



STORY & PHOTOS
NORMAN HOLZTHAUSEN

Senator RH780 Pontoon HT

EVERGREEN PERFORMER, STILL GOING STRONG

The primary reason many people choose pontoon boats is unsinkability, and the Senator RH780 has this to spare. Five separate compartments provide something like 800kg of reserve buoyancy and will keep it upright and stable if it ever got swamped.

The RH780 we tested has another reliability ace up its sleeve: twin Suzuki DF175 four-stroke outboards. The peace of mind from having two power plants should not be underestimated.

The RH780's 2.7m beam is slightly wider than the legal 2.5m width, meaning flags and an over-width towing permit are required.

However, in return you get more cockpit space than is normal for a boat of almost 8m overall length. This extra space means that a number of customisations

are possible, including an extended cabin.

The boat we tested has the standard cabin layout, with two full-length bunks in the forward cabin. The main cabin features skipper and passenger seats, with the forward-facing ones swivel types and fully upholstered. The fixed rear-facing seats each hide a cavernous storage locker, with the space to install a gas cooker or sink within if the boat is used for extended trips.

The dash is fully carpeted and features a 12in Raymarine touchscreen chartplotter-fishfinder, complemented by digital gauges for the Suzukis, a VHF radio, FUSION sound system and controls for the windlass. Electronic controls for the motors give light and precise control, while hydraulic steering is necessary for the effort of turning two outboards.

Our test boat had been customised as a serious fishing boat, including a clay pot hauler, and dozens of rodholders scattered around on the rocket launcher, gunwales and guardrails.

The large cockpit area has a tread-plate floor and double parcel shelves along both sides. The internal beam is wider than most pontoon boats which means heaps of uncluttered space in the cockpit – a benefit when the fishing is intense.

Twin-motors are diver-friendly, with a walkthrough transom door between. The two Suzukis are fairly wide apart, allowing a generous boarding ladder that locks upright as a safety rail for someone fishing there.

The livebait tank located under the floor of the stern platform between the engines is genius. This self-fills at rest, with a pump to keep it fresh underway.

The boat handles big seas well and even coming off a big swell, the rigid hull gave a relatively quiet landing. The well-suited Suzuki 175s proved capable of planing on one motor alone – we managed 24kt on just one.

The Senator RH780 should top the list for anyone after a serious and safe fishing machine. The solid hull will take on the biggest seas while twin engines provide peace of mind. ■

quick specs

Senator RH780 Pontoon HT

PRICED FROM \$134,500
MATERIAL Aluminium alloy (6mm hull, 3mm pontoons and sides, 4mm cabin)
TYPE Planing monohull
LENGTH 7.97m overall, 7.31m hull
BEAM 2.7m
ENGINE 2 x Suzuki DF175
RATED HP 175 (each)
FUEL 280lt
FOR MORE INFO
senatorboats.com