

BOAT TEST

KIWI-KRAFT 520 FISHERMAN

FIRST OF A NEW GENERATION



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The 520 Fisherman is one of a trio of new generation Kiwi Kraft models for 2017, that not only sees a radical change in the pontoon profile but also a significant increase in internal space. Barry Thompson went to the Kapiti Coast to check out the smallest of the three.



*Stylish new look
with the same
Hush Tec hull.*

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KIWI-KRAFT 520 FISHERMAN

Invercargill built Kiwi Kraft, has been given a major market boost. While the Kiwi Kraft has always been at the forefront of pontoon boat manufacturing, Kiwi wanted to take it further.

Ian Coutts, Sales Manager for Boat City explained that while they loved the Kiwi Kraft brand and so did their customers, they felt they need to get more involved with the design to better reflect what their customers were asking for. In close cooperation with builder and designer Rodney Harris they have now come up with a whole new look. "We call them our New Generation models and so far we have released three, the 520 Fisherman, 590 HT and the 620HT and have more to follow", says Ian.

He adds that the boats don't only look more modern and stylish, the internal spaces have been better utilised and all the while not changing anything about the hull's running surfaces.

In 1988 Rodney Harris sold his first Kiwi Kraft aluminium pontoon boat and since then 1000s more. While initial orders were all around the Southland area, the word soon spread north and it wasn't long before Kiwi Kraft boats were appearing throughout the country.

Roll on nearly 30 years and this iconic Kiwi brand has established a strong following not only in New Zealand but also in Australia and the Pacific Islands. The range is extensive from open dinghies and hardtops, runabouts and cabins, and all share the same ethical standard for first-class workmanship and attention to detail. However while quality, strength and a superior build quality is the catch cry of every Kiwi Kraft, just how good the boat performs on the water carries equal respect.

I have driven a number of Kiwi Kraft models over the years and have always stated, that size for size, the Kiwi Kraft is one of the best riding alloy pontoon boats on the market. The hulls are based on what the company call, Hush Technology or simply Hush Tech. Is this any different to any other alloy pontoon boat? Well yes, it is and while it's not radical, it is innovative and very efficient. The traditional round tube shape with soft chines are used to trap air between the sponson and the hull, contribute to the smooth ride. The variable deadrise that runs from the fine bow entry



The 520 Fisherman comes with walk around side decks.

to 18 deg at the transom helps with the soft, dry ride and at rest or underway, the 520 is still a very stable boat.

Twin planing strakes that run the full length of the hull assist in the lift, leading to a low planning speed. The strakes also give the Kiwi-Kraft boats better grip and stability on the turns and in following seas. My experience driving the 520 in choppy waters of Plimmerton Beach certainly brought out the best in the boat and while the 520 is rated for up to 115hp, a 4 stroke 60hp CT would be more than adequate. The extra weight of the Mercury 90hp 4 stroke does assist in the balance and trim of the boat, pushing the 520 hard out in choppy water, the 90hp is perfect.

The 90hp Mercury, running an 18"Vengeance gave the 520 a top end speed of 38 knots, with a fuel burn of a

very respectable 30 lph. Drop that back to a cruise of around 24 knots @ 4500 rpm and the fuel gauge stops around 22 lph. At that speed and based on a 45-litre tote tank, the 520 would have a range of around 40 nm. The 520 – in fact, all Kiwi Kraft- has positive buoyancy, making it virtually unsinkable, even when full of water and contingent of passengers. This is achieved by a system of pontoons between the hull and the floor. Each of these pontoons contains up to nine compartments, depending on the model and is tested to 5 PSI during construction. While the hulls are built to CPC standards, they are also made to MSA and pass all their rigid flotation requirements.

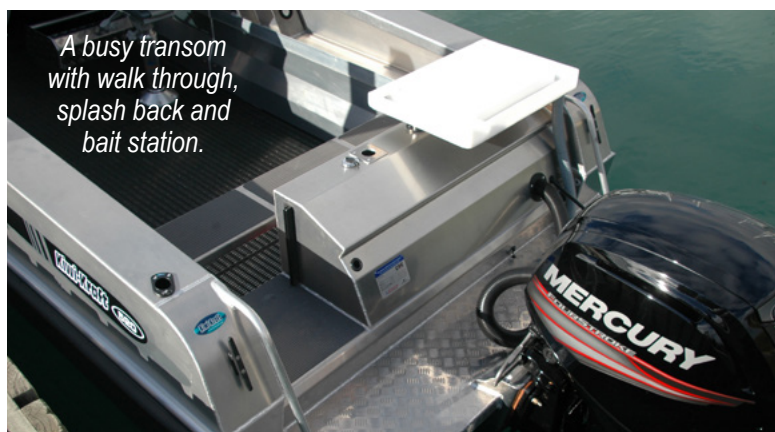
NEW GENERATION

While the 520 is essentially a replacement

Stylish new look with the same Hush Tec hull.



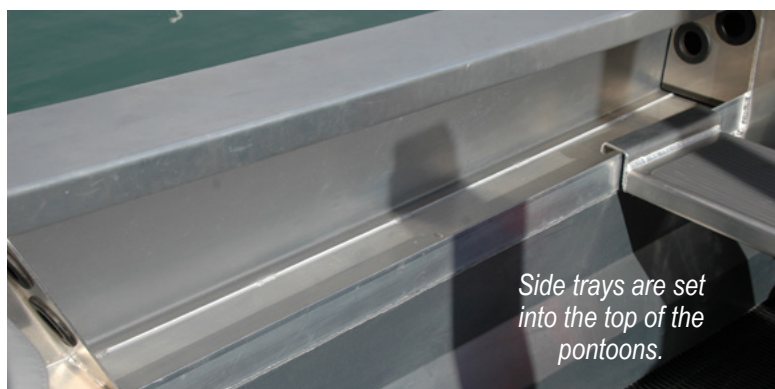
Looking aft to the sliding bench seat.



A busy transom with walk through, splash back and bait station.



Soft storage bags help keep your gear dry.



Side trays are set into the top of the pontoons.

for the hugely popular 550, a lot has been changed. The big difference is the new model is bigger all round. The 520 is 5.65m overall, compared to 5.50m for the 550. However, while the external beam is, in fact, 20mm narrower in the new 520, it's the internal beam that has gained considerably. "We have had a lot of customer feedback that they would like to see more beam in the boats, especially in the cockpit, so that was one of the first things we looked at when developing the new generation models", says Ian.

The internal beam in the cockpit of the 520 is now 1610mm, 50mm, or close to 2" wider than the 550 it replaces. Might not sound a lot, but it has been well utilised and is quite noticeable. The cockpit sole is flat, right across to the tubes, which have been squared off, to give maximum useable deck

space.

Also, the 520 has wider side shelves, recessed into the pontoon. These come with a high upstand, so things don't fall out and a pair of rod racks either side. The side decks are wider, the coaming height higher (800mm) and they come standard with two-rod holders per side.

Also visually, the 550 and 520 are nothing alike, with the new model one of the first with the new generation stylish tube shape. "We looked at the traditional round tubes and felt we needed to give the boats a more elegant and modern look above the waterline, while still retaining that round pontoon shape underneath", says Ian.

The transom design has also come in for special attention and follows some of the ideas used on the Aqualine boats, a sister brand to Kiwi Kraft. The transom has been

moved further aft, the cockpit is longer and the walk through transom is now a standard feature on all Kiwi Kraft. If you want to add an optional live bait tank that goes in under the step through.

Twin transom lockers look after any batteries and provide extra storage. Our 520 came with a single 45-litre tote tank, instead of two 22 litre totes and you also have the option of fitting an underfloor 150-litre tank. The large bait board is another standard item with the 520 and again you can upgrade that to a custom made Kiwi Kraft bait station complete with tackle drawer. I liked the full-width aft boarding platform that allows you to walk around the engine. Attention to detail extends right down to the clean way all the engine cables and fuel line have been routed.

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Twin hatches open to give access to the bow.

Another feature of all Kiwi Kraft is the splash back recess across the transom, which is designed to help keep the water out of the cockpit when backing up or retrieving your boat in surf. If you are going to create a boat for fishing, then you must offer an uncluttered cockpit. Nothing worse than being all blocked up with seating. So what Kiwi Kraft have done is provided a sliding seat, which can be placed anywhere from behind the twin pedestal forward seats to the transom. If there's only you or another mate fishing, then you can pull it out and leave it at home. Not unique to Kiwi Kraft, but a great feature on a smaller alloy boat. Tube matting on the cheque plate flooring is optional.

BOW BINS

Standard seating is a pair of gas-operated pedestals complete with plastic seats (cushions are extra), with full swivelling and sliding capabilities. For the passenger, there's a large wrap around alloy handle and both seats have foot rests with recesses for small bags. The dash of the 520 has also been given a revamp, with a much bigger area to handle large MFDs and an eyebrow to help eliminate some of the glare. Imitation carbon fibre

covering would be a good option to consider. Another very cool new design feature on the 520 is the bow access, achieved with a double folding system. Firstly the centre of the screen folds open and then the So Pac deck hatch is also hinged to lift out of the way. This allows you easy access to the deep anchor locker, which in a lot of Kiwi Kraft these days is fitted with a drum winch. Obviously, there's not enough room under the foredeck for any berths, so Kiwi Kraft has come up with a couple of vinyl gear bags, which keeps everything dry and off the floor.

INSTANT SUCCESS

Released four months ago, Ian says that the new generation 520 Fisherman has been a great seller. You can get one on the water under \$40,000 for the entire B/M/T package, which is an excellent price for a boat of this size and quality. Plus the 520 Fisherman is loaded with standard items that most alloy boat brands list in their options list. If you liked the 550, then you'll love the 520. Kiwi Kraft has listened to their customers who wanted an increase in internal space but with no sacrifice of the ride. With the 520 Fisherman, I score them 10 out of 10. ⚓



This shot shows how the bow shape turns the spray down and away from the boat.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model:	Kiwi Kraft 520 Fisherman
Price As Tested:	\$48,990
Priced From:	\$39,995
Type:	Cuddy Cabin
Construction:	4mm/3mm
LOA:	5.65m
LOH:	5.20m
External Beam:	2.18m
Internal Beam:	1.61m
Deadrise:	18 deg
Trailerable Wgt:	1030 kgs (est)
Power:	Mercury 90 4S
Propeller:	18" Vengeance
Power Options:	Outboard Only
Fuel Capacity:	Tote Tanks
Trailer:	Mudgway
Contact:	
	Boat City, Paraparaumu Ph 04 298 5931
	Auckland Ph 09 442 1933, sales@boatcity.co.nz
	www.boatcity.co.nz

FUEL & PERFORMANCE DATA

Kiwi Kraft 520 Fisherman
Fuel capacity: 45 litres

RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range (NM)
1000	3.5	2.5	0.720	56
1500	4.5	4.6	1.100	36
2000	5.5	6.5	1.200	33
2500	7.0	8.3	1.200	33
3000	11.0	10.2	0.930	43
3500	17.5	16.1	0.920	44
4000	20.5	18.9	0.930	43
4500	24.0	22.6	0.950	42
5000	26.5	28.6	1.100	36
5200	28.0	30	1.100	36

This boat could be protected against the effects of corrosion, oxidation and discolouration.

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