



Days Out is a McLay 1100, well-appointed for day charter fishing trips in particular due to its large cockpit.

BAY OF ISLANDS FISHING

NOT A BAD WAY TO SPEND A DAY OUT

In times where charter boat operations are shutting down all over the country, it's great to find someone who is prepared to invest back into the industry.

This is the case for experienced charter skipper Darren Knapping and his business partner Kerry Muir – former owner of Manson Engineering, manufacturers of internationally renowned Manson anchors – to put a McLay 1100 Walk Round into survey.

Licensed for ten passengers and one crew, the alloy-constructed *Days Out* can fish that number due to her walk-around decks with appropriately placed rod holders and bait boards. The layout features a substantial working space aft where there

are two tuna tubes and an XOS livebait tank, along with a sink set into the stern area. More fishing space is created at the stern via an extended and caged boarding platform, accessed through two transom doors to port and starboard. Two dive ladders have been incorporated in the boarding platform rails.

Days Out is game-rigged with Ocean Blue bases and, as mentioned, tuna tubes and a livebait tank. Handling a billfish at the transom would be easy with the uncluttered boarding platform.

Cold storage comes courtesy of a decent-sized Icy-Tek bin.

There are three underfloor areas in the cockpit sole for stowage of essentials. Darren says they intend to insulate and refrigerate two of these during the off-season to create slurry bins that ensure the catch is kept in pristine order.

Two final features of the cockpit are a central raised stowage area with an upholstered top which doubles as seating for passengers; and an extendible bimini that provides some shade over the fishing area as well as somewhere to seek a little shelter from the elements. The engine box is raised only a few centimetres above deck level, and does not impede on



From left: Stuart Hill with his 'poisonous' john dory; Marty Johanson (left) and skipper Darren Knapping with one of the better snapper.

“DAYS OUT IS GAME-RIGGED WITH OCEAN BLUE BASES, TUNA TUBES AND A LIVEBAIT TANK. HANDLING A BILLFISH AT THE TRANSOM WOULD BE EASY WITH THE UNCLUTTERED BOARDING PLATFORM.”

storage space.

The boat is wheelchair-friendly. The centre storage area can be removed, making it easy for anyone in a chair to manoeuvre around the cockpit.

Powering *Days Out* is a Mercury 351 DTi twin-turbo diesel, running a Bravo II stern leg which gives the vessel a cruising speed of 23 knots.

With the centre-cabin configuration, internal cabin space is a little restricted but there is room on the port side for passengers to sit out of the way. For overnighting there is a fridge and gas hob to provide the

creature comforts of a warm meal and cold refreshments.

At the centre of the helm station is a 15" Garmin touch-screen sounder/plotter/radar, as well as the engine interface. A Fusion sound system has been fitted and gets a fair bit of use, especially during corporate charters, hens and stag functions!

Down in the forward cuddy there are sleeping options for five, plus the head and shower.

Currently, the bunks are used to store an extensive range of Okuma tackle; everything from the Makaira game sets down to soft-baiting and bait-catching gear. It is all well-maintained with nice full line loads, ready to tackle the target species of the day.

There is nothing worse than stepping on a charter boat using supplied tackle that is not fit for purpose or has been poorly maintained. This won't be the case on *Days Out*. While we fished some new Okuma tackle due for release this coming season, a check on the day-to-day gear saw

it all up to scratch despite having gone through a busy summer season where Darren was often doing two trips a day.

He says he has been pleased with the way the gear has stood up to the rigours of charter fishing, often being used by inexperienced clients on a daily basis.

The bread-and-butter work for Darren is day-fishing for snapper and kingfish out of Paihia and Russell. He does, however, tailor trips to suit anglers' experience and requirements, be it gamefishing in season, hapuku trips out deep, or flicking soft-baits and lures around the rocks for snapper and kingfish.

At the height of the tourism season, he will do a seven-hour kingfish trip in the morning – leaving at 6:00am – returning at 1:00pm. After an hour's break to tidy up the boat, he then heads out for a five-hour snapper trip, returning round 7:00pm.

With daylight saving having ended and the days drawing in, he tends to concentrate on full-day

trips.

His *modus operandi* is to catch bait first thing – which, for inexperienced tourists in particular, is a good introduction of how to use a rod and reel – then head out to the deeper pins. At this time of the year Darren will also set up one or two livebaits while gathering bait, and these are usually good for a 'rat' kingfish or two, not to mention the ever-present kahawai.

In the afternoon, the livebait rigs go away and out comes the snapper gear. Darren likes to anchor and get a berley trail going. At this time of year the fishing is in close. While we picked up snapper beyond the Nine Pin on some foul off Sandy Bay, we were equally as successful fishing the inner Bay of Islands not far from Tapeka Point.

Darren knows the area well and has been on the sea all his life. He did a stint in the navy, followed by some time aboard oil industry service vessels overseas, as well as commercial fishing on purse-seine and longline boats.



The main cockpit incorporates three kill bins below decks, a central dry storage area, Icey-Tek bin and the bait/livebait station; the helm station.



Some 27 years ago he settled in the Bay of Islands and has worked as a charter skipper since, helming such boats as the *Lady Doreen*, *Pied Piper*, *Bucket List*, and *Angler's Anonymous* to name a few.

Our day

The forecast was good, but the Maori Fishing Calendar was telling us to stay at home, with major

and minor bite times coming before we would be on the water, then after we were off!

Based on the premise there is never a bad day to go fishing, Deputy Editor Miah and I headed to Waipu Cove where we overnighted before making the remainder of the trip to Paihia for a dawn start.

The first impression of *Days Out*, with its spectacular wrap, is a good one. We were welcomed

aboard by Darren and son Kaleb, who has crewed for him on a number of vessels over the last seven years. Our fishing mates for the day were Composite Developments CEO Marty Johanson and Sales Manager Stuart Hill. They had brought along some pre-production samples of new Okuma tackle for us to familiarise ourselves with.

A thorough boat safety briefing and basic familiarisation followed, along with a sharing of the day's game plan before we were off.

The boat was presented in 'ship shape and Bristol fashion' to coin an old naval term. The fishing area was spotless and it could well have been on a well-kept private boat, not a charter vessel that sees repeated fishing action day in and day out. Nothing changed throughout the day. Any slight hint of blood or slime was quickly washed down and the bait board was regularly scrubbed.

Livebaits were the first order of the day and when the tank was filled with around 40 inmates, it was time to deploy them over some foul up the coast from the Nine Pin. Anchoring up over some 30m deep structure, Kaleb started a chunk trail while Stu, Marty and I set up for straylining. Miah put down a livebait for a john dory

and was quickly rewarded with three kingfish, none of which quite made the 75cm minimum length.

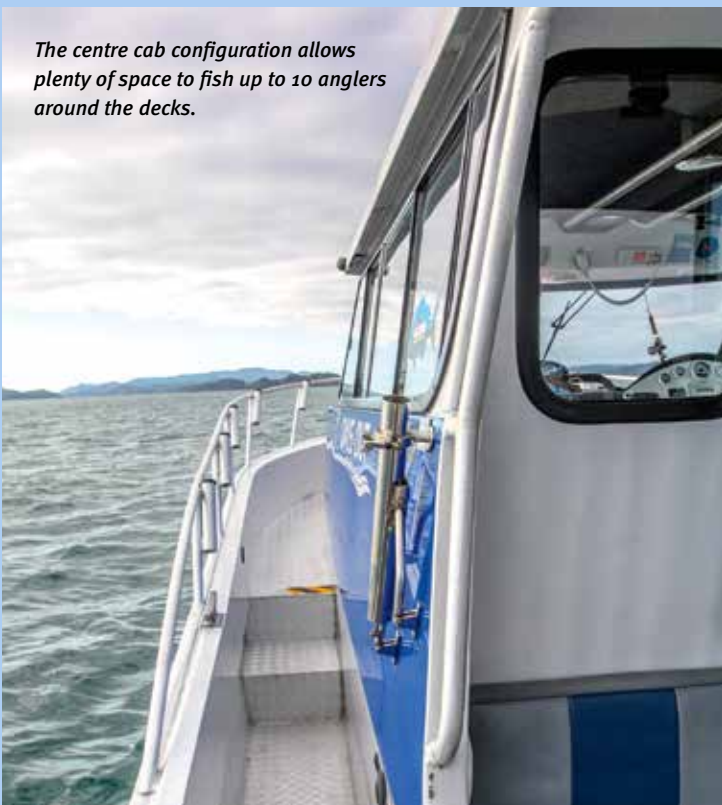
The snapper fishing was slow rather than spectacular, but by the time we had visited a few locations, slowly working our way back towards Paihia, we all had enough fish to take home. Stu caught a big john dory, not on a dead jack mac and was jokingly told by Darren that the spot on its side was 'poisonous' and that he would look after it – you are not dealing with tourists now, Darren!

By the time we had reached base, Darren had filleted the catch and it was neatly divided up and bagged – Stu keeping a close eye on his JD to make sure it was going to make it off the boat!

Darren and Kaleb were great hosts. We didn't have to lift a finger – dead jack macs were butterflied for us when snapper fishing and put on our hooks if we wanted. You could do a day on the boat and not touch a bait or a fish, such was the service.

Darren says he has always found it easier to fillet the fish himself, especially when tourists were involved.

"The moteliers certainly appreciate it," he jokes. There are restaurants in Paihia which will cook the catch for his clients.



The centre cab configuration allows plenty of space to fish up to 10 anglers around the decks.



The centrally-located livebait tank and tuna tubes are in an easily-accessed position in Days Out's transom wall; Miah puts one of the new Okuma sets to the test on a rat kingfish.

Nothing was too much trouble and some freshly smoked kingfish and crackers, along with cake and coffee were a pleasant surprise and much appreciated.

As mentioned earlier, much of

Darren's work is tourist-orientated and the service on board reflects this. He will tailor a trip to suit the requirements and experience of his clients.

We had a thoroughly enjoyable

day with good company, on a well-run vessel with some nice gear to play with. It is a pity the fish weren't more co-operative – but that is why it is called fishing, and not catching!

A quick look on the website www.daysoutfishing.co.nz shows there are plenty of crews who enjoyed a better day fish-wise than we did. - **Grant Dixon**



DAYS OUT

FISHING CHARTERS

Make a full weekend of it in the beautiful Bay of Islands with Darren. The girls enjoying perhaps the boutique shopping, lunch at the Duke of Marlborough Russell, exclusive wine tours or a round of golf at our stunning Waitangi Course and lots of other "to do's"

021 086 04019
WWW.FISHINGDAYSOUT.CO.NZ