

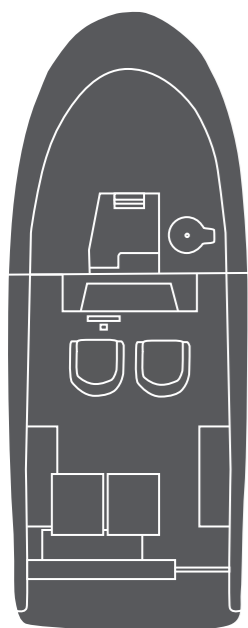


Length (LOA): 6.92m / 22ft 8in
 Beam: 2.65m / 8ft 8in
 Displacement: 1750kg
 Fuel capacity: 135 litres
 Water: 50 litres
 RCD category: C
 Engine as tested: Single Nanni
 T4-205evo 205hp
 Other engine options:
 Single Nanni from 150hp to 270hp
 Price from **£58,541**

BOAT TEST

Ocqueteau Ostréa 700 T-Top

“This walkaround fishing boat and overnighter packs a unique feature”



In the centre console walkaround boat world, outboards reign supreme. It's rare to even see a sterndrive model, which makes the Ocqueteau Ostréa 700 T-Top a rather unique beast. Not only does it have its motor inboard, but the engine is diesel and equipped with a traditional shaft. How

does this stack up against the plethora of outboard powered boats of a similar design?

The Ocqueteau Ostréa 700 T-Top is the flagship open boat in a range of 21 boats from 5.5m up to 10m, although an 800 T-Top is about to be launched to take the crown. Like compatriot boat builders Jeanneau and Beneteau, Ocqueteau has filled the range with a real mix of open, pilot house, fishing boats, cruisers and, like Jeanneau and Beneteau, has also ventured into sailing boat territory,

although only with a single, 7m, model. The 700 T-Top crosses their Open and Fishing boat ranges, and is also available in a pilot house version, called the Ostréa 700 inboard.

At first glance, the 700 T-Top looks just like many other boats of this style, but its differences go some way beyond its installed power plant. In the cockpit, the aft section offers a huge uncluttered, open space, perfect for two to four people to fish from. To aid this use, you get some rod holders in the top of the coaming

and a large draining locker/bait well in the transom. If you want something a bit more comfy for cruising and socialising, it doesn't take long to pop up a seat on the transom, and another one on either side, insert either one or two tables, and you have an area suitable for the whole family. Being a practical sort of boat, there is a couple of good-sized storage lockers in the floor, one of which houses the boat's emergency tiller. The connection for this tiller is easily accessible on the transom, with a hydraulic bypass switch located in

one of the floor lockers. Just in front of this area, is a slightly raised engine box. This only sits a few inches higher than the rest of the deck, so you don't really lose any floor space, but you do have to step up onto it, or over it, so presumably it could be a bit of a trip hazard to the unwary.

Lift up the engine hatch, which is on stainless steel gas struts, and you have good access to the single inboard engine. Our test boat was fitted with a Toyota based Nanni Evo 205hp option, but you can also specify the 700 T-Top with a 150, 170, 200 or 270hp engine, all from the Nanni stable. The two smaller engines come with a ZF 45A gearbox, while our test boat, and the other two larger engines come with a TTM40A or TTM50A. With the 205HP option, access at the aft end, and down both sides, of the engine looks pretty good, although access to the front appears quite tight.

Moving out onto the optional bathing platform from the cockpit, or vice versa,



The open deck space is versatile and practical

is easy enough, thanks to a large transom gate. Out on the bathing platform you have a large space with safety/grab rails on either side and a fixed bathing ladder. The diesel filler is nicely positioned on the top of the transom coaming, right next to the transom gate.

Just in front of the engine bay, you will find the helm, mounted on a slightly raised deck plinth. Here, you get a pair of adjustable bucket style seats with lifting bolsters. For the fishing orientated owner, a rod rack can be installed behind these, complete with wooden chopping board.



The console provides a helm to port, with an inboard throttle. Our test boat was lightly equipped, but there is a useful amount of space to mount your choice of multi-function display, a VHF radio or the optional bow thruster control. Your crew get a stainless steel footrest and a well-placed grab handle. The overhead T-Top is, of course, the defining feature of this boat and is made from stainless steel, and comes with a canvas top and a three part plastic screen.

Moving forward from the helm you have a nice deep and wide walkway, both to port and starboard, topped with a stainless steel rail to bring it up to top-of-thigh height. In the bow, things get rather interesting, with a range of user configurations. On the front of the helm console there is a single seat with cushioned back rest. The area in front, and to the sides, of this can also be equipped with cushions to turn the whole bow space into a flat cushioned sunpad. Alternatively, you can place a table here and, using the raised foredeck area with the addition of a cushion or two, have a forward dining area for up to four. You may have noticed the porthole in the helm console side, and it would not be unusual

in a boat of this style and size to find a small toilet compartment cum storage area inside. On the 700, Ocqueteau has managed to squeeze in a full two berths and portable toilet. It might not offer the last word in luxurious accommodation, but for an occasional overnighter, or maybe a daytime snooze while waiting for a change of tide, this is a great feature, and an enclosed toilet alone makes the boat a whole lot more family friendly.

The small raised foredeck houses a generous anchor locker, with good access through double opening hatches. The





PERFORMANCE					
<i>As tested 75% fuel 0% water 2 crew Force 4</i>					
RPM	Knots	LPH	GPH	MPG	Range (nm)
730	3.6	0.9	0.20	18.0	534
1000	4.7	2.0	0.44	10.7	317
1500	7.3	6.3	1.39	5.25	156
2000	10.9	11.9	2.62	4.16	123
2500	17.6	17.9	3.94	4.46	132
3000	22.7	26.8	5.90	3.85	114
3500	28.4	40.7	8.95	3.17	94



optional electric winch would make the anchoring process much easier, and is a worthwhile addition if you are likely to be dropping the hook regularly for fishing or just for relaxing. Another worthwhile option to think about is the bow thruster. Single shaftdrive boats are fairly predictable in their handling characteristics, and steering when reversing is usually pretty limited until you get enough flow over the rudder, which ultimately means speed. A bow thruster will make close quarters manoeuvring in tight spaces, much more nimble.

Underway

The 700 has a semi-displacement profile with a keel and skeg. This, and the inboard engine configuration, means it drives like no other centre console boat I have ever helmed. You expect the lightness and responsiveness of an outboard powered equivalent, but what you get is a solid ride

that feels altogether more purposeful. You don't need any trim, as its weight distribution means it rides flat and, when you turn, you brace yourself for a lean that never comes. It's like it's on rails. Although the 205hp engine will deliver speeds approaching 30 knots, with 32 knots from the largest option, it doesn't feel like that sort of boat. It is absolutely composed and 'in its groove' at about 16-18 knots, delivering a comfortable and economical ride. It's nice to know you have that power in reserve, if you need to out-run some weather, or make a tidal deadline, but realistically the engine is likely to spend most of its time rather unstressed, running at around 2500rpm. You could, of course, opt for a smaller engine, but I think it's nice to have plenty of power in reserve, and I would happily recommend the 200/205hp options, while at the same time suggesting that the 270hp engine is probably more than is required.

During our test we had a bit of breeze, and some wind against tide conditions that kicked up some short steep waves. At slow speeds, quite a bit of spray found its way onboard, although the screen and helm console did a good job of keeping us dry, as long as we were seated behind it. Adding just a bit of throttle to lift the bow slightly was all that was required to turn it into an almost completely dry ride. The hull just lapped up the conditions with ease. At the helm, we found that the most natural driving position was standing, with a full-on wind-in-the-hair experience. For longer cruises, with the throttle set, the seated position was also very comfortable, and offered the most protection from the wind and any spray.

Conclusion

Looks can be deceptive, and you would think that the 700 T-Top would offer a similar experience to any of the outboard

powered boats of the same style. In truth, you could not be more wrong. The Ostréa is to them, what a Broom is to a Fairline. It may provide many of the same facilities, and will do much the same thing, but it delivers in an altogether different way. If you want 40 knot performance, blistering acceleration and fast, tight turns, the T-Top is probably not for you. If, on the other hand, you want something that feels very solid beneath your feet, the economy of a diesel engine and the simplicity of a shaft drive configuration, the Ostréa 700 T-Top should jump straight to the top of your list. In fact, it should probably be on a list of just one, as I can't think of anything else quite like it on the market today.