

Quintrex 530 Top Ender

Once seen only in the tropics Quintrex Top Enders are now popping up in southern states because of their ability to mix it over a range of fishing situations. Test report by JAMES HILL, photos by Baitbox.



The name says it all – Top Enders are designed for the balmy waters of Tropical North Australia. Indeed, this Quintrex model came about directly from the request of northern fishos for a tinnie that could fish both open waters as well as estuary systems.

Everything about the Top Ender makes it a practical choice for Northern Australia. By virtue of its powerful, wide bow, it's a very stable fishing platform for lure fishing. At the same time it has enough freeboard and cutting entry to handle choppy open waters.

The interior of the Top Ender is a lot like the sport fishing punts, however, its higher sided hull makes it a better boat for ranging into open water.

This Quintrex design quickly took seed in the Territory and the rest of tropical Australia. But along the way southern fishos started reading about the Top Ender and demanded to see them in southern dealer showrooms. The rest is history!

Like the cane toad, the Top Enders have spread further south, however, it's a welcome invader because Top Enders suits a wide range of fishing situations and are a nice crossover between estuary and close coastal fishing.

This flexibility has made the Top Ender a firm favourite with keen anglers, especially soft plastic lure-flickers. The side console and raised cast deck make for a very effective fishing platform for this style of fishing. And that goes for whether you're chasing river bream, or snapper on an offshore reef.

Relatively low cost is another big attraction with the Top Ender and a reason why they sell so well. Recently, we caught up with the new 530 Top Ender that is the latest addition to the expanded range.

This is a nicely sized boat for the keen angler who doesn't have a lot of leisure time and doesn't want to spend too much to catch species offshore.

The dual nature of the Top Ender means you can readily change the fishing plan to suit the day and weather. If it's crook offshore, you simply focus on what's available in the estuary and don't waste a day.

I had the pleasure of catching up with the 530 Top Ender on Gold Coast waters. It was a cool but pleasant winter's day and an ideal opportunity to sample this new Top Ender.

Our test boat was supplied by Broadwater Boating Centre and fitted with a Yamaha F100 four-stroke motor.



It also had a 55lb-thrust Minn Kota electric motor on the bow and a few other options like a Lowrance GPS/Broadband sounder that brought the price to \$49,862. However, by trimming back on some of the fat you could get this baby on the water closer to \$40,000.



Design: The 530 features the much-acclaimed Quintrex Millennium flared bow design and Maxi transom. The bows help to deflect spray and make for a nicer, more level ride. Meanwhile, the pod stern ensures better low end speed performance and stability.

The hull actually measures 5.53m overall from its stubby bowsprit to the end of the pod. It also has a 2.3m beam and a fairly deep hull of 118cm (keel to gunwale).

Because this model features the advanced level flotation system, the cockpit floor level is a bit higher than usual. This has the benefit of making the cockpit self drain via stern scuppers. You also get a higher, better fishing position, while still retaining some decent gunwale depth.

The internal cockpit depth is about 58cm, or about 3-4cm less than what you'd get in a true offshore boat. This is enough to give you reasonable security offshore – especially with the addition of bow and stern hand rails.

While not a hardcore offshore boat this Top Ender should allow you to fish out to five-mile reefs in good weather. In Northern Australia they'll travel a lot further because of more benign water conditions, but that's another story.

Our test boat certainly looked splendid with its black topsides and graphics. Equipped with its Minn Kota deck weaponry, it looked a very eye-catching fishing machine.

I suspect the family will love the look of the Top Ender, even if it's not exactly designed with them in mind. Actually, the boat is more family-friendly than you expect, thanks to the optional rear transom door. Coupled with the transom landing platforms and stern ladder, it's a great boat to keep kids swimmingly happy in summer.

I might mention the option list includes a stainless steel ski pole and a bimini and envelope cover. However, fishing is definitely the forte of this design and the ski pole is really there to provide a mounting point for the raised cutting board.

With the console mounted to starboard you've got a clear, uninterrupted fishing space from stern to bow. The console is also kept low so it doesn't get in the way of lures, or fly casts. The forward casting deck also provides a seat slot so you can fish up there in comfort. Coupled with the Minn Kota pedal-control electric motor you could very accurately position the boat for inshore sport fishing.

The casting deck could also be used in open waters, provided sea conditions were fairly calm. And talking about offshore waters – it's nice to know the 530 Top Ender comes with the added safety of level flotation. This means it stays afloat fully swamped with the crew inside the boat.

There's still some debate about the pros and cons of level flotation, however, ultimately, it has to be a plus – especially in tropical waters when you have the danger of crocs as well as sharks!

The downside of this configuration is you lose some valuable stowage space in foam-filled sides. However, the 530 Top Ender does have useful side pockets for hand lines and small tackle items. There are also some large stowage lockers under the casting deck, plus some extra in-floor stowage bins.

Looking at the 530 Top Ender on the trailer you notice bow sections are quite full and flared above the chines, but you still have a good wave-cutting entry. This combination means you have plenty of floor space up front for stand-up fishing.

The hollow bow sections also help the Top Ender slice through choppy water in reasonable comfort. The bottom is also left unpainted for beaching or encounters with the ramp – a sensible choice.

Construction is also suitable for a mix of inshore/offshore operation. There are 3mm gauge alloy bottom and 2mm alloy sides. This is backed up with plenty of internal framing and the added rigidity of a raised internal floor system.

All up, hull weight is 560kg, which translates to an easy-to-trail weight of about 1100kg, thanks to an alloy trailer. Allowing for a bit of extra gear you're looking at a road weight of around 1200kg – still within the tow capacity of cars like the Mazda 6, or soft-roaders like the Mitsubishi Outlander.

Performance: It was a pleasantly sunny day as we left the ramp and buzzed up the Gold Coast Broadwater at speed. The 530 Top Ender certainly felt at home in the moderately bumpy water around Wave Break Island and we had no trouble averaging around 28 knots.

With the passenger seat position alongside the helm, Jacqui and I were able to enjoy a pretty comfortable ride despite our fast pace.

Pleased with the way the Top Ender was handling the inshore conditions, we decided to try our luck outside of the Seaway.

In low swell the Top Ender felt quite at home and jumped along nicely at around 20-22 knots. Even with a bit of wind chop we were staying surprisingly dry and saw little or no spray over the side. I suspect the ride would be a bit wetter in much fresher wind conditions, however, the general impression is the Millennium bows are doing their job of throwing spray out to sides effectively.

What's also nice about the Top Ender is the way they ride in a fairly level manner, making for good vision ahead from the helm. The ride feels fairly comfortable by tinnie standards and also free of 'tinnie' sounds. The latter is because the boat foam flotation and lined cockpit virtually insulates away the hull noise as well much of the vibration.

The driving position is quite comfortable with padded pedestal seat positioned behind the neat console. Especially with the optional hydraulic steering, the steering feels light and very responsive. I fully recommend you tick the box on the latter when buying the boat!

Back inshore Jacqui tested out the fishing position up front and gave it full marks. However, not before she very nearly hooked my hat! Never mind though, we were having fun and proving just what a great fishing platform this boat is for places like the Gold Coast.

What's also appealing about the 530 Top Ender is the relatively high level of stability – enough to make it easy to walk around without unduly upsetting the hull trim.

The extra space in this model also allows you to better spread your fishing party. It gives anglers more room to fish at both ends of the cockpit. The boat is rated to carry up to five people with level flotation so you could take along a few of the kids in a learn-to-fish session.

About the only drawback of side console boats is a tendency to lean when there's not the counter weight of a passenger. However, that's less of a problem in this boat because of its bigger size and wide beam.



Power: The 530 Top Ender is rated for a single outboard up to 115hp. That's a pretty good call because our test boat got along pretty well with a 100hp Yamaha motor. The following were the GPS speeds attest:

3500rpm	16 knots
4500rpm	20 knots
5500rpm	28 knots
6000rpm	32 knots

These figures would be a touch higher once the motor had been worked in, and fine-tuned with a better propeller. However, these are pretty acceptable speeds for fishing, especially if you are working offshore.

Northern fishos will probably go for the maximum horsepower because they have longer distances to travel. In that instance, or for lakes, I'd go for the 115hp motor to max the top end speed. A fully tweaked 115hp motor should get a top speed up to 35 knots.

Fitted with Yamaha's 115hp V-4 two-stroke, performance would be particularly perky, however, you can't beat the four-stroke for fuel economy. So maybe the best option would be a 115hp four-stroke motor fitted with a stainless steel propeller.

Still on the subject of power, the 530 Top Ender comes standard with a 95-litre in-floor fuel tank. We didn't run fuel tests but with careful driving around the 4000rpm mark I reckon fuel range would be pretty good.

Deck Layout: The 530s Top Ender is well set up for a mix of inshore/offshore



fishing. It has a stubby bowsprit with roller, moulded plastic anchor well so you can properly anchor it when required.

It also comes with front and stern handrails and wide flat side decks that can take extra rod holders. A fully carpeted interior with enough overhang in the side decks gives you a pretty comfortable toe-under fishing position.

The for'ard casting deck provides two large stowage lockers plus a room to fit a fully plumbed live-catch tank. You also get four plastic rod holders, a live bait tank on the rear deck and an under-floor stowage bin.

There are four seat positions and two pedestal seats provided. I assume this will be enough for most buyers considering it's a hardcore fishing machine. However, extra pedestal seats are available as well as a lean-seat that some angler prefer.

The console features a modern moulded plastic dash, sports steering wheel, 3-ganger switch panel, instrument display. The standard sounder is a X52 Lowrance and you get a GX600 VHF radio, fold-out drink holder as well. The console has a low Perspex windscreen surrounded by a low hand rail. There are also two cockpit lights as well as navigation lights for fishing at night.

One of the extras I really like is the padded backrest on the rear coaming.





It's not so much for seating but to give you a comfortable knee pad when you're fishing.

Our test boat also had a recess for EPIRBs and a fire-extinguisher. These are two items you should always have on a boat going even a short distance into open water.

Verdict: Quintrex can be justifiably proud of its newest addition to the Top Ender family. This boat is just about the right size/price for many anglers given they don't want a boat too large a craft to tow, or park at home.

Handling is quite comfortable and its level of stability spot on for open water fishing. Quintrex has tweaked this concept over the years and some fancier features have been dropped in favour of keeping price down. This is a smart approach because buyers today are very dollar-sensitive and they don't want to splash out too much. At the same time 530 Top Ender offers a lot of value if you want a good, all round fishing package.

Standard of finish is pretty impressive and there's no doubt Quintrex has a strong resale value in the market. All of which makes the 530 Top Ender an appealing package. And that goes whether you're living up north, or down south.



BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Yamaha 100hp 4-stroke motor, single axle trailer, two-tone paint, upgrade hydraulic steering, bow mount thruster Minn Kota, live bait well, transom door, transom backrest, Lowrance GPS sounder, VHF radio, ladder, four rod holders. \$49,862 from Broadwater Boating Qld ph 07 5529 1777.

SPECIFICATION CHART

	Quintrex	Stacer	Seascope	BarCrusher	Quintrex
Brand	Quintrex	Stacer	Seascope	BarCrusher	Quintrex
Model	530 TopEnder	529Fisher	Kingfisher532	560WR	470 TopEnder
Material	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy
Style	console	console	console	console	console
Length	5.6m	5.5m	5.3m	5.6m	5m
Beam	2.3m	2.3m	2.3m	2.2m	2.1m
Rated power	115hp	100hp	140hp	150hp	60hp
Power as tested	Yamaha100	Evinrude75	Evinrude130	Suzuki115	Mercury60
Hull weight	560kg	439kg	620kg	800kg	403kg
Fuel capacity	95L	70L	110L	150L	70L

STAR RATING

Finish	★★★★★	Helm Set-up	★★★★★
Fitout	★★★★★★	Fishability	★★★★★★
Ride	★★★★★	Safety Features	★★★★★★
Dryness	★★★★	Value for Money	★★★★★

*Data ESTIMATED by the TBF team when accurate information is unavailable. Maximum star rating 5 stars.