water, you could plough your way across an open bay, anchor up in a protected cove and it wouldn't matter in the slightest what the weather was doing outside.

HOME AND AWAY



Although their cricket team seems to let them down fairly regularly these days, the Kiwis have always been pretty good at building boats. I tested the Genesis 400 Targa a couple of years ago and remember being fairly impressed at the time with the boat's build quality and seaworthiness. I didn't expect any real surprises from the Saloon model and as it turns out it is really only layout that differentiates the two.

The main difference with the Saloon model is that it features a big sliding glass door, which separates the saloon from the cockpit. This way it doesn't matter what the weather is like outside, you can tuck yourself away with the airconditioning on and watch a DVD or read a book. There is still plenty of natural

light though, with big side windows and two sliding sunroofs overhead.

Like most sportscruisers, the Genesis 400 Saloon is designed to be a home away from home and it features all the amenities required for weekends away or even for a couple to do some extended cruising.

You step aboard the Genesis via a big teak-laid swim platform. There are transom doors that lead to the cockpit from either side of the boat, which gives you flexibility when tying up to the dock. In between these transom doors is a central entertainment station including an electric barbecue, a sink and a freshwater washdown. This is the ideal location for a barbecue on a boat. A hinged lid covers the barbecue when not in use and there is ample storage below.

Engine hatches form the cockpit sole which is also laid in teak. The big hatches are on gas-assisted rams and provide excellent access to all parts of the twin diesel engines.

The testboat was fitted with twin Volvo Penta KAMD300EDC diesels which are rated at 285hp. Genesis offers a number of power options in petrol and diesel, shaftdrive and sterndrive to 440hp a side. Genesis is one of the first companies to be fitting Volvo's new IPS propulsion system also.

The saloon layout is very social with the helm, dinette and lounge all at the same level so conversation can be made even while underway. And although the galley is at mezzanine level, the chef can still converse with people in the saloon.

As you access the saloon from the cockpit through the big sliding door, there is a cabinet directly to starboard which houses an icemaker, drinking glass drawers and a bottle rack. There is a good-sized dinette to port and a two-seater lounge to starboard. A Phillips flatscreen TV can be viewed from the lounge with the DVD player recessed behind the helm chair.

Appropriate lighting and airconditioning vents are strategically positioned throughout the saloon and a lazarette below the saloon floor provides good storage space for items not regularly required.



The helm provides good vision and the bench seat suits either a seated or standing helm position. The bench seat is even wide enough to get cosy with your co-pilot, if you want.

A Simrad CA54 15in plotter/sounder/radar takes up a large proportion of the dash but is ideal for serious navigation. The Volvo electronic controls fall nicely to hand and are silky smooth to use. Other dash features include a Simrad AP11 autopilot, Maxwell Auto Anchor, Max Power bowthrustrer controls and a Raymarine VHF radio. AC and DC switch panels are located on the vertical bulkhead below the dash.

Three steps down from the saloon on the port side you'll find a classy and fairly spacious galley. High-gloss cherrywood timber cabinetry and Avonite benchtops provide a sophisticated look. Plenty of storage space is provided via underbench drawers and cupboards as well as drop-down overhead cabinets. Galley features include a convection microwave, two-burner electric hob, stainless steel sink, underbench freezer, fridge, and recessed rubbish bin.



Opposite the galley on the starboard side is the guest accommodation. A double bunk that runs back under the helm area is a little bit squeezey but a good backup if friends decide to stay aboard for the night.

Ask anyone what they dislike most about boat bathrooms and I bet nine out of 10 will reply, "wet toilet seats after someone has just had a shower". Yep, me too!

Well Genesis has solved this problem on the 400 Targa Saloon by splitting the toilet and shower into two totally separate cabins - toilet to port and shower to starboard.

The forward cabin is the master stateroom and is separated from the companionway by a privacy screen rather than a lockable door. An island berth takes pride of place in the bow but Genesis can option this forward cabin with vee-berths if required. I wouldn't say there was excess hanging space in the forward cabin but drawers, sidepockets and shelving should provide enough storage.

GALE RIDER

After we got the photo shoot out of the way it was time to go for a spin and see what she could do. The first thing I noticed once behind the wheel was that although the boat was fitted with trim tabs it didn't

want or need much trim on. It liked to ride high, and from what I could tell the tabs were purely there to keep the boat on an even keel. When the tabs were applied we seemed to be pushing a lot of water for no reason.

There was a 25kt sou' easter blowing offshore but we decided to poke our noses out and at least have a look at the sea conditions. Seeing all those white-caps reminded me of New Zealand actually so it was an appropriate test.

The thing about the Saloon model Genesis is due to being fully enclosed and partitioned off from the engineroom and the weather, it's difficult to judge how fast you are going.

It felt like we were just puttering along when we came off the back of a wave in the seaway with a fair thud, but when I looked down at the GPS we were still doing 20kt. It felt like we were doing half that!

I slowed down to a speed more appropriate to the conditions and the Genesis plugged along without any nasty surprises. Oh, except for one. We actually ripped the tender bracket off the swim platform. Yes, a 3m inflatable does have quite a bit of windage apparently. The tender bracket was an aftermarket install which had been secured with self-tappers. I suspect the next one will be through-bolted.

We copped a fair amount of spray with the wind on our forequarter but sitting in our airconditioned cabin it didn't really matter. Once we turned down-sea the Genesis really started to perform. It loved the following sea and did everything I asked it to.

The 285hp Volvos seemed to be a nice match although, because the bum on the testboat was a little dirty, speeds were not truly indicative of what this combination of hull and powerplant can do. According to Carl Kellett, Genesis Marine's Australian importer, this boat normally has a top speed of 30kt at 2900rpm and a 25kt cruise at 2000rpm. We were down a couple of knots on the testday and contribute that to the dirty hull.

The V-drive configuration provides good manoeuvrability and I'd say you would rarely need the bowthruster, maybe just to get you out of trouble in the odd tight parking spot.

While I can see real merit in the Genesis 400 Targa Saloon in areas where the weather isn't the best - like New Zealand or perhaps even Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay - I still prefer the Targa model with the open layout.

Either way, Genesis has put a classy package together. It's nice to know that your sportscruiser isn't going to fall to bits if you hit a patch of rough stuff. The quality of fitout is very good and it's well worth comparing this Kiwi-built boat to other imported products as well as our locally produced sportscruisers. You might be pleasantly surprised.

HIGHS

- Seaworthiness
- Separate shower & toilet
- Minimal engine noise
- Manoeuvrability

LOWS

- Starboard cabin
- Tender bracket

Website: www.boatpoint.com.au