

Glacier Bay 2680 Hardtop



Every once in a while a boat comes along you just want to sit on the wharf and admire. “Gee, wouldn’t it be . . .” moments are rare indeed these days. Enjoy one of them with us, now, as we study the lines of a very handsome, beautifully built cat.

Report & Pics By Peter Webster



From the first day we saw the catalogues and photographs of the American built Glacier Bay catamarans, we picked out the 2680 Hardtop as the “model that would most suit Australians”.

Cat boatowners here are not too keen on soft tops, because most of these boats work in fairly rugged areas where heat can be oppressive, or cold, wet conditions are prevalent. Australia is a land of contrasting weather patterns and sea conditions, and it’s for this reason catamarans have long served boating communities in some of the more isolated areas of our coastline.

As editor Peter Webster discovered, not only is this test report a labour of love, it also verified our original thoughts.

Before starting this report, the writer has to “fess-up” to a number of issues and precedents that will impact on this report.

For example, Sea Media (publisher of F&B) owns two of the in-line, 4 cylinder 150hp Hondas outboards on F&B’s Salty 27 long range cruiser which has featured extensively in this magazine and Plate Alloy Boats Of Australia – Book 3.

Several hundred hours later, nothing has changed our view that these are exceptional engines, wonderfully smooth, extremely economical and reliable. Fitted with Honda’s V-TEC valve timing system, our two counter rotating, 2.35 litre Honda 150’s constitute one of the best engine set ups we’ve ever owned.

So when Glacier Bay’s Queensland agent (Bill Fankhauser) asked if we’d be happy to run the 2680 Glacier Bay with twin 150 Hondas, we accepted the proposition with alacrity; the 150 Hondas have always been one of our engine recommendations for a craft of this size and type.

The second admission the writer would like to ‘fess-up to concerns my widely published and long held view

Left: Yes it is 'trailerable' but please note that is a TRACTOR towing it, not a 4WD. It needs oversize signs, big balls and pre-whitened knuckles to tow something this big down the highway with anything less than a Kenny, a Mack, or Trewin Transport.

Right: When they wrote that cliché about boats "slicing through the water like a knife through hot butter", I'm pretty sure they were talking about Glacier Bays at the time. Check this out - how 'fine' can you get? Can you just imagine how softly this cat rides through the water? Amazing stuff.

that catamarans do offer a substantial advantage in certain applications over monohulls. Whilst not the cat 'fanatic' that the writer has often been painted, there is no doubt I hold a very big soft spot in my heart for powered cats.

What people don't understand is that there's also a big soft spot in my heart for powered monohulls – because the point that is often misunderstood, is that the writer is an unashamed 'boataholic' and likes 'em all, cats and monos, big and small! (True, I haven't been getting out much lately; maybe I do have a problem . . . !)

Nevertheless, I must admit to being very impressed with the Glacier Bays we've tested thus far, and this 2680 is, quite simply, a beauty.

When we saw the pictures and brochures and discussed the boat with Glacier Bay's founding president and chief engineer, Larry Graf, we were then quite excited about the prospect of seeing it in Australia, let alone being able to test it properly.

That in itself became something of an issue because Larry Graf is one of the more energetic and excitable types of Americans you'll ever meet. He has boundless enthusiasm for his product, text book knowledge on the subject and an abiding passion for catamaran performance and design.

Larry Graf is something of an adventurer too, in the Hans Tholstrup mould, albeit with his Glacier Bay catamarans.

He has made some truly remarkable voyages up around Alaska (for instance), or down the East Coast of America to Miami (from his home port in Seattle) and he's run from Hawaii out to the Midway Islands in a pair of



SPECIFICATIONS

Length	.....(26')	8.0m
Beam	.....(8'9")	2.67m
Deadrise	.....	n/a
Hull Weight	.....	2381kg
BMT height	.....	n/a
Fuel Cap	.....	.280 Litres
Water Cap	.....	83 Litres
Min Power	.....	175hp
Max Power	.....	2 x 150hp
Max Eng.Weight	.....	.240Kg ea
Towing Weight	.....	3992kg
People Capacity	.....	8

Glacier Bays to prove their ocean-going capability - and that's a hell of a hard way of doing it, too.

Design

Interestingly, the Glacier Bay 2680 Coastal Runner Hardtop is the model of choice for Graf, too. It's already proven itself on the 1378 nautical mile run to Midway Island in the south Pacific (from Hawaii), and was Larry's choice for the 2700 nm trip from Seattle to Alaska's Glacier Bay.

So one thing is for sure - there's no doubt about the boat's inherent seaworthiness, capability or pedigree.

Let's look at some of the stats.

Overall the boat is actually 7.95m long (that's 26'1") with a maximum beam of 2.67m (8'9") (note, please) - with a draft, engines up, of 28.3cm (19"). The dry hull weighs

approximately 2381.5kg and is rated for a maximum of 2 x 150hp outboards.

Importantly, it carries a total of 681L of fuel and is rated for 8 persons capacity.

Back to engines again, it's important to note the maximum weight specified for the factory on the transom is 240.5kg for each outboard using a 25" leg.

The factory calculated a range figure of 310nm and that's pretty close to the truth. We worked out a figure of 299nm using our Australian data here on the Gold Coast.

The 2680 has an 83.5L water tank and a 56.8L waste capacity or holding tank.

For farmers, or like-minded citizens interested in towing the rig from the farm down to the water, be aware the factory estimates the craft weighs just shy of 4 tonnes (3991.6kg) with the trailer, but without liquids.

With fuel though, water and waste, not to mention personal effects, fishing tackle and sufficient supplies of amber fluid, the rig will obviously go over the 4.5 tonne limit, but as it's already over the legal (width) limit for towing at 2.67m, it's a little bit academic.

In the real world though, because no one's going to trail it with full fuel and water, there's every possibility of keeping this rig just under 4.5 tonnes. Apart from the need for flashing lights, oversize signs and quite strong traffic restrictions when travelling through cities, there is actually no reason why a



Above & Right: Typically, the GB 2680 was superbly finished with fabulous attention to detail - and the small, nitty-gritty details, too. Having said that, it makes their lack of attention to refrigeration and freezers all the more curious - Australian fisherman expect a bit more than an ice chest in their \$200K fishin' machine. Ironically, Glacier Bay have paid more attention to the bait (the 2680 has a superb bait tank) and the catch (big wet lockers) than they have to the fisherman's need for liquids on long, very hot summer days. Note helm position, though - it is extremely well set-up, flexible, sheltered and comfortable.

well equipped farmer couldn't tow this rig with the tractor or truck from the property down to the water with appropriate accoutrements for towing oversize rigs.

Please take this onboard carefully - I'm not suggesting you can tow this boat from Bankstown across to the Roseville Bridge ramp on a weekly basis, but I do recognise that there are many regional communities and farms in Australia with the necessary towing equipment (tractors, trucks) and towing skills to tow this rig over short haul distances down to regional waterways and bases.

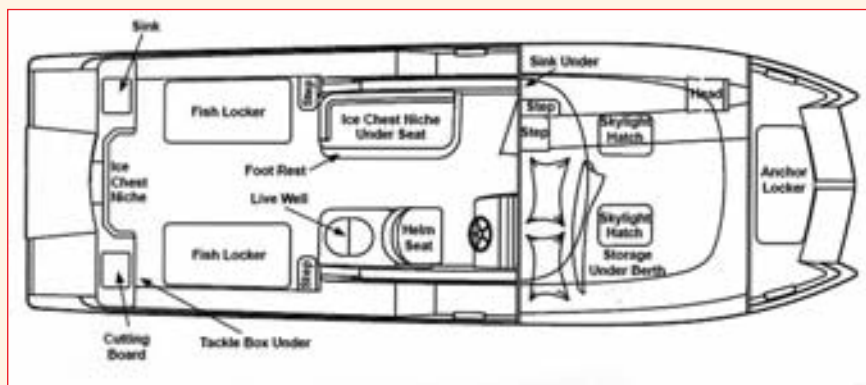
This is a fairly common practice throughout regional Australia - and the further you are out in the bush, the more prevalent it becomes for entirely practical and logical reasons.

So yes, it is trailerable, and Bill Fankhauser and the Glacier Bay people here in Australia have built a very good trailer for it for precisely this purpose.

Cabin Comfort

The 2680 has more than a hardtop of course. It also encloses a very impressive double berth in the lower cabin, which also contains the electric toilet, holding tank, shower and even a small sink unit.

The fit-out down below is just as impressive as it is above, and for two people, spending a weekend onboard this craft would be a pleasure not a



pain.

In the main cabin area in the cockpit under the hardtop, there are actually a number of options available which are worth considering. There's actually a GB model called the 2685 Coastal Runner that combines a longer hardtop with an optional dinette galley, along with the same open air feeling - because the back of the hardtop and dinette is not enclosed, it just uses a soft curtain.

Keep in mind however, this cat has not really been designed for live

aboard use. Nevertheless, with the 2685's longer hardtop option, the dinette embraces a small galley unit as well, so going away for weekends is a real proposition - and a very comfortable one for at least 2 people, if not more.

With a bit of thought it would be a cinch to embrace Australian style camper covers on this craft so two more can sleep on air beds in the cockpit.

But this is getting a bit personal, and I suggest people seriously interested in

exploring these options with Glacier Bay talk to their dealer about them because there are many options that can be incorporated within the standard range of fittings.

Fitting Out

We've noted this before in F&B, but the Glacier Bay engineering is exceptionally good. Because Larry Graf is himself a highly experienced marine engineer, he is attuned to the need for good engineering practice as a principle, let alone for maritime purposes.

As a result, the Glacier Bays are built to a very high standard and whilst we can do all of that here in Australia (and do quite often) what makes it so significant in the Glacier Bay camp is that they provide this standard of fit-out on every single boat – they're not just one off exceptions.

Every single Glacier Bay is built to this universally high standard.

Features of note include:

- **Urethane foam filled double bottom**
- **Self bailing cockpit**
- **4 automatic bilge pumps**
- **316 ss hardware bedded in urethane and through bolted**
- **316 ss fasteners and bolts**
- **Fuel system to ABYC standards – pressure tested**
- **Service access plates 8-12 each**
- **2 fuel filters with replaceable cartridges**
- **2 fuel gauges**
- **Hydraulic steering with tilt helm**
- **Dual ram enclosed hydraulic steering**
- **Insulated fish wells with gutters, gaskets and ss gas springs**
- **Lee chrome bronze rod holders**
- **Heavy duty compass**
- **Dual batteries switch**
- **Marine wire harness with sealed plugs and labelling.**

And this is just the beginning of the STANDARD fittings! Truly, the list is awesome, and goes on for pages, so it's worth jumping onto their website if you're serious about a Glacier Bay, and just printing out the full specifications and inventory on the GB 2680/85.

Handling & Ride

We took off from Runaway Bay Marina on a beautiful morning with whales running down the coast, seagulls flying languidly about and sparkling blue water – truly, a classic Gold Coast day. As we cruised down



the Bay sitting on 4,000 r/min for 22 knots, it was very easy to put computers behind us, settle back and relax for what proved to be an exceptionally satisfying test.

I think Bill Fankhauser, who accompanied me on the test offshore, enjoyed it as much as I did, because for both of us, it was a needed break in a fairly hectic period; just to chill-out with good company, a great boat and a beautiful day was a very welcome break in proceedings.

As we turned around the “corner” and headed out through the Seaway Entrance’s rock walls, it was easy to feel the Glacier Bay’s hulls working as they do, slightly from side to side, but with that awesomely soft, squishy ride that is so typical of these semi-displacement hulls. They would have to be the finest hulls (as in ‘thin’ in section) the writer has ever experienced, and you have to experience the ride softness to believe how good it is.

Yes, if you get the boat out of sync with the wave set, you can still create some occasional tunnel slap, but in the ordinary truck of running out through the Seaway entrance and out into the ocean, it still reminds the writer this is without doubt the softest riding hull in this class / size of vessel (ie, an 8.0m cat) in Australia at the moment – and I say that in full mind of some very good hulls around the place. But none are as finely drawn as these Glacier Bay hulls, and as the waterline length of the boat gets longer and they become proportionately even finer, the ride is actually getting softer and softer.

For blokes with bad hips and backs all over Australia, these boats are truly

a godsend and will add ten years to their fishing life.

Aided and abetted with some modern toys like a click-on-the-dash anchor winch, drive-on trailers, even electric bottom fishing winches – these GB’s can be built to put the fun back into fishing.

Quite frankly, that is something too often forgotten as we oldsters get older, our backs get weaker and our hips get crooker!

We just do not have the capacity we had in our 30’s and 40’s to bounce around the cockpit walls like we used to; we have to think about the issues of safety and the ‘fitness of purpose’ for these craft as fishin’ boats in our later years.

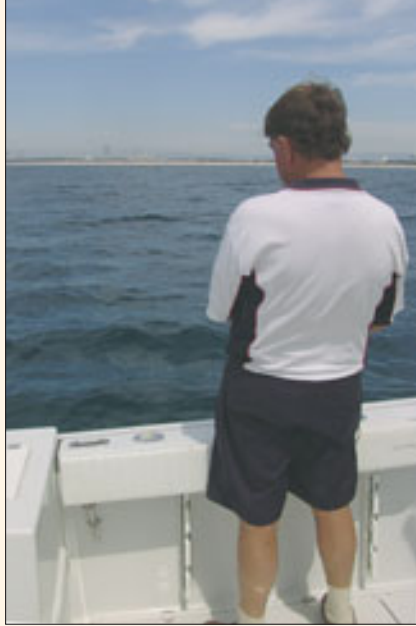
That’s another way of saying as you get older you need to look more closely at the softer options and believe me, it doesn’t get much ‘softer’ than this Glacier Bay 2680.

As we cruised out through the Seaway it was a pleasure to be at the helm.

I loved the hardtop system. The vision was superb, the opening window on the driver’s side was just right to let beautiful fresh air in through to the skipper (ditto for the passenger) but if there was a bit of spray about you just slid the window shut for a watertight seal and complete comfort.

I would have liked to have seen a rear bimini off the trailing edge of the hardtop and I think it would be necessary in some parts of Australia, but damn it, that’s not a criticism, it’s just a suggestion!

Over the next couple of hours we travelled up and down the coast off the Seaway and I put the cat through one



of my favourite tests for boats like this . . . where the helm is set in a series of giant circles, so that ultimately, the skipper goes through every point of the compass with the boat at ever diminishing or increasing speeds depending on how you're doing it.

In this case, it was more about watching the seagulls and the bait fish schools coming along the Coast, and wishing I had my fishing gear with me.

On the way back in through the entrance with the sea behind us, we had some more good fortune in the sense that two cruisers in the 60-70' class zoomed out of the entrance, whilst another zoomed in - creating an exceptionally interesting cross-wave action on top of the Seaway entrance waves. Frankly, I think the Glacier Bay 2680 acquitted itself better than the "no-name" 60 foot monster from one of Australia's top manufacturers. It looked disarmingly 'rock 'n roly' in the sloppy conditions that ensued.

Back down where we were in the Glacier Bay 2680, it was more a case of not getting run over in the traffic, and simply steering through waves that were way in excess of the Glacier Bay's bow height. I mean, we had some serious action happening there for a few minutes, and it was a terrific opportunity to see just how easily the Glacier Bay handled a whole series of near vertical, out of sorts waves coming from opposite directions at once.

Bill Fankhauser and I actually didn't stop talking during this period, and Bill was content to let the writer steam through the Seaway entrance, past these craft, overtaking their wakes and waves, and enjoying a little play on the way through the walls - not enough to

upset the volunteers in the Seaway Tower (who do a fantastic job I have to add, keeping an eye on us all) but enough to check out the finer points of the Glacier Bay's handling.

The upshot of our run offshore was entirely predictable - this is an excellent craft that I would be more than happy to take across to NZ or up to Thursday Island, let alone across to ET's new hideaway on Groote Eylandt.

It has that sort of capacity and it's only really limited by the length of that big black hose that goes all the way back to the fuel wharf.

In terms of seaworthiness and capability, I would happily go just about anywhere at anytime, providing you had fuel and these ultra-reliable Honda engines.

Performance

As you can see in the attached performance box, we zoomed through an *average* 34.6 knots with a working cruise speed of around 22 knots at

PERFORMANCE	
R/min	Speed (Knots)
1,000	4.3
1,500	6.1
2,000	7.4
2,500	9.9
3,000	14.5
3,500	18.0
4,000	22.9
4,500	25.5
5,000	28.8
5,500	32.6
6,000 (F/O)	34.6

4,000rpm. In truth, Bill wasn't at all happy with the 17" props on each corner, and they were actually ventilating in certain angles at sea, especially when the wave action picked up the back corners of the boat on the quarter.

The existing props either needed a bit of cupping, or the boat needed to have a pair of stainless steel props installed. I agreed with that, because the gain in top speed over the last thousand revs or so was not proportionate to the power curve of the Hondas, suggesting that the boat was losing some of its ooommph at the very top end of the envelope. No doubt this would be reflected all the way down the line.

No matter, by the time this magazine goes to print, Bill will have installed other props and nailed the performance on the wall.

Conclusion

Um, actually I have to 'fess up a third time - *I loved it*. It's just great to be able to step onboard a boat that is completely finished. There's nothing to bolt on, nothing to spend, nothing to fit-out - it's all there, it all works and the boat is ready to go from when you take delivery from the dealer.

It has the seaworthiness to handle anything we'll find along the east or west coast of Australia, it will also handle the big waters down south off Tasmania, SA and WA, and it has the fishing capability to handle everything from bottom bashing to high-tech pelagic sportfishing.

For once, this is a boat that works just as well in the remote parts of Australia as it does on Sydney Harbour and I would urge people in those big cities to explore the Glacier Bay option before they get too much older.

Why? Because this boat has the capacity to easily run down to Wollongong to fish Brown Mountain on the way home, or to run from Sydney Harbour up to Port Stephens just for a weekend, or the Inter Club.

Very few boats of this size and cost have that capability.

As far as the writer is concerned, bring it on! This boat is one of the better things we have to consider in Australia.

F&B