

TOP CLASS

This stylish US high performing dual console shows why it's Grady-White's top seller, that ticks all the boxes.



This is a boat that takes rough water for granted.

While bow riders have always been popular in big continental countries, like Australia and the US, they have generally been less so in New Zealand's rather less settled conditions. Their lack of protection when the wind kicks up and the fact they have often feature shallower vee hulls (again, not ideal if things turn nasty) have limited their appeal. So too has their fit-out. In a land where the main motivation for buying a trailerboat is to go fishing, they were usually set up primarily for lounging.

While the new Grady-White Freedom 275 certainly has plenty of space in which to lounge comfortably, there is also no shortage of room (or fixtures) for those keen on catching fish. There is a live bait tank, integral fish bins for bait or the catch, rod holders in all the right places, bolsters and toe kicks along the cockpit sides

and across the transom (for fighting big fish) and even secure "hidden" stowage for those precious rods.

There is also no shortage of protection from elements. In fact, in many ways, the Freedom 275 doesn't even look like a traditional bow rider. Its centrally-mounted dual console towers high above the deck and, thanks to its Vista bimini top and tight clears front and sides, the protection it offers is as good as that found under a traditional hardtop.

And, if lounging around doing very little is your thing, there is a fully appointed bow section with comfortable seating, backrests and drink holders close at hand and, in the cockpit, an electromechanically extendable lounge seat along with a traditional Grady-White foldaway transom bench seat.

As one would expect from a marque that has won more customer satisfaction surveys than any other, the Freedom 275 is not only beautifully presented but is obviously solidly built as well.



The twin Yamaha 200s were amazingly responsive, especially in the mid-range.

Powered by twin Yamaha F200 four-strokes, this solid GRP 8.5-metre vessel can carry almost 700 litres of fuel and boasts a trailerable weight of 3100kgs.

The Freedom's high level of appointment starts at the transom with an integral dual engine flush and a stylish retractable swim ladder. The solid transom incorporates not only that transom bench seat but also a 112-litre livebait tank, a 156-litre insulated icebox and a cockpit shower in the coamings, connected to a 75-litre freshwater tank. A special moulding in the centre of the transom can accommodate either a ski pole or a baitboard with additional rod holders.

The batteries (two starting and one house) are all gel and come with both an isolating switch and a trickle charger to ensure they are always ready to go and in the best possible condition.

While, in fishing mode, the cockpit is reasonably spartan with just a single aft-facing seat to port, once safely at anchor in a sheltered bay, it is a rather different story. When full-on relaxing is the order of the day, that port seat extends further aft (using electro-mechanical power), transforming into a supremely comfortable day bed. If a snack or something more substantial is required, the lounger can retract, the transom seat come out and a cockpit table be placed into its base in the floor, creating a delightful little dinette.

UNDER COVER

In the enclosed dual console area of the Fisherman 275, it is hard to imagine that one is actually on a bow rider. Not only is one almost completely insulated from the weather (whatever it is) outside, the level of appointment is of the sort more usually found on a small cruiser.

The passenger side is also quite unlike most other vessels of this size. The crew seat is actually a double bench seat, complete with a single large footrest. Forward of this is the Fusion control unit, some small, open stowage areas and a large module containing a good-sized door that leads down to the head. Set down into the hull, in an area that would possibly otherwise not be used, this is a little more than spacious than one would expect. In true Grady-White fashion, it is also better appointed. There is an elegant timber framed mirror on the inside of the door, a timber floor, handy shelves and even an enclosed toilet roll holder. The head itself is of the Jabsco electric variety and is connected to a holding tank. In another bit of Grady-White cleverness, the front bulkhead has a hatch that, when opened, reveals a rod holding bracket with room for three rods and access into the area below the port bow seat. Given that the door above is lockable, this is a very secure "out-of-sight" space in which to stow the ship's most valuable armoury.

The helm station features a variable pedestal captain's chair and a stylish, well-appointed dash. In pride of place is the 16" Garmin MFD linked to a 7" Yamaha Command Link panel. There is also a biggish Grady-White DC panel (as usual, with the toggle switches arranged in order of importance and likely frequency of use).

Above is the standard Grady-White hanging net (for easy access to the boat's lifejackets) and a LED "triple" light (capable of emitting white, red or blue light). Dividing the bow from the rest of the 275 is a GRP half door and the centre section of the clears. With these open, access forward is completely unimpeded even for us larger fellows.



The bow, like the rest of the vessel, is extremely comfortable with thick contoured squabs against the sides and front and padded sloping backrests against the console. There is provision for that easy-fit table from the cockpit to reposition here, there are speakers and drink holders galore and an insulated icebox under the starboard seat.

At the apex of the bow there is a substantial anchor and rode locker housing a Lewmar windlass, through-stem anchoring and a large cleat which, like all the fittings on board, is top-of-the-line marine grade stainless steel.

While the Vista bimini top seems to be an integral part of the boat, it is actually only one of three options available. The others are an open or a hard top (the latter able to be either three- or four-sided). Without having viewed the others it is hard to be sure but, from I see, the Freedom 275's owner has made the right choice. For a start, the numerous clear panels allow him to choose exactly how much protection he wants and where (and quickly make alterations if the weather changes). The strong curved support structure is also ruggedly stylish, adding to the manly appeal of the boat. It also contains another two rod holders per side, perfectly positioned for dragging baits or lures. Finally, a clever cockpit shade, employed by simply winding a handle, can be extended aft from its home above the bimini to cover as much or as little of the cockpit as the owner wishes.

LOADS OF FUN

The sheer joy that these vessels from North Carolina are to drive should not come as a surprise but it is always does. There is something about the combination of the Grady-White's SeaV2 hull, the hand laid solid GRP construction and the usually generous amounts of horsepower bolted on to their transoms that makes these boats perform in a way that cannot fail to put a smile on one's face. They get quickly onto the plane, sit solidly in the water when there and twist and turn like jet boat on a steroids.

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The helm station features a variable pedestal captain's chair and a stylish, well-appointed dash.

A large port side module contains a good-sized door that leads down to the head.

In the enclosed dual console area it is hard to imagine that one is actually on a bow rider.

The bow, like the rest of the vessel, is extremely comfortable with thick contoured squabs.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model & Model:	Grady-White Freedom 275 Dual Console Bowrider
Type:	Luxury Bowrider
Construction: LOA:	GRP Fibreglass
Beam:	8.5m
Deadrise: Height	2.59m
on trailer:	18.9 degrees SeaV2 Progression 3.45m
Trailerable weight:	3100kgs
Test Power:	Yamaha F200hp 4 Stroke
Propeller: Power options: HP Range	14-1/4" x 18 Reliance SDS Outboard Twin F150, F200 or F250
Fuel Capacity:	696 ltrs
Trailer:	Magic Tilt, USA
Contact:	Grady-White Boats New Zealand, 12-14 The Marina, Tairua, 0275-365346 marineimports@xtra.co.nz www.gradywhite.co.nz www.gradywhite.com

FUEL & PERFORMANCE DATA

Fuel capacity: 696 litres

RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range(NM)
1000	4.3	6.05	1.500	410
1500	6.5	10.2	1.600	390
2000	7.6	17	2.300	270
2500	10.5	24.6	2.400	260
3000	16.5	33.5	2.100	290
3500	22.8	42.4	1.900	320
4000	28.0	56	2.000	310
4500	32.5	69.6	2.200	280
5000	36.2	98.5	2.800	220
5500	41.0	128.7	3.200	190
6000	43.0	147.2	3.500	170

The port side seating can be converted to a full-size lounger.

The hardtop with clears offers plenty of weather protection.



While blasting across the waters off Tairua and Pauanui, at speeds up to 43 knots, it was hard to imagine I was piloting a three-tonne-plus machine. Its twin Yamaha 200hp four-stroke outboards, swinging 14½" x 18 Reliance SDS propellers, were amazing responsive, especially in the mid range. Cruise along comfortably at 4000rpm doing 28 knots and bump the throttles up to 4500rpm and the speed climbs almost instantly to 32.5 knots. It's basically the same anywhere between 3000 and 5500 revs: a 500rpm increase gives an additional 4½ - 5 knots, sometimes more.

Need to throw the boat into a high speed turn to avoid something in the water (or just because it's fun) and around it goes: tightly, predictably and without even a hint of slippage or digging in. It is easy to imagine the 275 heading out for a quick fish to a nearby spot and still being underway 20, 30 or 40 miles later. It is the sort of boat that makes you want to keep heading out, not turning for home.

And, pretty clearly, I'm not the only one to feel that way. The Freedom's owner racked up over 40 hours in just his first month. And his smile on the day of our review was still just as wide as mine.

He tells me he had previously owned a bow rider but, when he bought his house in the nearby waterways, decided he wanted something more substantial. He wanted a solid sea boat. Not a big boat, a day boat that was well presented and "plain" — "compared to most US boats" that he finds too glitzy.

He first saw the Freedom 275 and met Stuart Arnold, owner of New Zealand Grady-White distributor Marine Imports, at Stuart's base on the Tairua Marina.

"It took me two minutes to make up my mind," he says. ☺