



The Whittley CR2600 is more than just a floating caravan on wheels — it's a five star motel! There's no age limit to this boat, says John "The Bear" Willis, because great design is timeless.

MAGIC HAPPENS

**WEATHER
CONDITIONS**

Wind: Light
Sea: Calm

I've been a little critical of some Whittley cruisers in the past, since I often found them poky. However, the CR2600 is about large sea decks, open cockpits, big comfortable lounges, innovative convertible berths, a spacious bathroom, useable galley space, and plenty of headroom for us big fellas.

This boat's attractive, Euro-style cabin is a masterpiece. CAD-CAM modelling of the package has delivered maximum use of space while experience has supported the layout with efficient bow design and an effortless anchor winch. I loved the fold-out bow ladder that came in handy when pulled in to a sandy beach, while the sliding sunroof is a welcome addition since a full cabin-boat can become a sauna without good ventilation.

The sunroof also allows unhindered

vision for navigating in low light conditions, simply by standing up. The rooftop has a convertible "pack rack" for storing fishing gear, ski tubes or even a Whittley inflatable tender, and there's a sliding rear awning for added protection on sunny days.

From bow to stern the CR2600 is smattered with inbuilt features. Our test model had everything from a Fusion flat screen television to a kitchen sink. The V-berth has plenty of room for indoor entertaining, perhaps with a scrumptious meal of freshly caught fish, washed down with a chilled Sav Blanc from the 12V fridge. There's a dinette that quickly converts to a large double berth, with the table top becoming the bunk infill.

The people at Whittley have really used their brains on this one. For example, the upholstered backrests are detachable and double up as mattress inserts. Good thinking, eh? Whittley also offers its customers a range of customised Manchester to match the designer interior.

The CR2600 has a washroom that's quite large for a pocket cruiser. It has a marine toilet, a small vanity and even a shaving cabinet. Lighting throughout the boat is excellent thanks to a Perspex skylight, side windows, and downlights for the evenings. The lockable, sliding cabin door is also one of the best on the market — thank God local designs allow ample headroom and big doorways for tall blokes.

THE COCKPIT

It's quite a step up into the helm and passenger seats. However, once you're in position you feel like the King of the world. The large step is there to accommodate a 12V freezer, situated under the floor-panel on the driver's side, as well as a cool storage area with drop-in basket under the passenger. In addition, a portable Esky is inconspicuously housed under the passenger module.

I'd add an optional depthsounder/GPS/plotter unit to the ample dash

TRAILERBOAT RATES THE WHITTLEY CR2600 CRUISER

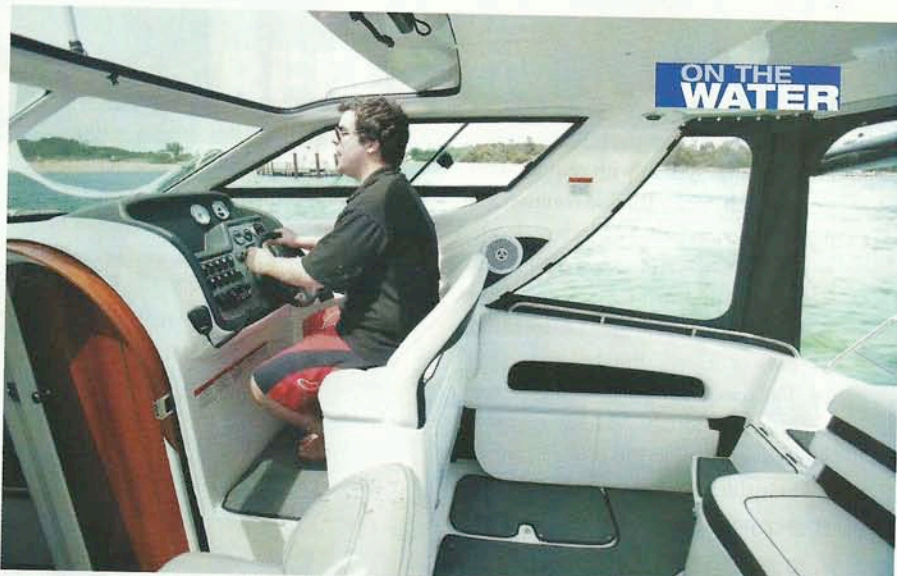
1 Fun factor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3 Design and layout	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Quality of finish	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Handling and ride	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6 Stability at rest	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7 Ergonomics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8 Standard equipment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9 Value for money	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10 X-Factor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OVERALL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



PERFORMANCE

18kts (33.2kmh) @ 3250rpm (starting to trim)
23kts (42.6kmh) @ 3500rpm
(up and running and starting to trim out)
27.5kts (50.8kmh) @ 4000rpm (big Vee hull is
up and running, steering feels great)
31kts (57.3kmh) @ 4500rpm
(a little touch of torque lean but really opening
up and going fast)
35.4kts (65.6kmh) @ 5000rpm WOT (really
loves to run although just a little noisy)

ON THE
WATER



Top right: All around visibility from the comfortable, attractive helm is good and so is access to controls and instruments. You can actually stand up at the high-mount helm and steer the boat through the sunroof. After all, one of the nice things about boating is feeling a warm breeze in your hair (assuming you have any).

Right: The cabin is a tasteful blend of light teak veneer, upholstered cushions, attractive fabrics, padded liners, plush carpeted floor and brushed stainless fittings. The galley surfaces are a light granite laminate, with a stainless steel sink, tapware and an Origo single-burner stove. The cupboards have black reflective acrylic doors and there's a large enclosed shelf for nick-knacks.

Bottom right: The "L" shaped rear lounge is just the place to wile away the hours in total comfort. It starts from the rear of the passenger module as a "Chez" lounge and continues around to a fold-down access step on the starboard side of the transom. More seating is available with a fold-up section on the starboard side, and the table is easily assembled for social cruising or just brekkie.

Left: Time to light the barbeque. Young or old, family or singles, male or female — everyone will love this comfy lifestyle machine.



On the plane...

- ✓ Beautiful Euro-style design
- ✓ Compact yet spacious layout
- ✓ Premium accessories and fittings
- ✓ First class workmanship
- ✓ Good anchoring
- ✓ Great fun

Dragging the chain...

- ✗ A little noisy at high revs
- ✗ Bazz can't afford one



space, but the Volvo gauges, thumping Fusion sound system with remote, key start, switch panel, Ritchie compass and digital function meter including depth are all standard. Trim tab controls are well-placed on the side-moulding near the flush-mounted engine controls, and of course a driver's drinkholder is close by. The fixed helm and passenger's seat are quite comfortable and the rear of the driver's console has the liquor cabinet/bar.

The swim platform is the ultimate staging point, offering safe and secure

water access via the fold-out ladder. It's rather large, but it works with the boat very well. There's room for several people at a time, all safely retained by the stainless steel enclosure. There's even a place to park your bum on the upholstered top of the transom. This hides one of the wet-storage boxes, while another is in a boarding platform that's ideal for wetsuits, boat shoes and so on. The Volvo Duo Prop leg is also situated well-under the platform for added security when boarding. **L**



LET'S DRIVE IT

No, let's drive it *hard*.

You get exactly what you ask for when you throw the throttle down — immediate power. The big girl jumps straight to attention, with only limited bow rise for a long 19° hull. The ride is a vast improvement over many earlier Whittley models, making the boat quite capable of longer trips through larger estuary systems or perhaps some limited coastal cruising. A similar Whittley completed the arduous Hobart to Melbourne Offshore Challenge, and others have competed in similar ocean voyages around the country. Whittley has gone to great lengths to develop new hulls that provide a combination of soft ride and stability while still providing that “wow” factor.

When you want to have some fun, the manoeuvrability is thrilling for such a big pocket cruiser, although I suspect a big crosswind may be a bit of a problem due to the high centre of gravity. However, the trim tabs will keep her on an even keel even when the party kicks off and the crew starts to rock. For those who need to burn off youthful energy, this versatile all-rounder is more than capable of some social ski and wakeboarding, broadening its appeal even further.

The CR2600 cruises really well at 31kts (57.3kmh) and an economical 4500rpm, and when you really give it to her she responds quickly with a WOT of 35.4kts (65.6kmh) at 5000rpm with Volvo Penta F3 stainless propellers. The noise levels are generally quite low for a full-bodied cruiser, and the engine-bay has been sound-deadened with acoustic material. However, noise levels rise with a pleasing V8 growl when you peak her out at high revs.

The Whittley team likes to call the CR2600 “Australia’s best three tonner” on account of the fact that — when packaged with the standard Whittley alloy-trailer — the gross weight is within the towing reach of many mid-range vehicles commonly driven by tradesmen; Holden Colorado or Mazda BT-50 4WDs for example.

Buyers should carefully check specifications because she is at the upper end of towing limits. I would personally prefer to see it behind a larger 4WD vehicle like a Toyota LandCruiser. The package is within the maximum 2.5m towing width so wide load regulations do not apply. On the water, your only limit is the 200lt fuel tank.

WHITTLEY CR2600

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: Approx. \$30,000
 Options fitted: Battery management system and charger, third battery, B&B, built-in, cocktail cabinet, slideout sun shading, helm, Wyback cleats, bow ladder, deck mats, and marine board carpets, spotlight, swim platform, side windscreen wiper, cabin fan, main and tank, VHF upgrade, cocktail cabinet, screens, flyscreens, Esky to fridge, fusebox upgrade, full Whittley bedding package.
 Priced from: \$20,000

GENERAL

Type: Day-cruiser
 Material: Fibreglass
 Length (LOA): 6.5m
 Beam: 2.5m
 Weight (standard BWT package): 2,600kg
 Deadweight: 200kg

CAPACITIES

Foot: 10
 Rec. max. HP: 150

ENGINE

Make/model: Volvo Penta F3
 Rated HP: 150
 Displacement: 2.6L
 Stern-drive: Volvo Penta IPS 300
 Weight (engine and drive): 150kg
 Gearbox ratio: 1.85:1
 Propeller(s): Volvo Penta F3 (stainless prop)

MANUFACTURED & SUPPLIED BY

Whittley Marine Group
 99 Freight Drive
 Somerton, Vic. 3062
 Tel: (03) 8339 1800
 Web: www.whittlymarine.com

TO OWN THIS BOAT

Price as tested: \$30,000
 Weekly Repayment TBP: \$500
 Deposit: \$4,000
 Final Repayment (P+I): \$48,000
 Term (months): 60

* Customer rate is 9.53% comparative rate is 9.94% for all of the above payments. See of magazine for conditions



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