

LOCAL POWERBOAT REVIEW

Riviera 545 Platinum

IN VOGUE

Fashion and function, essential ingredients in the competitive sports utility market, combine in Riviera's new 545 SUV

STORY **Kevin Green** PHOTOS **Kevin Green & Supplied**



An evolution of the popular 525 SUV, the new release continues with its proven hull but now comes with an improved accommodation plan and enough oomph to ensure fun is a factor in this 58 foot IPS powered hull. Despite being best known for their towering flybridge models, the Queensland based company has been making strong sales in this sportier range, which appeals to both senior sailors seeking a single-level boat and, now, with the full beam master cabin, six person families can enjoy it as well. Of course it has to be good, as there's a raft of foreign competition in this category, not to forget fellow Australian Maritimo's newly released X50.

Differentiation is the watchword here, so whereas Maritimo pride themselves on traditional shaft-driven propulsion, Riviera was an early adopter of the Volvo IPS pod drive that is child's play when it comes to manoeuvring and of course is generally more frugal as well. The latter is an important factor when combined with the sturdy offshore-ready hull that the Riviera 545 SUV boasts. Having built around 1,000 IPS driven boats, the level of integration with hull shape means these cruisers are slippery and fast, as I found after taking hull number one offshore from Sydney on a voyage to the beautiful Broken Bay cruising grounds.

WHY AN SUV?

Nimble handling and a low profile hull that doesn't rock around offshore are some of the key traits, so these are intended to be the hot hatchbacks of the boat world. Continuing the car analogy, some of the key selling points include a big boot (aft cockpit), being quick at the traffic lights (to pull a skier out) and sharp handling for easy parking. Other niceties are plenty of usable deck space to be mothership for the watertoys in sheltered bays while also having enough horsepower to blast offshore for the weekend. In between they must have liveability at the anchorage, so sufficient comforts to keep the



profile of its Sports Yacht siblings and those undulating hull windows, which definitely makes it a Riviera. At nearly 60 feet this is a big boat, so vast compared with the 395 SUV sistership. The hull contains the requisite high volume for living below decks as the fore part is raised high above the aft deck and there's enough flare in the bows to be seaworthy while giving the fore cabin huge volume. Other key design points that differentiate a Riviera from, say European competitors, is the wise use of bulkheads and overhangs to protect from the harsh southern hemisphere sun.

adults happy yet not be overly complicated or high maintenance, as busy owners simply want to jump on and blast off.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The three cabin and two bathroom Riviera 545 SUV has the specifications to accomplish this well, including a base price on par with several competitors, so I thought it best to find out what lay under the bonnet myself. Aesthetics can make or break the deal for many prospective owners in this category but for others — and this is where downsizing Riviera owners come in — it must still look like a Riviera. The 545 SUV accomplishes this by continuing the curved

Water access is another major requirement, as is dockside convenience and the latter proved fine as I stepped aboard from the pontoon at Birkenhead Point in Sydney where hull number one's metallic grey looked very businesslike in the winter sun. The wide swim platform can support a bunch of kids fishing and our review boat had the hydraulic version so easy launches for the dinghy.

A transom door on each quarter cleverly opens seaward so is like an extended gunwale and our boat had a bait tank on here as well.



“Nimble handling and a low profile hull that doesn't rock around offshore are some of the key traits”

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT There are more than enough comforts to enjoy your time at anchor; The nimble handling is great for those wanting to get in and get going; A wide swim platform provides extra space to relax on the water





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The outdoor barbecue can be used in all sorts of weather; An airy saloon has everything needed for entertaining; An optional joystick control can take advantage of views like this

The large aft cockpit with fibreglass overhang and extension means this is an all-weather area. The placement of the barbecue under it is ideal as it adjoins the aft galley; with fridge in another locker. Diners have a small table under this awning with bench seating and another bench at the transom, which leaves a spacious teak clad cockpit for a fighting chair or dance floor, depending on your persuasion. Alfresco diners can easily reach-in through the large opening window to the galley worktop. Another Riviera feature is storage, and the 545 has plenty here including side lockers and underfoot. The other key lockers here are the two aft ones for gearbox access and a rather smallish one on the saloon step for the engine house. Our boat had the optional Volvo IPS joystick control hidden in a port side recess, something we found ideal when manoeuvring in the tight Pittwater marina; as you can look along the topsides as you twist the joystick in the direction of travel. Nearby it, a panel housed the main power switches.



STYLISH SALOON

Walking up two steps and through a sturdy sliding door reveals the saloon with U-shaped galley portside. Another step takes you to the carpeted lounge, so clearly demarcated from the composite floored galley to combat those dripping swimmers. Here the U-shaped dinette with another wide bench on starboard creates a convivial entertaining area, and for cocktail hour a seat converts into a low table so your G&T is secured. The saloon is airy thanks to vertical bulkheads, wide opening side windows and a large sunroof in the middle.

Given that SUVs must also be driver's boats, the 545 again comes up trumps with its stylish steering console. Twin leather Recaro bucket seats house skipper and co-skipper, sensibly shaded by Riviera's signature stylish

visor which ensures the Garmin Glass Bridge instrumentation is daylight viewable. There's twin 17 inch screens for navigation and another for the Volvo engine controls. Throttles and the IPS joystick are nearby as are the Volvo vertical trim tab controls that can be auto or manual. All other systems are managed by the CZone digital bus screen and controls. Fault finding is a major advantage with these digital bus systems so any problems show on the screen and Modes are used to quickly set the inside lighting for harbour or offshore. Traditionalists will appreciate the chunky buttons for repetitive controls such as wipers, lights, horn and so on. For entertainment, click a button to elevate and swivel the television or in party mode, pump up the volume of the Fusion hifi that's piped throughout the 545.



Facts & Figures

RIVIERA 545 SUV

PRICED FROM

\$1,778,700

PRICE AS TESTED

\$1,878,889

GENERAL

LENGTH OVERALL 17.60m (57'9")

HULL LENGTH 16.15m (53')

BEAM 5.01m (16'5")

DRAFT 1.11m (3'8")

WEIGHT DRY 23,885 kg

CAPACITIES

FUEL 3,500L

WATER 800L

HOLDING TANK CAPACITY 400L

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL 2 x Volvo Penta D11

IPS 800 625 HP pod drive (725HP

option)

SUPPLIED BY

www.RivieraAustralia.com

Stepping aft into the galley shows a modest but sufficiently equipped cooking space — reflecting the day use and weekend general clientele for this boat. There's a deep sink, single electric hob and microwave convection oven — the latter two appliances requires the 13.5 KVA generator set to run or the inverter. Cooking is best done when stationary as there's no fiddles to prevent spillage or hot pans falling off. On the plus side there's energy efficient double drawer refrigeration and for the non-perishables, overhead lockers. This is similar to some other marques but what differentiates Riviera is the detailing. So there are sturdy longitudinal handrails, Sunbrella soft furnishings and strong stainless fixings on doors and cupboards. The joinery was done with absolute precision in American oak. Clearly these boats are built to last, so maintain the value of your asset should you ever sell.

FULL-BEAM MASTERS SUITE

A wide central corridor beside the helm leads below to the three cabins. Whereas the 525's

Achilles heel was its lack of a grand suite, the 545 has remedied this. The owner now enjoys a full beam master cabin with spacious ensuite thanks to the compact IPS gearboxes creating space aft. However, the forepeak VIP cabin is a force to be reckoned with as well, thanks to a vast overhead space, portlights and an equally spacious ensuite bathroom. This has dual access so that the third cabin guests can also have ablutions. Despite the two bunks and limited natural light this third cabin has adult sized mattresses; but arrive first to claim the bottom bunk which has the only window. Other features down here included separate washer and dryer machines housed in ventilated cabinetry. Returning for a closer look at the full beam owner's suite, notable points include the sunken floor around the queen-sized island bed, as headroom on entry is limited; but there's plenty to like. The chaise lounge for instance or the tall cedar lined cupboards, while chilling out (thanks to piped air conditioning) and gazing at the wall-mounted television is comfortably done on the 545. Elongated windows with small opening portholes should minimise air



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE A hidden washer and dryer is a welcome feature; The spacious VIP guest ensuite is just as good as the master ensuite; Two bunks with adult sized mattresses provides additional room for guests; The VIP cabin lives up to its name



conditioner usage, especially if the large hatch in the bathroom is opened.

TIDY TOPSIDES

Given that fuss-free anchoring is a major part of this style of boat, Riviera has ensured that the rode is adequate for all conditions, thanks to a deep locker that avoids chain build-ups and an oversized electric Muir windlass/capstan with manual override to control the quality 35kg Ultra anchor.

Then it's time to kick-back on the double sunpad and slip a few coldies into the drinks holders. Guests can safely join you by holding

onto the tall 316 stainless handrails when moving forward.

Equally good is the large cleating midships and all round for when you go alongside the fuel dock.

Hull construction continues in the well-proven hand-laid laminated technique with solid GRP around keel and other key underwater areas. Elsewhere, its cored laminate on decks and cabin top to maximise insulation. Structure includes watertight collision bulkheads and wide longitudinals, while the outer skin is vinylster to prevent osmosis.

Engine access is via a smallish hatch in the aft cockpit (unlike sibling the 395 that elevated the



entire cockpit floor); so choose a small service mechanic. Of course given the Riviera-Volvo's impressive five year warranty, it shouldn't be much of a concern. Climbing down the steps reveals the tops of the Volvo D11s fairly near the ceiling of the engine room, but with enough clearance for even a rusty former yacht engineer like myself to reach most of the service points. Huge and powerful extractor fans keep this area cool — I can confirm this, having done my visit right at the end of our coastal voyage. The 59 foot hull is built around these 625 HP (or 725HP) supercharged engines with their forward facing propellers. Traditionalists understandably see this forward facing design as being vulnerable to debris. However Riviera have installed over 1,000, so this is a well proven design and of course manoeuvrability is child's play. Other hazards for any kind of sail drives is electrolysis corrosion and this is something Volvo has tackled with its QL Active Corrosion Protection System that helps prevent galvanic corrosion attacking the metal parts of your drive leg, a system that complements the sacrificial anodes. The AGM batteries are sensibly placed above water level, as are switches and other componentry, while the bilges have sufficient depth to cope with a leak should a skin fitting fail. Also slightly elevated is the 13.5 KVA Onan generator that sits aft; while a gap in the forward part of the centreline can house a Seakeeper gyro to ward off the dreaded mal de mer.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The stylish helm makes for easy manoeuvring; Supercharged engines have enough power to pull a skier out; Good visibility came in handy when navigating busy Sydney harbour



“Sydney sailors enjoy some of the most beautiful cruising grounds”



Sea Trials



RPM	SPEED (kt)	ECONOMY (L/h)	RANGE (nm)
1000	9.1	29	1098
1500	14	95	515
2000	22.7	160	496
2500	32.3	268	421
2572	33.4	282	414

* Figures supplied by author.
Sea trials conducted in flat water with 45 percent fuel and four people on board

BELOW The stylish Riviera is great for sunset cruising and entertaining



OFFSHORE, SYDNEY

Sydney sailors enjoy some of the most beautiful cruising grounds on the east coast of Australia, both in our lovely harbour and 20 miles north in the famed Broken Bay. It's here in the beautiful Palm Beach that the show *Home and Away* is filmed, so an apt destination for the Riviera 545 SUV. Getting to it involves a blast along the rocky and beach clad coast where big surf pounds on the reefs, so not a place to dally in an easterly swell as I found when departing Sydney behind the wheel of the 545. Negotiating Sydney harbour had required the usual diligence from

the steerer as a myriad of ferries, cruise boats and jet boats whizzed around us. This is when I appreciated the good visibility all round and the flat trim of the 545 so that the bows were perfectly controlled by the auto tabs. Smooth power delivery from the twin Volvos propelled us to a comfortable cruising speed of 22.7 knots with fuel burn at a reasonable 160 litres per hour; for a useful range of nearly 500 miles. The sports credentials were also shown on the 545 as I effortlessly broke the 30 knot barrier to reach nearly 34 knots; so plenty of oomph for pulling those water toys as well. As we moved

offshore from Sydney across the half metre swells, there were no complaints from joinery or any other part of the 545 and with a measured sound level of only 65 decibels it allowed Riviera representative Stephen Milne and myself to chat easily about features of the 545. Unlike the flybridge models when offshore, the motion was much easier on the legs which left us all refreshed as the yellow strand of Palm Beach hove into view. The *Home and Away* film crew weren't there which was a pity as this stylish and functional Riviera 545 SUV would undoubtedly have been the star of the show. 🍷