

# biggest



The latest Surtees model is also its largest, but the 8.5-metre overnighter sticks with a 2.5-metre beam for hassle-free towing on Australasian roads.

**A**luminium boatbuilder Surtees Boats has orders for more than 150 boats, which will keep its Whakatane factory busy until November 2013. Many of those boats are bound for Australia, a growing market for Surtees, as well as New Caledonia. All Surtees models meet European Union CE and US standards and can be built to NZ marine survey requirements if desired.

Phil Sheaff, CEO of Surtees Boats, says the 8.5m Game Fisher is the largest Surtees. "It's not a model we expect to build in large numbers, but we've had customers wanting to upgrade their boats asking for a larger Surtees option and we didn't want to lose them to other manufacturers," Sheaff says. He may not be expecting to sell too many of the 3.5-tonne, \$200k-plus trailer boats, but a second is already under construction,

pre-sold to an Australian customer based in Sydney, with a third planned.

Surtees' designers resisted the temptation to take the new model's beam out towards 3m, preferring to ensure the 8.5 Game Fisher meets New Zealand and Australia's trailer width regulations. Over-width loads are permitted in both countries, but with conditions that become more onerous as trailers get wider, especially in Australia. The Surtees 8.5 can be towed in

New Zealand and Australia without special flags, pilot vehicles or restrictions on when and where they may use the roads.

## **LEAN AND MEAN**

As a consequence of its 2.5m beam, the 8.5's sleek, deep-vee hull doesn't offer as much interior volume as some boats of similar length. The fully enclosed extended hardtop also looks a little tall and narrow, though Surtees is shaving 100mm from

# Surtees

Words John Eichelsheim Photos Will Calver



the hardtop of the second boat, some of it coming out of the roof and the remainder from lowering the wheelhouse sole.

In profile the boat is a good looker with its attractive sheer and superbly executed grey and black metallic paint. It's one of the last Surtees boats to be painted by Goose Haddock in Whakatane. To keep up with demand Surtees Boats has opened its own paint shop. Sheaff says the results are right up there with the high standards set by

Haddock and his crew.

Inside the 8.5 a relative lack of volume isn't really noticeable – this is still a big, roomy trailer boat – but it does impact somewhat on the boat's dynamic stability while underway. Moving about the cabin or cockpit affects its trim, although Lenco automatic, self-levelling trim tabs are a considerable help here, quickly compensating for passenger movements and maintaining a level attitude underway.



Boating writer John Eichelsheim, left, and Phil Sheaff, CEO of Surtees Boats, enjoy the comfortable interior of the biggest boat in the range.



The Surtees 8.5 Game Fisher has a compact galley, good dining and comfortable accommodation with plumbed head, for'ard, and plenty of stowage. The helmstation is fully spec'd for a boat capable of exploring extensive fishing grounds.

At rest the boat is nice and stable, its flooding keel chamber quickly fills with 600 litres of water. Unlike smaller models in the Surtees range, the ballast gate on the 8.5 Game Fisher opens and closes hydraulically rather than mechanically.

The big Surtees lacks nothing in the cockpit department. High gunwales provide blue water security and there are plenty of overhead and cabin-side grab rails under the hardtop overhang, which features a retractable awning.

Side pockets are long enough to store items like tag poles, gaffs and fishing rods, although with the rocket launcher and four additional rod holders across the back of the transom bait station, rod storage is generous anyway. Six through-gunwale rodholders are set up for trolling and there are sinker holders in the coamings to keep heavy sinkers from swinging around while re-baiting when bottom fishing. They also serve as cup holders. A nice detail is the

small nozzle on the bait station – perfect for rinsing bait-covered hands.

A saltwater wash-down in the aft port corner next to the live bait tank complements a hot and cold freshwater cockpit shower. The shower rose, califont and gas bottle are housed in a bulkhead locker under the seat on the port side of the cockpit. The two starting batteries and one house battery are nicely up off the floor, protected by the fold-up transom seat.

#### FRESH INTERIOR

Surtees has opted for a fresh, modern look for the boat's interior. An open bulkhead connects the forward cabin with the wheelhouse, ensuring plenty of light, while cool blue and grey fabrics with darker, removable carpets and light-coloured, faced aluminium ceiling panels give the interior a contemporary feel.

The three-pane toughened glass windscreen boasts a wiper per pane while

sliding side windows and a drop-down cavity window aft complement the hardtop's bi-fold doors. With windows and doors closed, it's snug and quiet inside the hardtop. When they're open, there's plenty of ventilation.

The forward cabin features a large acrylic foredeck hatch rather than Surtees' usual aluminium affair. The hatch admits daylight and gives access to the ground tackle – a Savwinch drum winch holding 150m of warp, plus chain. A curtain provides some privacy and the marine toilet is tucked away behind the helm console under a squab.

Vee berths in the bow convert to a generous double berth and some clever design involving the cabin's swivelling, height-adjustable table, a sliding wooden panel and some in-fill cushions provide another good-sized double berth in the wheelhouse. The Surtees 8.8 Game Fisher would be more than comfortable for overnight expeditions.

There's a two-burner gas hob, a freshwater sink, under-bench stowage with smart custom aluminium and glass drawers, a decent fridge under the helm seat and ample stowage inside the boat, including underfloor lockers.

The shower in the cockpit benefits from 150-litre freshwater tank; a cockpit BBQ would be a priority for a stay-away weekend – it could stow in one of the cockpit's underfloor wet lockers. Rails on the hardtop roof are just the ticket to strap down an inflatable tender for trips ashore and there are LED lights galore for night use, including underwater lights, under-coaming cockpit lighting and LEDs throughout the hardtop and cabin. These are switchable between white and red so they can be safely used while the boat's underway at night.

#### BEHIND THE WHEEL

The 8.5's swivelling helm seat with its well placed footrest is a comfortable place to



### Surtees design process

Stimson Yacht Design and Yacht Studio provided naval architecture, analysis and design engineering services for the new Surtees 8.5m aluminium hull and structure, with full size computer-generated cut files being provided to Surtees Boats Ltd. The 8.5m is the largest model in the Surtees range and represents a technological evolution from its usual non-computerised build design and build process. It features the Surtees trademark water ballast system and bullet-proof construction. It cleared 37kts on sea trials with six persons aboard.



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perch. Equipped with a fold-down bolster, it also gives back support when standing up to drive. Power steering is effortless and Honda electronic throttle controls fall easily to hand. I didn't even touch the trim tabs, letting them do their own thing on automatic.

Surtees' painted aluminium helm console is simple but stylish. A Garmin GPS Map 5012 takes up most of the dashboard fascia, with a row of customisable GMI 10 displays under the curved, anti-glare eyebrow presenting a full range of engine, performance and navigation data. The VHF radio is located overhead and there are plenty of DC12V outlets scattered about the cabin.

The twin Honda 150hp outboards are a happy combination, affording strong acceleration, excellent grip on the water and a healthy 36-knot top speed on test day. A single rig would probably be marginally faster, but the hole shot is certainly impressive with twin engines.

In the turns, there's a fair amount of heel, as you'd expect from a deep-vee hull, but the boat holds on tight. It's not as nimble as a smaller boat, but the handling is sharp.

The ballast chamber empties out in seconds as the boat gets underway, or else the water can be retained for more



Stowage abounds throughout the Surtees 8.5 Game Fisher; batteries are well-protected in lockers above the cockpit sole.

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## Fully trailerable

Equipped with a Carlisle electric over hydraulic braking system operating on one axle only, the Surtees-built galvanised steel trailer is a conventional self-centring, multi-roller design with Surtees' patented drive-on catch system. During a drive-on retrieval, the ingenious counter-weighted latch secures the boat on the trailer ready to be pulled out. The safety chain and winch cable can be hooked up once the boat's safely ashore if sea conditions dictate a speedy retrieval. The rig weighs in at a smidgen under 3.5 tonnes on the trailer, so a substantial tow vehicle is required – larger 4WD wagons and utilities with a 3.5-tonne braked trailer tow rating are suitable. With its 2.5m beam there are no restrictions on towing the rig on New Zealand roads, other than with a suitable tow vehicle.



## PERFORMANCE

Garmin GMI 10 multifunction display \*\* Both engines

RPM	Speed (knots)*	Fuel (lph)**
1000	5.8	3.6
1500	7.2	6.9
2000	8.7	13.0
2500	9.7	18.0
3000	13.5	23.4
3500	19.2	30.4
4000	25.4	44.4
4500	30.1	58.0
5000	32.1	80.6
5200	36.2	97.2

displacement in rough conditions. At rest, the water ballast certainly helps with stability.

The 6mm hull feels like a soft rider, as is usual for a Surtees boat, and it's a quiet runner too. With its extra waterline length, it's probably the best Surtees yet when the going gets rough, although we didn't get to test that in the benign sea state we experienced off Mt Maunganui. A 500-litre underfloor fuel tank ensures plenty of endurance, though the second 8.5 Game Fisher off the rank will have a slightly smaller 450-litre tank, along with a few minor tweaks to the hull.

The Lenco trim tabs are impressive, automatically adjusting the moving boat's trim whenever someone upsets the boat's equilibrium by shifting around. As soon as the boat comes to a halt, the tabs revert to the fully up position.

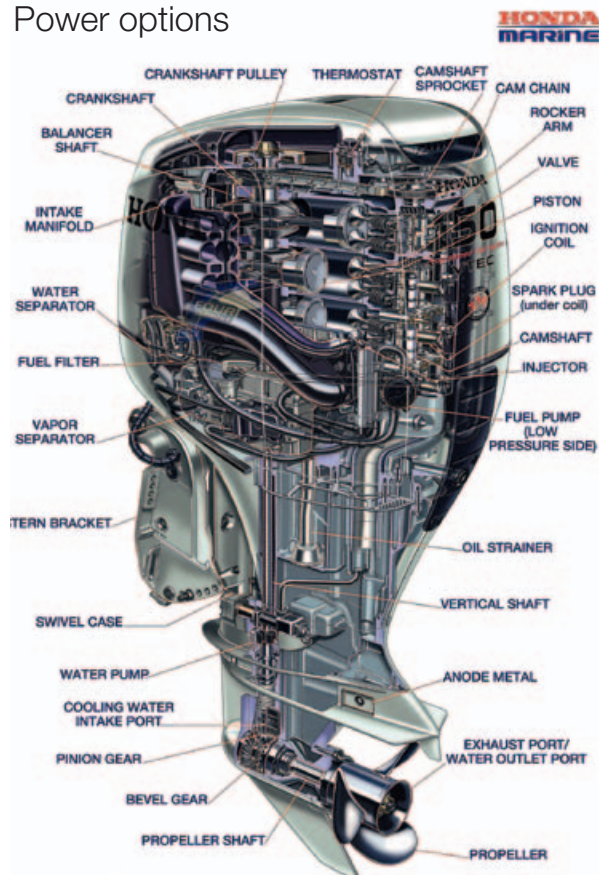
Also interesting is the Savwinch anchor system. Neat, tidy and quiet to operate, it has a free-fall function that's speed adjustable from the

helm. A free-fall anchor system is desirable in a fishing boat, since it makes precise anchoring much easier, but I suspect the open well in the bows containing the drum winch could flood in heavy seas, though a large drain/air vent connecting it with the ballast chamber should empty it quickly enough.

Well equipped and with a long list of optional extras, the biggest Surtees is a fine looking, nicely finished craft that performs and handles well. Its size and range make it ideal for offshore fishing and its easily trailerable nature should allow keen owners to transport it by road to wherever the fishing's hot.

Comfortable stay-away facilities and a fully enclosed cabin with fresh, modern interior styling should make this boat pleasant to overnight in. It would make a great camper when it's sitting safely on the trailer after a hard day's fishing – an option owners of large trailer boats often indulge in if they away fishing for a few days.

## Power options

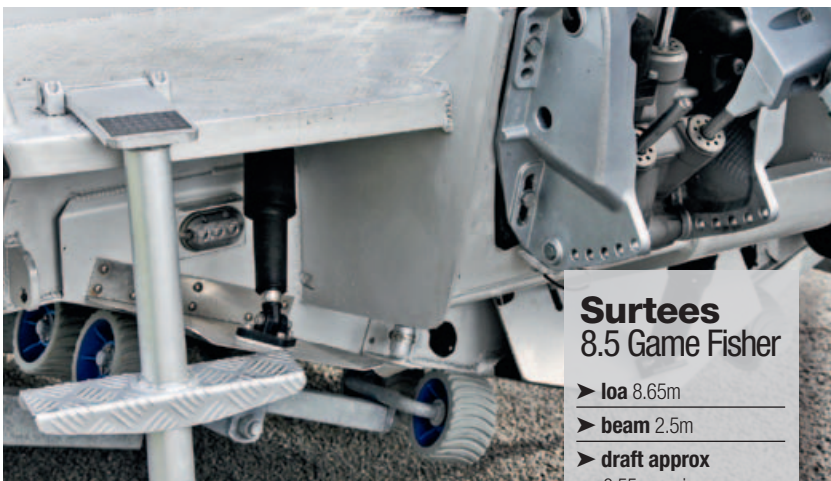


The Surtees 8.5 will accept outboard or inboard engines of up to 350hp. That means it could be fitted with a single 350hp V8 outboard, a single 250 or 300hp or twin 150-175hp outboards, as reviewed.

Inboard power is also possible with several petrol or diesel options available. An inboard installation would impact only slightly on cockpit space, says Surtees CEO Phil Sheaff, because most of the engine box will extend over the swim platform. Surtees boats carry their bottom plates well back under the portofino so there's ample buoyancy to support a petrol or diesel inboard straddling the transom. Modern engines of any type seamlessly interface with most brands of marine electronics to display a wide range of performance, navigation and engine status data. Hydraulic power steering and electronic (fly-by-wire) engine controls are standard across most manufacturers, too.



The fishing-dedicated cockpit has high coamings, washable surfaces and good shelter.



**Surtees  
8.5 Game Fisher**

- ▶ **loa** 8.65m
- ▶ **beam** 2.5m
- ▶ **draft approx**  
0.55m engine up
- ▶ **weight approx**  
approx 3.4kg on trailer
- ▶ **hull thickness** 6mm
- ▶ **sides and topsides**  
4mm
- ▶ **cabin thickness** 3mm
- ▶ **engines** 2 x Honda  
150hp four-stroke  
outboards x 2
- ▶ **propellers** Solas 14 x  
21in stainless steel
- ▶ **deadrise** 21° at transom
- ▶ **fuel** 500 litres
- ▶ **water** 150 litres
- ▶ **water ballast** 600 litres
- ▶ **holding tank** 41 litres
- ▶ **cruising speed**  
25-30 knots
- ▶ **max speed** 36 knots
- ▶ **price as tested**  
\$267,000
- ▶ **packages from**  
\$198,000 fully optioned,  
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