



The Explorer Bluewater is based on a 21 deg high lift grp hull which incorporates a central plank that runs well forward.

BESPOKE RIB

The Explorer Bluewater 710 is one of three models in the Bluewater 700 series, which range from 7.1m to 7.8m and while all three are based on the same hull, the layouts and internal design can be very different.





Two different console options are available on the Bluewater 700 Series.



Inflated, the boat carries an extra wide 2.81m beam.



The raised bow along with the large diameter tubes set on broad flanges make this a very dry boat.



There are two different transom options.

Our Bluewater 710 was only the third boat from the mould, and while only one has been for recreational use, Explorer is keen to sell more into that market. Explorer likes to use the word bespoke, and it is very apt, considering when you talk to them about a Bluewater 700 series you start with a blank deck and build it from there. How you want the internal space configured is entirely up to you. Our boat was set up for a commercial whale watch/dive operation in Tonga, so the seating layout was designed to accommodate 10-12 passengers, hence the central bench seat design, open deck space and forward console. This is not something that would suit most recreational owners.

PLENTY OF OPTIONS

Explorer starts with a couple of different consoles. There is a larger and higher unit that provides plenty of storage space and protection. The downside is you lose some of your access to the bow due to its width. The smaller version as we had on the test boat was narrower and still allowed space for a Lowrance 5 Hook MFD, ICOM VHF, Yamaha controls, twin instruments and other accessories. There is a couple of deep storage lockers below the console, plus a moulded forward seat with soft cushion. To keep your cellphone and keys dry, there is also a waterproof glovebox. A Perspex screen helps divert the wind, and if you want to add drop



Power options are 150-200hp with our boat running a Yamaha 150.

down clears from the bimini, you can make the helm a very protected area. , and like the rest of the boat, variations of the design are also available. There is a variety of standard seating options from bin seats to bucket seats, and Explorer can supply just about any variant of seating you want. The self-draining cockpit can be finished in either anti-skid fibreglass or U-Deck flooring. There are two different transom options: a straight transom with no rear seats or aft decks or one with a couple of aft jump seats and twin decks. I would think the full transom with engine well, decks and rear seats would be the favoured option, and you also get the bonus of storage lockers

and somewhere to keep the batteries. If you do go for the flat transom, the engine will be set back further, and you have the bonus of more internal space. As this boat is to be used for diving, there were two Dixon boarding ladders, one on the port side aft deck, the other a tube mounted ladder. There was also a Tenob auxiliary outboard bracket on the starboard side. The Bluewater 710 comes standard with a traditional over bow anchoring system with a deep moulded self-draining anchor locker. However, there is the option of a drum winch and through-hull system, which can be operated from the helm.

QUICK AND AGILE

Power options are 150-200hp with our boat running a Yamaha 150. This gave a top speed of 41 knots and was ideally matched to the 750 kg RIB. Acceleration, as expected, was rapid and we reached max rpm very quickly. The flat centre plank and wide strakes help in getting the boat unstuck from the water.

On the calm water off Gulf Harbour, the Bluewater 710 sat very comfortably at around 5000 rpm @31.5 knots. You get the impression the bow is riding high, but the bullish front is quite deceiving. It's a boat I found required little trim and hangs tight in the turns with no sliding. At rest or underway it is also extremely stable. It would easily handle a bit more power, but it doesn't need it.

The Explorer Bluewater is based on a 21 deg high lift grp hull which incorporates a central plank that runs well forward. The raised bow along with the large diameter tubes set on broad flanges make this a very dry boat in both a head and following sea. The Orca 866 Hypalon tubes have a maximum 580mm diameter and come with safety ropes as well as heavy-duty wear covers. As the boat is going to be based in Tonga, where the temperatures can soar, pressure release valves have been fitted to the tubes. A variety of colour options are also available.

With the tubes rolled out a few degrees on the flange, the internal beam is increased to 1.65m. External beam is a generous 2.80m. The tubes are glued to the wide flange, and for extra wear resistance, there is a double layer of tape across the bow. The ply deck is glassed over, with all cavities doubling as buoyancy chambers, apart from a 210-litre polyethylene fuel tank aft.

SUMMARY

Since Andy Lamont brought Explorer Boats 12 months ago, he has done a lot of development on the model range, especially the jetboats (See PPB May-Jun 2019 issue) and he says he is pleased with what they have achieved in the short time.

"We have made several changes to our outboard RIB range, and while this will remain an important part of the market for us, it is the jet tenders that we see our future growth", says Andy. However, he adds that they still like to work with clients on the more customised designs, such as the Bluewater 710 for the Tongan based Sea Change Eco Retreat. (See Sidebar). With a couple of Bluewater 700 series already in the Pacific Islands and interest in more product, Explorer Boats are growing steadily on both the local and export fronts. ●



Owner Maria Cantrell in a perfectly timed photo framed by the fluke of a humpback whale. Photo by EJ of EJ's Encounters

Sea Change Eco Retreat is located on the remote island of Uoleva in the Kingdom of Tonga. Uoleva is part of the Ha'apai Island group located approximately 165 kms northeast of the main island of Tongatapu.

These are the very waters where the Mutiny on the Bounty started when they put Captain William Bligh in the dinghy (1789). Each year Humpback whales migrate to these same waters from Antarctica where pregnant females give birth to their young calves and raise them until they are old enough to make the journey back south. This takes place between July and October of each year. Sea Change operates whale swim encounter boats as Tonga is one of the few places in the world where you can see these creatures close up, and have the chance to interact with them guided by highly trained staff who ensure the whales are not disturbed. Staff from Sea Change will meet you at the local airport in Ha'apai (30 minute flight from the main island) and will take you to Uoleva Island in one of their boats - as this is the only way to get there.

Guests are accommodated in one of 6 beach facing fale, and the resort operates on solar power and rain water - truly off the grid. www.seachangetonga.com

SPECIFICATIONS

Model & Model:	Explorer Bluewater 710
Price as tested:	Centre Console
Priced from:	GRP (hull) & Hypalon (tubes)
Type:	(tubes)
Construction:	7.10 m 6.40 m
LOA:	2.81 m
LOH:	1.65 m
Beam (External)	21 deg
Beam (Internal)	
Deadrise:	
Trailerable weight:	900 kgs
Test Power:	Yamaha 150hp
Propeller:	Yamaha Reliance 17"
Power options:	Outboard Only
HP Range:	150-200 hp
Fuel Capacity:	210 litres
Trailer:	Hoskings
Manufacturer:	Explorer Boats Ph +64 9 412 2040 andy@explorerboats.co.nz www.explorerboats.co.nz

EXPLORER BLUEWATER 710

Fuel capacity:	210	litres		
RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range (NM)
1000	3.9	3.2	0.830	220
1500	5.6	5.1	0.920	200
2000	7.0	7.3	1.100	170
2500	9.5	10.1	1.100	170
3000	15.5	15	0.970	190
3500	21.0	20	0.960	190
4000	24.5	25	1.100	170
4500	28.5	32.4	1.200	150
5000	31.5	38.5	1.300	140
5500	35.0	48	1.400	130
6100	41.0	58.5	1.500	120

WHAT IT'S GOT