

Kiwi-Kraft 795 HTE

Comfort and Fishability

When keen outdoorsman and boat builder, Rodney Harris encountered his first aluminium pontoon boat back in the late 1980's, he could see the applications and advantages for Kiwi fishermen and divers in the rugged conditions of his home Southland waters, writes Sam Mossman.

Kicking off in July 1988, Harris built his first aluminium Kiwi-Kraft in the shed behind his house. These days, as director of Kiwi-Kraft, he and his small team of craftsmen design and build a range of world-class boats to meet the needs of the recreational fishing and diving market, as well as for commercial and rescue use. Safety, performance and styling are key in their design.

Rodney Harris enjoys the interaction with his customers and dealers and has no intention of becoming a mass producer of boats; he and his team prefer designing features and customising boats to suit individual requirements. Kiwi-Kraft now operates from a modern 2000 square-metre workshop equipped with the latest technology in alloy welding, CNC cutting, bending and fabrication.

Working with Kiwi-Kraft agents Auckland Marine, we reviewed Kiwi-Kraft's 740 HTE in the January issue of *Fishing News*. This month we follow up its larger brother, the 795 HTE.

HUSHed up

Pontoon designs have several advantages over standard monohulls. Important characteristics include good levels of reserve buoyancy; excellent stability; and high load-carrying ability. To these, Kiwi-Kraft can add excellent sea performance. They put this down to the hull design, and what they call HUSH technology. HUSH is an acronym for Hi-performance, Ultra-Smooth-riding Hull. The pontoons are not tapered but are curved upwards to present what amounts to a rising sheer-line. The bottom hull plates form a deep-V of 22 degrees, stiffened by pressed-in strakes, producing a fine entry which cuts through the water easily.

The chines are formed by the shape of the pontoons and their meeting with the bottom plates. This rounded, down-turned section forms an air cushion as the hull comes down, helping soften the ride even further.

The pontoons are built from strips of longitudinal extrusion, three and four millimetres thick. These are seam-welded together, forming a very strong construction, with ten individually

sealed buoyancy chambers. The bottom plates and transom are constructed from 5mm aluminium, the deck is 4mm tread plate and the topsides are 3mm.

Stem to stern

The Kiwi-Kraft 795 HTE is set up as an overnighter, sacrificing some fishing space in the cockpit to provide more living comforts for those who want to do stay-away trips. Starting at the bow, a plough anchor is permanently set on the fairlead with a Maxwell anchor winch that feeds the ground tackle through the foredeck into the anchor locker. This locker can be accessed, if necessary, through a hatchway in the collision bulkhead. The bow rail construction has a fold-down boarding ladder incorporated, allowing the skipper to nose in and pick up or drop off passengers on steep-to beaches. The bow can be accessed around the cabin sides (non-skid panels are fitted) or through a hatch in the fore-cabin roof.

The fore-cabin is fully lined and could sleep three adults (snugly) with the berth infill fitted. (Out in the wheelhouse, bench seats and

the table can be adjusted to form a fourth berth if required.) There are four hatched lockers set into the pontoons, two levels of side shelving and stowage space under the berths.

The wheelhouse has a modest dash and a console with a flush-mounted Simrad sounder/GPS MFD, GME G Com VHF, Fusion sound system and Maxwell capstan control. The helm seat is a comfortably upholstered bucket seat with roll-back bolster and footrest; good forward visibility is available through the 6mm toughened-glass front screen and 5mm side sliders. The passenger side has two bench seats with an adjustable table between, backrests (one a reversible bolster) and stowage underneath. Grabrails are fitted around the fore-cabin entry and under the wheelhouse roof.

As a further aid to making overnighting comfortable, a Vitrifrigo fridge is fitted under the helm seat and behind it is another bench seat over a Dometic three-burner stove with a drawer and locker beneath. The gas bottle is housed out in the cockpit in a locker set against the





1) The Kiwi-Kraft 795 is a smooth, dry rider; 2. An enclosed flush toilet and hot-and-cold freshwater shower is fitted in the corner of the cockpit; 3) A locker set against the rear cabin bulkhead houses the gas bottle, califont, sink and bench seat; 4) Behind the helm seat is a Dometic three-burner stove with a drawer and locker beneath; 5) The helm seat is a comfortably upholstered bucket seat with roll-back bolster and footrest; 6) The forward passenger bench seat has a reversible back rest and stowage underneath.



rear cabin bulkhead. This also houses the califont for a 100-litre freshwater system and doubles, no, quadruples, as a basin stand and bench seat. Naturally, a gas detector is fitted.

Bi-fold cabin doors and swing window allow the cabin to be locked, but also provide for ventilation and communication between the helm and the cockpit. In another nod to its stay-away credentials, an enclosed flush toilet and hot-and-cold freshwater shower is fitted in the corner of the cockpit, made possible by the stability of the pontoon configuration. This is a handy place to keep a big landing net, too! Extensive use has been made of quality Hella LED lighting – in the cabin, shower and cockpit floods.

The sealed tread-plate deck drains to a sump under the transom wall from where any water is drained by a 1100gph bilge pump. Side-shelving runs along each side of the cockpit with

SeaDek 'Octopus' panels along the top. Lockers for the dual battery system are in a protected position up in the transom wall and the hatch entries to it are revealed when the bench seat across the transom is lowered. A saltwater wash-down hose is mounted underneath.

The transom wall also has a step-through with drop-door on the port side. Behind the transom wall is a tread plate boarding platform. Pipe 'cages' on each side of the outboard provide secure fishing positions and the one on the port side includes a section that can fold-down to form an 'H'-type boarding ladder with grab rails.

The power plant

The big 300hp V8 Verado is controlled with integrated trim and electric/hydraulic steering, along with Mercury Smartcraft throttle/shift, making it a pleasure to helm. It features Mercury's AMS (Advanced MidSection), an

improved engine mount design that helps make the big engine even smoother and quieter in operation.

I made several trips in this boat, one in reasonably calm conditions, and another on a day when 20 knots of south-westerly against the tide kicked up over a metre of steep chop. With its fine entry and HUSH pontoon design, the boat is a smooth, soft, dry, rider which handles the rough well.

Performance figures for this rig were supplied and can be seen on page 115. Since these were recorded, the prop pitch has been changed from 17" pitch to a 19" model. Gary Hutton of Auckland Marine says that this change has not altered the top-end speed much but provides more torque.

Fishing fit-out

As mentioned, the primary concept behind the layout is creating a comfortable over-night boat, and this has involved sacrificing a little fishing space in the cockpit to





1) The cockpit is a decent size, with additional fishing space provided by the the boarding platform, the transom wall includes a fold-down bench seat and step-through; 8) Gary Hatton works a fish in the Motuihe Channel. The cockpit can easily fish four.

allow room for berths, galley, toilet and shower. The cockpit is still a decent size, however, and with the additional fishing space provided by the rail cage on the boarding platform, four anglers could bottom-fish without too many tangles. Gary Hatton and I threw some lures around in the Motuihe Channel one day, catching a

few kahawai and snapper with no issues and it wouldn't take much to set this boat up for game fishing if required. The pontoon configuration offers a stable work platform, the tread-plate deck provides good footing and the gunwale faces are flat and comfortable to work off.

There are eight rod positions on

the hardtop rocket launcher; three through-gunwale alloy rod holders along each side; and four more across the back edge of the bait station on the transom, for a total of 18 positions. The bait station itself is removable and can be replaced by a ski pole. It has some stowage under the cutting top and a drained gutter behind.

Performance

Kiwi-Kraft 795 HTE

V8 300 Mercury Verado four-stroke
Prop: 17" pitch
(since changed to 19" pitch Mirage)

Revs (RPM)	Speed (Knots)	Fuel (l/hr)
1000	4.5	4.7
2000	6.5	12.0
3000	11.3	20.0
4000	20.5	37.0
5000	27.0	54.0
5960 (max)	36.0	91.0

(Figures provided)

A mackerel-sized live-bait tank is built into the transom step-through and catch stowage is taken care of by an aftermarket ice bin. Divers are catered for by the previously mentioned boarding ladder, grabrails, transom step-through and hot-and-cold freshwater shower.

On the road

With a tow weight of around 3200kg, the big Kiwi-Kraft is deserving of a substantial trailer and is carried on a tandem-axle,



Models range from 4.35m to 9m
and are available from:

Auckland Marine Centre
277 Ti Rakau Drive
East Tamaki
Auckland
Ph: 09 271 1575

Boat City
Main Road North
Paraparaumu
Wellington
Ph: 04 298 5931

Powered by:





1) The port side platform cage includes a section that can fold-down to form an 'H'-type boarding ladder; 2) Lockable bi-fold cabin doors and swing window provide ventilation and communication between the helm and the cockpit; 3) The bow rail construction has a fold-down boarding ladder incorporated.




cradle-A frame model from Mudgway Trailers in Kaikoura. With ten pairs of wobble rollers per side (plus keel entry roller), BrakeRite/Credo hydraulic-electric braking, a parking brake, LED submersible lights, dual-ratio manual winch, wind-down jockey wheel and zinc-protected leaf-spring suspension, this is a

Specifications	
Material:	Aluminium
Design:	Pontoon three-piece extrusion
Configuration:	Enclosed Hard-top
LOA:	8.00m
Beam (exterior):	2.65m
Beam (interior):	1.90m
Hull deadrise:	22 degrees
Pontoons:	3 and 4mm
Bottom and transom:	5mm
Transom:	5mm
Topsides:	3mm
Deck:	4mm
Floor to Gunwale height:	800mm
Fuel tank capacity:	300 litres
Test engine:	300hp Mercury Verado
Tow weight approx.	3200kg
Key-turn price:	Packages from \$171,200 (Mercury 250hp V8)
Price as tested:	\$238,000
Test boat courtesy of:	Auckland Marine

robust, well-designed trailer.

All in all

In the 795HTE, Kiwi-Kraft have achieved their design plan – a comfortable boat with stay-away capability for a family, or a group of up to four adults. And they have done so without compromising

the fishing and diving aspects. Add the stability, load bearing and safety aspects of a pontoon configuration, excellent sea-keeping and robust, well-finished construction to Kiwi-Kraft's willingness to customise, and you have the gateway to a lot of great days (and nights) on the water. 



Dometic Cool-Ice iceboxes are the perfect cooling solution for when power is not readily available. It will keep your ice frozen for several days, depending on model usage and conditions. These robust iceboxes are ideal for continuous exposure to weather, especially on boats.

With the addition of the Cool-Ice CI 92L there is now an icebox designed longer and narrower than the existing Dometic Cool-Ice range so it can fit in longer fish whilst not taking up valuable deck space on the boat.

For more information visit dometic.com

