

Boat review **Boston Whaler 230 Vantage**

On-water SUV

Words by **John Eichelsheim** Photos by **Will Calver**



The Boston Whaler 230 Vantage from America is a bow rider for family-style boating. It's like a maritime SUV: robust, versatile and comfortable – and adept at handling pot holes.



Boston Whaler is best known for its offshore trailerboats, most of them with a sport fishing bent, so the Vantage range of family-oriented bowrider boats aims to broaden the company's appeal.

It was a worthwhile experiment because the 230 Vantage is an excellent all-rounder that draws on Boston Whaler's blue water pedigree with its deep-vee hull, generous freeboard, complex running surfaces and pronounced down-turned chines, but adds a clever deck layout to create a multi-role watercraft with the toughness and versatility of an SUV.

Auckland turned on a blustery day for our mid-winter boat test, with steep seas in the Motuihe Channel big enough to show up any shortcomings in a boat's ride or highlight its strengths. Fortunately the Vantage loved the conditions and we blasted back and forth over the whitecaps, thoroughly enjoying the hull's rock-solid handling and comfortable ride.

The Boston Whaler feels strongly built because it is. Boston Whaler bonds the exterior GRP hull to the moulded hull liner using closed-cell



“...we blasted back and forth over the white caps, thoroughly enjoying the hull's rock-solid handling”



The Motuihe Channel in the Hauraki Gulf provided a good playground for the Boston Whaler 230 Vantage, with foam-filled, double-skinned hulls.

foam: a process it calls Unibond. The result is a strong, rigid boat that is virtually unsinkable. Boston Whaler has famously sawed boats in two and driven away in the rear portion.

The 230 Vantage's bows are somewhat squared off at deck level, which provides a more usable space at the pointy end. The overall balance is good, which is reflected in the boat's ride and its ability to carry weight in the bow. Because of the rough conditions, we left the heavy-duty bow cover clipped in place, and only removed it in a bay out of the wind and weather. The cover keeps the bow area dry, but plenty of flare produces a dry-riding hull anyway, and we had to use the single windscreen wiper only occasionally.

The Vantage 230 has a twin console deck plan with a central walkthrough, a fold-back centre windscreen and a reversible door to close off the bows. The door and screen block any wind funnelling between the consoles. Open them and access to the comfortable

lounging area in the bows is good. Recessed stereo speakers in the bows can be controlled independently of those in the cockpit and a drop-in table shared with the cockpit adds utility to both areas.

There's no shortage of drink holders and storage space up front, while bow-riding passengers will appreciate the sculpted backrests, plush cushions and recessed handholds when the boat's underway. Fancy a bit of fishing? Throw the cushions into the helm console void and you have a great casting platform.

STORAGE APLENTY

Multi-purpose boats need plenty of storage space to stash all the gear people might need in the course of a day's boating: picnic equipment, water toys, fishing tackle and dive gear. No need to worry with this boat: there's heaps of storage behind the helm and co-pilot consoles and a long, narrow underfloor locker between them. The helmsman's console is accessed from the front; the door reveals a cavernous walk-in space suitable for covers, cushions and other gear. A factory-supplied bucket/rubbish bin with a handy little side hatch takes care of rubbish without having to open the main hatches. There's also a side



Brunswick and Boston Whaler

Brunswick Corporation's Boston Whaler is a premium brand at home in the US and here in New Zealand, where it's imported and marketed by Sports Marine. Boston Whaler's high quality boats have never been for the price-sensitive, but their customers enjoy robust construction, industry-leading engineering standards, foam-filled double-skinned hulls and top quality, heavy-duty marine fittings, as well as performance and style.

The Boston Whaler 230 Vantage made its New Zealand debut at the Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show in May. The Vantage 230 and 270 models are Boston Whaler's take on the family all-rounder: bowriders suitable for day-tripping and picnicking in comfort, but equally competent towing wakeboarders, water-skiers and kids on water toys or heading out deep to go fishing and scuba diving.



There is storage throughout the boat. Peter Wu of Sports Marine takes a seat on the chemical toilet in the space behind the co-pilot console.

opening; the hatch door with its clever magnetic latch doubles as the 'air dam' door used to close off the bows.

The walk-in, co-pilot console is accessed from the rear. The housing contains a chemical toilet and wash basin, it is big enough to get changed in. Aft, an extra-large underfloor cockpit locker provides access to the battery bank, fuel tank and pumps. It was reassuring to see deep gutters moulded into the cockpit sole under the hatch and heavy items like batteries and fuel tanks properly secured. All the hatches are equipped with gas struts and the cockpit drains overboard through scuppers.

VERSATILE COCKPIT

The cockpit and helm layouts work well. With 2.59m of beam, the Vantage 230 has plenty of cockpit real estate to work with, so it feels quite spacious, but cleverly engineered seating options help to maximise cockpit space. With the rear bench seat folded up, access to the transom is unimpeded; with it down, there's comfortable seating for two across the back. On the port side the seats can be configured back to back; the backrest can be positioned to provide forward or aft-facing

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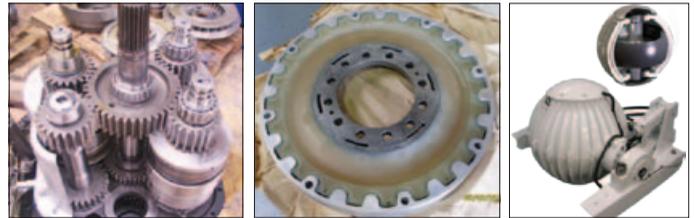


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The double seat in the cockpit which can flip back or forwards to face either way.

loungers, or it can be folded flat to create a day berth.

The helmsman sits in comfort on a swivelling bucket seat with a bolster for a bit of elevation if required and a moulded footrest to brace against. The driving position is excellent with good visibility seated at the helm. The boat is supplied with a full range of factory-fitted Raymarine electronics, Bennett trim tabs, Fusion stereo, Mercury SmartCraft gauges and Mercury digital throttle and shift. Mercury Verado power steering is a pleasure to use. Switchable blue/white LED lighting is suitable for fishing or entertaining at night.

A Corian counter top and plumbed sink unit provide for basic onboard food preparation, along with an ice box/cooler strapped to the floor under the sink, but there's no cooker. Unlike some American boats, the 230 Vantage has a robust anchor set-up concealed under a hatch in the bows. It's neat and tidy with the Quick capstan controlled either from the helm or with the cabled remote in the bows. The plough anchor is stored permanently on the fairlead.

If watersports are on the agenda, there's plenty of stowage for waterskis, wakeboards, biscuits



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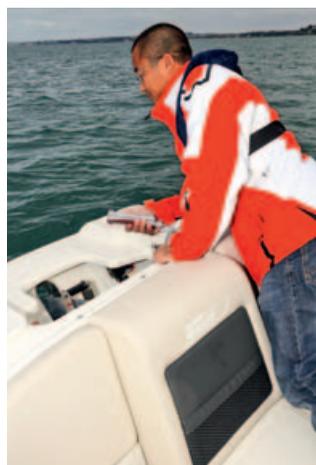
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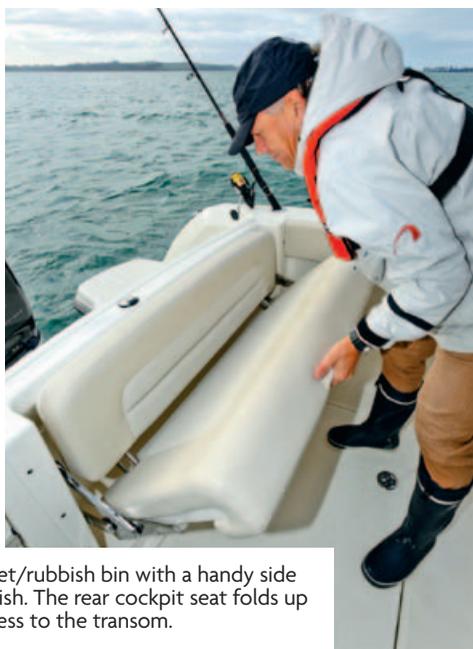
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A Corian counter and plumbed-in sink provide for basic food preparation. The anchor locker with remote control. Storage space beneath a seat in the bow.

and dive gear. Overhead, a solid powder-coated arch supports the canvas bimini top. There's a dedicated wakeboard tow point on top of the arch and it also furnishes two, heavy-duty rod holders per side. Sports Marine offers New Zealand-made clears to enclose the helm.

The freshwater transom shower is handy after a swim or a dive and there's a decent saltwater wash down. For fishing you get padded coamings, a good spread of heavy-duty rod holders, plus gaff, net and rod racks. There's even a decent integrated and plumbed live-bait tank option under the port lounge and the high rod holders on the fitted arch will substitute for outriggers



A factory-supplied bucket/rubbish bin with a handy side hatch takes care of rubbish. The rear cockpit seat folds up to allow unimpeded access to the transom.

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Thruster Sizing Guide

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Boston Whaler 230 Vantage

- ▶ **loa** 7.02m
- ▶ **beam** 2.59m
- ▶ **draft approx** 0.4m
- ▶ **weight approx** 3.1 tonnes incl trailer
- ▶ **deadrise at transom** 20 degrees
- ▶ **construction** GRP monocoque, foam sandwich Unibond construction
- ▶ **engine** Mercury 300hp Verado FourStroke
- ▶ **propeller** 14 1/4-inch x 18-inch Enertia SS
- ▶ **fuel** 420.18 litres
- ▶ **water** 75.71 litres
- ▶ **cruising speed** 18-35 knots
- ▶ **max speed** 45 knots
- ▶ **packages from** \$159,750
- ▶ **price as reviewed** \$196,500
- ▶ **Manufactured by** Boston Whaler, Florida, USA. www.bostonwhaler.com
- ▶ **boat supplied by** Sports Marine Ltd, Auckland, 09 274 9918 021 732 721 www.sportsmarine.co.nz



Battery bank, fuel tank and pumps are well secured in an underfloor cockpit locker with deep gutters.

PERFORMANCE

Boston Whaler 230 Vantage – Mercury Verado 300hp*

Engine speed	Boat speed	Fuel burn	Economy	Range
rpm	knots	L/h	nm/L	nm
idle 600	2.3	1.9	1.19	451
1000	3.7	3.8	1.04	393
1500	5.6	6.44	0.86	327
2000	6.9	10.6	0.65	248
2500	7.9	17.4	0.45	172
3000	11.9	25.7	0.46	176.4
3500	18.8	30.7	0.62	233
4000	23.9	39.0	0.61	232
4500	29.3	49.6	0.59	224.2
5000	33.5	64.7	0.52	196.4
5500	37.4	84.4	0.44	169
6000	41.9	112.8	0.37	141
6380 (WOT)	44.9	112.8	0.40	150

* Performance and fuel consumption figures from the Boston Whaler website
WOT = wide open throttle

when offshore trolling. A dedicated fishing package is available with additional features.

VERADO POWER

A Mercury Verado supercharged in-line, six-cylinder, four-stroke provide the boat's motive power, and there's plenty of it. The engine is an upgrade from the more usual 225-250hp Verado options fitted to this boat, but the extra horses provide exhilarating performance, as well as superior fuel efficiency, according to Boston Whaler.

As always the big Verado was amazingly quiet and super-smooth. Sea conditions in the channel and an engine on its first run precluded full throttle operation, but the Verado felt strong: 40-knot-plus performance is a given. At 3000rpm we could plane through the worst of the chop; at 2500rpm the boat got along at 8 knots trolling speed and the fuel computer showed the most economical speed was 4000rpm/24 knots. The 420-litre polypropylene fuel tank gives better than a 220nm range at cruising speeds of between 18 and 30 knots.

TOWING

The Boston Whaler 230 Vantage is supplied on a tandem-axle, aluminium trailer fitted with Hydra-Star electro-hydraulic brakes working on both axles. It's a bunk-style trailer with a heavy-duty 2 5/16-inch coupling, submersible lights and a spare wheel with hub. All-up towing weight is 3.1-tonne dry, and with a beam of 2.7m, there are some minor towing restrictions.

CONCLUSION

A family-style bowrider, the 230 Vantage is built around a classic offshore-capable Boston Whaler Unibond hull, with convertible and fold-away seating, lots of integrated fishing, diving and watersports features, plus heaps of amenities and comforts for spending family time on the water. While there's no such thing as a true all-rounder, this boat comes close because it suits most types of power boating. ☑