Family First

BUILT TO FILL A WIDENING GAP BETWEEN SPECIALIST VESSELS, THE NEW RIVIERA 445 SUV IS BILLED AS A JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES
“The family that plays together stays together and as you will see, both the cockpit and the saloon are good examples of this philosophy.”

Though I had heard rumours something significant was in the pipeline for some time, my first viewing of the Riviera 445 SUV (Special Utility Vessel) was at its world release during the Sydney International Boat Show back in August 2012. The warm tones and relaxed styling immediately got my attention. Kind of like a friendly neighbour inviting you over for a barbecue, this dune boat felt welcoming to step onboard.

A time was set the following week for an extended private cruise on Sydney Harbour with Riviera director of brand and sales Stephen Milne. This first trial was so successful we soon arranged for a more indulgent family focused day on Pittwater.

**QUICK ONCE-OVER**
The Riviera 445 SUV is presented as a contemporary single-level, two-cabin liveaboard cruiser. In the current market the exterior lines are distinctive - crisp and refreshingly clean. A wide, fully enclosed cockpit leads through to a spacious saloon with round-table seating to starboard, a galley to port and the helm station forward.

The accommodation spaces can be somewhat customised but were presented today specifically to suit a family of five, with a double cabin forward and three single berths in the full-beam cabin amidships. In summary, the single-level 445 could not be better configured to ensure all are involved as much as possible. After all the family that plays together stays together, and as you will see both the cockpit and the saloon are good examples of this philosophy.

**NEPTUNE’S PLAYGROUND**
Those who like to think outside the square should picture the cockpit of this boat as a well-fenced floating backyard with unparalleled sea views. Entertainers will find plenty of space to set-up for alfresco dining and can enjoy tasty monte喜悦 all of the barbecue and take place centrally located in the transom. There’s a drinks fridge and an inmackerel within easy reach under a tidy, teak-trimmed counter top and the galley and serving benches are only another step or two away through the saloon doors.

Diners and fishermen will be pleased to see features like the two over-sized self-draining wet-lockers in the cockpit sole and toe-kicks around most of its circumference. And all berths and watersports enthusiasts will find the water access via the oversigned swim-step more than adequate and Riviera has included a stainless steel tender bracket on the back as well.

For safety reasons, particularly with small children onboard, I personally favour the double-locking transom door featured on the 445 over the stainless steel gaited walk-through option often seen on Portofino-sterned cruising vessels.

**FENG SHUI**
Balancing the use of space on any mid-sized vessel is a challenge and given the Riviera 445 SUV has made the most of its opportunities in the cockpit, I was pleased to see the saloon and galley area hadn’t paid a heavy price for the room allocated outside.

A five-seat (perfectly matches the number of berths) U-shape couch surrounds a classic timber three-piece foldout dining table. Directly opposite, and in almost a mirror image to the U-shaped lounge/external is the galley. While it is true this area could be described as compact, it works well. Two can easily prepare gourmet delights while the lucky remaining three languish in comfort ready to leap in and assist if required. “Yeah right,” I hear the mother’s groan.

**SOUND OF LAUGHTER**
In a move contrary to recent vogue, Riviera has not located the master cabin in the full-beam space amidships, instead opting for a more traditional double vee-berth for the older, complete with private ensuite. Fear not, it remains comfortable and spacious, and tailored to a level worthy of the captain and his queen.

Alternatively, the full-beam space has been cleverly configured as a children’s cabin to complete with three independent single berths, individual sets of drawers and of course, the all-important TV. Although, this cabin can be optioned differently if single berths are not your thing, as a family man I view this presentation as a real coup de grace in a boat of this size.

To be honest, the broad description above does not do justice to the living spaces of the Riviera 445 SUV. It’s a classic case of the whole package, with its fresh styling and warm tones, being worth more than the sum of the parts.

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**TRADE-A-BOAT SAYS**
In the Riviera 445 SUV it seems likely this company has found the perfect formula to enter a new era of affordable boating. Highlights for me include its versatility and its unchallenged appeal to any family whose primary vehicle is an SUV – regardless of whether it’s a Porsche or a Prado III.

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**facts & figures**

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