

Hunter Of Hauraki

ULTIMATE CHARTERS

NEW BOAT

We had been out with Auckland based Ultimate Charters before, to enjoy a day chasing spring workups and we had a top day, so we had vowed to head out again with them.

BY MATHEW HEWETSON



The big 915 Walkaround Extreme is an impressive charter boat with twin Mercury 225hp SeaPros that can venture out wide in the Hauraki. Photo: Simon Brady

ULTIMATE CHARTERS

The cabin is roomy and comfortable for customers as we leave Westhaven at dawn with calm conditions.



The opportunity came recently to go in their new boat 'Hunter.' This 915 Walkaround Extreme is sister to 'Gatherer' which is a 795 Walkaround, both boats had been commissioned in 2021

to replace aging boats in their fleet.

The 915 Walkaround had upgraded 8mm hull/sides and was fitted with twin 225hp Mercury SeaPro V8 outboards with active trim for improved fuel efficiency. This is important with multiple skippers operating multiple boats and it helps the business with ongoing fuel price increases. The V8 SeaPro outboards also feature a heavy-duty gearcase that is validated at three times the lifespan of recreational gearcases to help decrease the workload on the engine. While Advanced Range Optimization (ARO) and closed-loop fuel control on the V8 outboards precisely adjust the fuel mixture for optimal fuel economy.

CUSTOMISED BOAT

Hunter had additional customisations in addition to the 8mm upgrade, including more seating in the cabin, with a second live bait tank fitted, a forward underfloor fish bin with bilge pump (as the boat sleeps in the water with no option to drain via a bung) and

manual whale bilge, additional internal hand holds, extra rod holders fitted on the bow platform for stickbaiting and softbaiting off the front, increased bow rail height for anglers, a fuel sensor, additional battery upgrades for survey, with forward cabin decamp paint for further noise reduction.



The sea state was vastly different off Waiheke into the Firth with a strong 15 knot+ southerly making for sloppy conditions, but the boat handled this superbly.

Fishing off the bow is a real bonus with this charter boat as Mike hooks up again.



The writer scored a good fish on a 120gm Bruised Banana Fish Finger around dolphin and gannet workups.



The Extreme is also decked out in full SeaDek from head to toe including the large roof, a Simrad package including Simrad NSSEVO3, RS40-B Radio and Halo 24 radar, with Precision-9 Heading compass for improved performance when at speed.

We had tried to get out in early February but with constant 20 knot easterlies and storms, it was proving difficult so on the third go our crew of five finally met up on a Tuesday after Cyclone Cody had passed. Conditions were forecast for light 6-7 knots and calm seas as we set off with from Westhaven to head out from Waiheke and look for the anchovy schools that had turned up in force in the Hauraki.

Cruising out at speed past Auckland's islands and between Waiheke and the mainland, we were soon in for a shock as the weather changed quickly with a strong 15+ knot southerly rising and whipping up the sea and creating a real slop. We could see plenty of terns working on the surface as skipper Mike approached to position us ahead of the drift and the Simrad screen showed good schools of baitfish with larger fish below.

On the way over the sun came out and the wind dropped to almost nothing and we were greeted with gannets diving into dolphins working on the surface. Happy days!

Cam hooks up on a snapper using a Slider under the bait schools.



HUNGRY FISH

Although the conditions were far from pleasant as forecasted and we were the only boat seen for miles, the big walkaround provided a great platform as we set to work pulling up pannie after pannie. The snapper were super hungry, hitting our jigs on every drop and the bite time was quite amazing as it never stopped all morning.

Many of the smaller fish were released unharmed and the skipper decided to head further over to the Coromandel side near the Black Rocks as the wind was finally starting to abate around 11am. On the way over the sun came out and the wind dropped to almost nothing and we were greeted with gannets diving into dolphins working on the surface. Happy days!

These larger workups had bigger fish under them and in no time, we soon had the 160L Ikey-Tek bin full of snapper and covered in salt ice just after midday.



Warren brings up another pannie on a jig as the weather changed to the forecasted better conditions.



Skipper Mike was busy looking after the crew and did a top job.

BELOW: The V8 225hp SeaPros offer outstanding fuel economy and power, Hunter can hit top speeds of around 50 knots!

Skipper Mike had been busy all day putting us onto fish, clearing fish off lines, and dispatching them into the bin. He was everywhere and immensely helpful, while owner Simon Brady who had joined us was jumping into the water to take photos and video on his GoPro of all the action.

It was 1pm when we decided to head back in with job done and the weather out was stunning, showing us what a normal February in summer should be like. Hunter had proven to be an amazingly comfortable charter boat to fish from, with key points being the massive room for up to seven anglers to enjoy, the impressive V8 SeaPros are fast and incredibly quiet, and I loved that you could get up to the front to cast your lures out. The boat in those earlier challenging conditions was also excellent as you didn't notice how bad it was due to the size and seaworthiness of the 9.15m vessel. Hunter is right up there as one of the best charter boats I have been fortunate to fish off, and it will prove to be a popular boat for Ultimate Charters fleet. **FIGZ**

Key Specs

915 WALKAROUND EXTREME

- + Overall Length: 9.15m
- + Beam: 2.80m
- + Standard transom and hull thickness: 6.00mm
- + Side and deck thickness: 4.00mm
- + Deadrise: 20.0°
- + Recommended outboard: 300 – 450 hp
- + Standard fuel tank size: 450L
- + Height on trailer (including rod holders): 3.20m
- + Width on trailer: 2.80m
- + Rated for 8 people

MERCURY 225HP SEAPRO

- + HP / kW: 225 / 168
- + Engine: V-8
- + Displacement (L): 4.6L
- + Full Throttle RPM: 4800 – 5600
- + Weight: 239kg

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