

# Sonata 7



**PAYNE:** This boat is much more the roomy cruising boat than the "racing" type of trailer-sailer. There is considerable emphasis on accommodation space, and, taking this into consideration, it is really remarkable how well the boat sails. All the proportions of the boat seem well chosen, and stability and helm balance seemed about average when compared to the other boats. The rig was very simple and quite suited to the sailor who's not much interested in the finer points of sail setting and trimming. Altogether a boat for people who want cabin amenities and easy sailing.

As a trailer-sailer for cruising, the Sonata deserves more attention than might be supposed from reading my rather flat comments. I must admit to being more interested in the sailing qualities of a boat than I am in the livability of the accommodation, and I ought to point out that the Sonata has a lot of space, and although heavy on the road, is not difficult to launch and recover.

If one were planning to spend some long time (say, a four week holiday) living aboard, the Sonata could be the best boat. And the sailing qualities are sufficiently interesting for the boats to race as a class in Sydney.

The masthead rig is worth noting for the cruiser, too, because, even though tacking with the big headsail may be a little bothersome, lowering it produces an instant large reduction of sail. For an owner with a really unskilled crew, this set-up could be much better than trying to jiff reef a 3/4 or 7/8 rig.

**WEBSTER:** The Sonata 7 is far and away the bulkiest yacht in this Rally, and one of the heaviest. It arrived on a tandem trailer, fitted with a power winch behind a four wheel drive vehicle — and that's the sort of combination you would need to consider if cruising in the Sonata 7 was to be a practical family proposition.

From a trailing viewpoint, an inertia launch is required, unless the trailer is particularly well set up and greased. There are no protrusions under the keel so the Sonata is simply drawn up on to the trailer. But without guide bars on the trailer, one could imagine the Sonata could be a handful in some poor launch ramp situations unless the crew knew what they were about.

Going down below, one word describes it; spacious! There is virtually full standing headroom. There are huge berths everywhere, providing a total accommodation of between 5-6 adults. There's room to move about, no feeling of claustrophobia, and the dinette is nearly big enough for 4 adults. Without folding down the dinette there are berths for at least four in comfort, with two more bunking down on the dinette if needs be.

The galley consists of the usual two burner spirit stove, a poorly designed ice chest arrangement (without drain, too) and a toilet that is either under, or not under, the berth according to your particular taste and inclination. This is quite a good arrangement in the Sonata, being one of the best compromises between privacy and the efficient use of space we've seen.

In the cockpit, the Sonata 7 has slightly less space than some of the other yachts, a trade off from the very large and comfortable cabin. The pop top is strong and well built providing easy access down the companionway. The mainsheet runs across the cockpit, but does not intrude quite as much as one would first think. The outboard auxiliary is mounted on a bracket (awful) on the transom, and we noted with interest that the 7.5hp Johnson gave the Sonata real motor-sailing capacity, with performance around 6 knots. A boarding ladder was fitted to the transom — something that is absolutely vital in a craft of this size.

To sum up the Sonata 7; it is easily the most comfortable cruising yacht below decks, and providing the tow vehicle was big enough, is relatively easy to handle on and off the trailer, particularly if it is fitted with a power winch. With these qualifications, the Sonata 7 is another yacht nearing the top of the list.

**DAVIDSON:** The Sonata 7 makes few pretensions to being a sailing man's boat. Rather it is a (very) comfortable floating weekender that will transport you without having to listen to an engine. The boat has a distinct "big" feel about it, rather like a cruising yacht. It chortles along all right, but even when it's going fast, it feels sluggish. The sailing gear in its supplied form is fairly basic; the headsail winches are too far away from the helm, the tiller is too short and the boat has a vicious weather helm when hard on a breeze. If you let it go, it rounds up so fast you wonder what hit you. On the credit side, the boat is quite stable and not skittish. It definitely needs a longer tiller, though, and I see no reason in terms of cockpit space why it shouldn't have one.

The finish on the big Sonata is good. The on-deck arrangements are OK and the cockpit big and comfortable. Considering its prime role as a family cruising boat, the outboard could have been located more conveniently than on a transom-hung bracket. Below, the boat is so big you blink and wonder whether you've accidentally stumbled into a caravan. There is plenty of teak trim and the centreboard is tucked out of the way, with its controlling winch under the companionway and easy to get at.

## SONATA 7:

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