

**GRADY-WHITE
191 COASTAL EXPLORER**

BIG LITTLE BOAT

Grady-White's 191CE is the latest model in the inshore hybrid Coastal Explorer range from this renowned US boatbuilder. Kelly Dalling Fallon walks us through the reasoning that led her and husband Luke – a highly respected pro gameboat captain based in Cairns – to choose the 191 above all other contenders to be their 'big little boat' for their downtime gamefishing fun. They also explain how they set it up for billfishing ... and how it performs.

When you're a professional marlin captain running a custom-built 17-metre O'Brien gamefishing machine for a living, deciding on a small boat for fishing on your time off is no easy task! Fortunately, my husband Luke has a lot of experience with boats, which he drew on to whittle down the choices.

Owners usually want their boats to fulfil multiple purposes, and we are certainly no different – although for us, all purposes relate to fishing! Specifically, we were looking for a boat that would enable us to comfortably chase our two biggest loves: barramundi in the Gulf of Carpentaria on long-range camping trips, and billfish on the east coast on our days off from charter commitments.

We are also used to running a boat that looks so good it makes you feel good just being in it. Therefore, we were also looking for something with the same beautiful lines and impeccable finish that we are used to, as well as being purpose-built for fishing.

Comfort and ride on the water were also high on our priority list. Having driven Grady-White's in the past, Luke was already a fan, so by the time we hit the Sydney Boat Show in August, we'd pretty much already decided on our purchase.

In the end, for what we wanted, nothing else came close, so we partnered with Game and Leisure Boats to import the very first of the new Grady-White 191 Coastal Explorers to Australia.



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Rod storage around the console makes it easy to clear the trolling pattern rapidly following a hook-up.

COASTAL EXPLORER

The Grady-White Coastal Explorers were designed to fill the 'inshore hybrid' niche, specifically a range of inshore activities including both fishing and cruising. With a generous 2.49m beam, it is both roomy and seaworthy, yet still legally able to be towed on Australian roads, earning it the moniker a 'big little boat'.

The shape of the hull, reversed chines and lifting strakes make her a dry ride, keeping spray to a minimum. As plenty of past *BlueWater* Grady-White boat tests have highlighted, the SeaV2 hull rides soft and comfortably in all kinds of chop, easily performing above its size in a sea.

Luke is constantly amazed every time we go out in the boat how well she handles, which is saying a lot coming from someone who has professionally spent over 30 years at sea.

It also packs a lot of space and features into its 5.8m. There is ample room to walk and fight a fish, with 360-degrees around the console, as well as a huge front casting/lounging deck plus a smaller aft casting deck.

Dry storage is well catered for with a huge insulated area under the front casting deck. This also contains the anchor locker, which doubles as additional fishbox storage if required. There are also two dry removable rigging compartments beneath the rear deck on either side of the livebait tank, as well as within the console itself.

You'll also find plenty of other features that you wouldn't expect in a boat this size. It holds 40 litres of freshwater connected to an in-cockpit hose/shower, as well as a saltwater washdown, both great factory-installed optional extras for fishermen.

We opted for the factory-installed trolling motor set-up, which includes wiring for two 12v deep-cycle batteries and 24v charger, leaving us only needing to connect the Motorguide to the plug.

As you would expect from Grady-White, she is a very pretty boat, with the classic Carolina flare and raised sheer line. The boats come in a variety of optional gelcoat/paint colours, although we went with the standard Grady off-white, knowing we were going to wrap the boat. Blue LED cockpit lights complete the modern look.

SETTING UP FOR FISHING

For many aspects of the way we fish, she was the perfect boat as is. Being a coastal explorer, she is made for skinny water, with a very shallow draft that enables us to barra fish onto the tidal flats.

The addition of a 100-litre fuel bladder to the on board 200-litre capacity means we can now easily run up and down the coast to some of the more secluded rivers of the Gulf. A bow-mounted Motorguide electric motor completes the estuary set-up.

The same set-up takes us onto the coral reefs, where again the shallow draft helps us chase GTs and other reef brawlers. She is also the perfect dayboat when escaping to more remote systems in the far north using *KEKO*A as a mothership.

However, for serious billfishing we did need to make some simple, but key modifications to increase suitability and performance.

REFRIGERATION

First thing on the list was converting one of the two native livebait tanks – the under-seat tank forward of the console – to a fridge/freezer. The installation was easily achieved by Luke, who did the job himself using an Ozefridge 12v eutectic system.

When day-tripping, we find that the 68L cooler mounted under the console seat meets most of our needs. However, the addition of an extra 66L of fridge

Above main: Unobstructed vision in all directions makes it easy to spot the clues that lead you to fish.

"The shape of the hull, reversed chines and lifting strakes make her a dry ride."



Above: The helm is compact, but still sports a very functional array of Garmin fish-finding, navigation and communication electronics.

Above right: Together with slightly longer trolling rods, the use of Reelax Multi Mount Rod Riggers in the midships rodholders provides height for the outer lures, giving them better action and making it easy to clear the rod tips of the transom lines. Luke is also trolling a pair of dredge teasers on cord lines attached to the transom bollards.

Centre: Beneath the rear casting deck is a livebait tank and two removable dry storage compartments.

space allows us more flexibility to stay out overnight, anchoring behind the reef or camping on one of the many islands near established billfishing grounds.

The refrigeration also means we can replace food stores, once used, with take-home fish fillets.

ROD STORAGE

We added an additional four standing rodholders around the console. These help when clearing rods after a hook-up, and enable us to make use of the boat's greatest asset for fish fighting: the 360-degree walk-around.

When there are only two of us on board, having everything – including the gaff and tagpole – within reach on the console holders has proved very convenient.

OUTRIGGERS AND TROLLING

To keep the boat versatile, we didn't want to add permanent outrigger fittings that would get in the way of our other fishing exploits. For this reason, we went for the Reelax Multi Mount Rod Riggers (rodholder brackets), teamed with two ACM Custom Rods made specifically for the purpose and therefore slightly longer than normal.

We plan to install two more gunnel-mounted rodholders just shy of the rear casting deck, enabling us to run all four rods within easy reach of the console



and without having to step up onto the casting deck. One of the two aft rodholders will then be used to hold a downrigger on a pedestal base.

ELECTRONICS

Being Garmin ambassadors with a full system aboard *KEKOA*, the choice for electronics was easy. Two touchscreen units, the 7412 (30cm screen) and 7407 (18cm screen), were installed and linked to each other as well as to the Mercury Verado engine. This gives us the flexibility to view GPS, sounder, auto pilot, engine and trip data on either of the two screens.

Luke also mounted the Garmin GT51M transducer in the keel, rather than in the usual transom-mounting



"While travelling downsea, the Carolina flare of the bow comes into its own."



The low gunnels make reviving and releasing fish easy.

position as he believes this produces a more reliable bottom reading, as well as reducing shadowing from the engine on the side-scan.

The Garmin's side-scanning ability enables us to detect bait schools, structure and predators out to 150m each side, while also scanning 50m beneath the boat – which is a huge advantage when hunting for gamefish.

ENGINE

The choice of the Mercury Verado 175 over the standard Yamaha was based on personal preference. The 175 provides the perfect amount of horsepower, and the electric control and gauges interface easily with the Garmin units – something that Luke really wanted as it enables him to closely monitor the engine.

OCEAN FUNCTIONALITY

When billfishing we remove the back bar of the centre console seat rest so we can both sit forward for driving or backward to watch over the baits. We also take out the removable forward casting deck insert, which then enables us to use the entire 360-degree walk-around.

While trolling we can comfortably run four rods, plus two teasers (dredge and daisychain) and have a livebait ready to pitch without feeling overcrowded.

Trolling is stable and dry. The low gunnel height doesn't cause problems as the hull comfortably rides over the sea. The console seat puts you in prime position to watch over the baits, and is within a step of every rod.

When running into a sea the hull performs perfectly, cutting through any chop and residual swell. The planning strakes and chines do their job to keep us dry. The same applies when running across sea, with the wide beam providing a sure-footed, stable ride.

While travelling downsea, the Carolina flare of the bow comes into its own, parting the waves for a smooth passage. It does nothing untoward down the wave face, giving you confidence for the run home when the weather turns rough during the day.

So far we've only found one downside to the hull design. While the lower gunnels are great for estuary fishing and don't really pose any problem when fighting fish at sea (since we can brace against the higher console), the lack of anywhere to tuck your toes in can be off-putting when you're used to it in smaller boats.

Overall, we love the boat! The build-quality and performance everything we had hoped for from Grady-White. If anything, it has exceeded our expectations. 🐟

HIGHLIGHTS

- A soft, dry ride.
- High-quality workmanship throughout.
- Versatile fishability – both inshore and offshore.
- Smooth electric control with the Mercury Verado.
- Freshwater shower and saltwater deckwash.
- Beam complies with Australian road rules.

< SPEC CHECK

GRADY-WHITE 191 COASTAL EXPLORER

PERFORMANCE

RPM	Knots	L/hr	L/NM
1450 (trolling)	5.3	3.75	0.7
3200	15.5	14	0.9
3500	19	16.5	0.88
3600	20	17.8	0.89
3800	22.5	19.5	0.87
4000	24	21.4	0.88
4200	26	24.4	0.94
4400	28	27	0.99
4500	28.4	29	1.05
4600	28.9	30	1.05
5000	32	38	1.2
5500	35	50	1.4
6000 (wide open)	40	67	1.7

OPTIONS FITTED

- Full set of cushion infills for all seats and casting decks.
- 175hp Mercury Verado with electric controls.
- Water tank with shower and saltwater deckwash.
- Tandem-axle aluminium trailer with electric hydraulic brakes.
- Garmin 7412 and 7407 Chartplotter with CHIRP sounder and side-scan running through a Garmin GT51M transducer.
- Garmin GHP compact reactor autopilot.
- Garmin 200i VHF radio.
- 80lb 24-volt Motorguide electric trolling motor.
- 2 fully plumbed livebait tanks, the forward tank converted to a fridge/freezer with an Ozefridge 12v eutectic system.
- Custom wrap designed by owner using Pelagic Gear graphic designs with permission.
- Full travel cover.

GENERAL

Hull Type: Mono Grady-White SeaV2 hull
 Material: GRP
 Length overall centre line: 5.89m
 Beam: 2.49m
 Depth: 0.4m
 Deadrise: 14.5-degree SeaV2 progression
 Hull weight: 1070kg (without engine)

CAPACITIES

Max power: 200hp Water: 38 litres
 Fuel: 197 litres People: 8

ENGINE

Make/model: Mercury Verado 175
 Type: Inline 4-cylinder super-charged 4-stroke
 Rated HP: 175
 Displacement: 1.7 litres
 No. cylinders: 4
 Weight: 231kg
 Shaft length: Extra-long – 635mm
 Gearbox ratio: 2.08:1