

Freedom found

Building large, multimillion-dollar bluewater motoryachts for a global market is a serious business, not to be taken lightly. But with the new 4300 Sports Express, it feels like Riviera Australia has momentarily let its hair down to play in the sandpit.





review

Riviera 4300 Sports Express

WORDS BY
DAVID ROTHWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO
BY **RIVIERA**



ou have to look way back within the company's range to find comparisons, the most recent being the 43 Offshore Express of 2009 that was labelled by one scribe as a 'fisherman's playground'. That, the 4300 is not.

Nor is it quite like the Riviera 4000 Offshore of 1996 or the open M430 dayboat of 2007, and certainly not the 1987-vintage Riviera Diavolo 44 with its Miami Vice overtones. Really, the 4300 also differs from just about every other express cruiser currently on the market.

While certainly as playful, the new model is more capable and versatile than its peers in many aspects. The amenity and integrity we've come to expect from the bigger Riviera models is writ small, most notably in the space utilisation and overall presentation. There's also a dash of history from those models past.

After three years of development work, the result is a unique sports vessel that expresses itself more quietly than others, allowing families and friends to sip a drink, launch a SUP, or don a mask and snorkel rather than just party like it's 1999.

The fun starts at the rear boarding platform, which features a hydraulic-lift extension for use as a submersible sea deck when swimming or to launch the four-person 2.7m inflatable tender. Once lowered, an aft-facing lounge is revealed in the fixed moulding – plonk some cushions here, switch on the underwater lights, and it would be magical.

Also tucked into the transom is a barbecue wet bar that you'd happily find on a much larger boat, with an electric grill, sink, and ample storage. The designers conserved space by only providing starboard-side access to the cockpit, and they've done an equally neat job with a slide-away transom door.





ABOVE Access to the bow is excellent via a side door and full-length walkway on the starboard side.

OPPOSITE The helm station is suitably luxe, the galley area compact but well-appointed and the stylish accommodation spaces are generous in size, versatile and luxurious.

From there, you can transition to the bow along a full-length walkway. Portside bow access is catered for by a door located amidships, opposite the helm station. That said, to manoeuvre the 4300 in and out of its marina berth, I automatically gravitated to an optional docking station located aft and to port.

Port-side walkway access is partially impeded by a raised coaming for a good reason – you can store two fully inflated SUPs

within the cavity, accessed via a transom door. That's far more elegant and convenient than storing them on the coachroof.

Similarly, you can slide a Seabob or your dive tanks directly onto the boarding platform from a lazarette under the cockpit stairs. Again, much better than lifting them from below deck.

The main cockpit – or 'sports deck' in Riviera speak – can be hosed out if you spill some fish blood or wine, while also



providing comfortable, diagonally opposed L-shaped lounges. Being fully shaded and fully open, it's an ideal space to chat, dine, or watch TV; those in cooler climates could fit clears and fire up the air-con.

Moving forward, the 4300's second catering zone comprises a compact galley with benchtop, sink, fridge, icemaker, cutlery drawer, and dedicated glassware cabinet. Plates and bowls are

allocated a drawer under the helm seat.

The helm station offers the ergonomic and aesthetic appeal expected of a leading bluewater boatbuilder, being surprisingly luxe for something built to cope with open-air exposure. You get twin pedestal seats, a tilt-adjustable leather wheel, dual 12-inch Garmin screens, and switches close to hand.

Sun-loving guests can venture to the bow entertaining area



and laze on its triple sun lounge and a separate forward-facing lounge with a fold-out table, erecting a euro-style awning if required. Less apparent, yet critically important for a seagoing boat, is the foredeck drainage system that channels water to the port side deck and out a scupper.

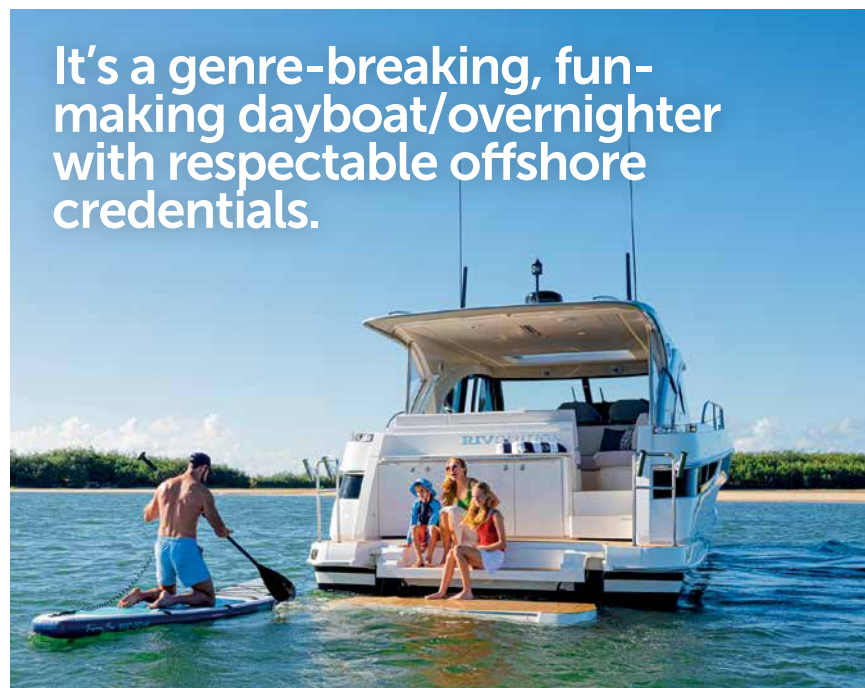
The 4300's lower cabin will impress those looking to nap or chill out. In fact, you'd happily spend a night or few aboard, given the space and luxury. Upon arrival down five steps, there's a lounge nook with an ottoman and TV cabinet. Opposite is the third food-prep zone, with a two-hob cooktop, convection microwave, sink, and twin-drawer fridge/freezer.

A master stateroom with island bed occupies the bow, privacy being afforded by sliding bulkhead panels. Alternatively, you can leave these open to promote air flow. Décor is typical Riviera – plush and timeless.

Guests, meanwhile, get a full-beam suite with a double berth and a king single. It's under the sports deck and therefore only offers sitting headroom, yet it feels light and airy thanks to topside windows.

There's only one bathroom, but that's okay for a five-berth vessel. I like that it's generously-sized, with a separate shower

It's a genre-breaking, fun-making dayboat/overnighter with respectable offshore credentials.





cubicle. Blackwater capacity is on the light side, though, at just 80 litres.

With all that said and done, the fact remains that Sports Express boats are built for speed, not just comfort. Again, the 4300 doesn't disappoint, albeit it's more of a distance runner than an outright sprinter.

That's partly because the development team followed company policy and stuck solid with diesel Volvo IPS pods rather than the petrol outboards (or sterndrives) commonly seen on competitors.

Accordingly, it loses some of the advantages of maintenance and draft reduction while copping a power-to-weight penalty. Still, the twin IPS 650s fitted to our demo boat, producing 480hp apiece, did a fine job of pushing the 15.5-tonne (dry displacement) hull.

If you're in less of a rush, IPS 600s are the standard powerplant, dispensing 40 fewer horses apiece. I'd suggest only buying them if budget is tight.

You access the engineroom through a large

ABOVE The Riviera 4300 is exceptionally well served by entertainment spaces, from the highly social 'sports deck' aft to the brilliant lounge area in the bow. The electric swim platform with its hydraulic mid-section makes it easy to access the water and to stow water toys directly into the lazarette behind the steps.



cockpit hatch. There's easy servicing and inspection access to the individual components, plus ample room for a genset, watermaker (optional) and more. Installation quality is world-class.

A single 1200-litre fuel tank resides laterally in the space, ensuring that hull balance is maintained regardless of fuel levels. The driver can also leave trimming duties to Humphree Interceptor tabs that automatically ensure a level ride. Fore-and-aft trim is adjustable via throttle buttons if so desired.

The light helm touch and responsiveness let you feel connected with the water and give the confidence to throw the 4300 around like a large runabout. The 5.5-litre diesels deliver punchy, mid-range torque, enhanced by the bite of dual forward-facing props. There's appreciable acceleration, and the extra displacement and broad chines keep the hull settled and dry in chop.

Quietness is another plus, making the diesels easier to live with in the long run, as

outboard noise can be amplified by a fibre-glass cabin that's enclosed on three sides but open aft.

The 4300's official top speed of 32.6 knots was achieved at a burn rate of 190lph with 1200l of fuel, 400l of water, and six people aboard, and we replicated it during our offshore run. The most efficient planing speed is 22 knots for 3,000rpm, with a total consumption of 119lph and a range of 202nm (374km).

At 88 per cent engine load, around 3,500 rpm, you're pulling 29 knots for a range of 189nm (350km). That range is sufficient for the vessel's capabilities and intended coastal-hopping role, albeit modest by Riviera standards, where 350 to 400 nautical miles is the norm.

To sum up, the 4300 is a new arrival to the Sports Express genre and a notable departure from Riviera's larger flybridge and sedan models. It's a genre-breaking, fun-making dayboat/overnighter with respectable offshore credentials.

The purpose, no doubt, is to bring fresh blood into the fold and also cater to existing owners who are contemplating a downsize or simply want a second, simpler boat.

With a starting price of around \$A1.6 million, the 4300 offers exceptional value. Indeed, it sits alongside a raft of centre-console dayboats that are one-trick ponies by comparison. As it has done so many times, Riviera hasn't just copied its competitors but has successfully managed to beat them at their own game. **BNZ**



Riviera 4300 Sports Express

PACKAGES FROM
\$A1,599,000

PRICE AS REVIEWED
\$A1,808,000

MANUFACTURED BY
Riviera Australia,
www.rivieraaustralia.com

MORE INFORMATION
www.rivieraaustralia.com
www.rmarine.nz

HIGHLIGHTS

Compact day boat/overnighter but with offshore credentials

Diesel power is quiet and delivers excellent fuel economy

Impressive level of standard equipment and high-end finish inside and out

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 13.88m
beam 4.45m
displacement 15,500kg
draft 1.22m
cockpit area 13.9m²
engine 2 x Volvo Penta IPS 650 480hp diesels
fuel capacity 1200 litres
water capacity 400 litres
blackwater capacity 80 litres
cruising speed 22 knots
max speed 32.6 knots

BELOW The Riviera 4300 is a fresh take on the Sports Express and represents excellent value.

