



CRUISE CONTROL

This sleek new Sedan puts you ahead of the crowd while you're taking it easy

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If the Joneses are trying to keep up with you, they'll be kept on their toes when you take to the water in Meridian's new 441 Sedan Bridge. The new release has just landed in Australia and it's all about cruising, entertaining and enjoying seascapes.

The cockpit, full-beam saloon, dinette and galley combine to make an almost-level entertaining platform for the gregarious (it's only one step up to the port side galley and another up to the dinette to starboard). Socialising is easy no matter where you are on board. In fact, if you've got good hearing, you could relax on the queen-size island bed in the forward master stateroom and have a conversation—albeit loud—with someone sunbathing on the transom lounge 40ft away. But you would be doing well to get over the noise generated by the cook chatting to the two larrikins enjoying a scotch in the saloon arm chairs, the four kids stuffing their faces in the dinette, and the three giggling ladies sipping gin and tonics on the saloon lounge.

LIGHT AND BREEZY

The saloon, dinette and galley share two-tier windows running the length of each side to the windscreen to provide 360-degree views. Internal living areas are bathed in natural light—perfect for relaxing in air-conditioned comfort to beat the heat in summer, or hiding from an icy winter sea breeze without missing

any of those views that make boating so relaxing and enchanting.

The natural light theme runs strong throughout the 441. The amidships guest stateroom, which utilises the vessel's full 4.3m beam, features a large port side window above the double island berth. If your will is strong enough to ignore a beautiful day outside, you could easily read a book in natural sunlight with your head resting on the pillows. There are also two starboard-side windows that offer distracting views for anyone trying to get some work done at the desk. Privacy is as easy as setting the blinds if the lady of the room is utilising the adjoining vanity with flip-top mirror to put on her face for a party. Or perhaps you just prefer a dark room when watching a DVD on the LCD TV or relaxing to some music.

STORAGE PLUS

The other noticeable theme throughout the Meridian 441 is storage. This guest stateroom features a headboard compartment, a big locker under the bed (which tilts up for access), two sets of drawers, three hanging lockers and enough extra space to accommodate an optional washer-dryer combo unit.

Forward, the master stateroom features a big storage locker underneath the queen island berth (which also tilts for access), plus two hanging lockers, two small bedside compartments and a

set of drawers. The two portholes—one each side—and an overhead deck hatch provide the natural light. All three open for a breath of fresh air and the deck hatch is fitted with a clever retractable flyscreen and shade for summer comfort and privacy. The fabric options were comfortable and classy, but the big mirror at the head of the island bed made

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“It’s a huge storage space that could hold five stowaways”

it impossible to photograph, so you’ll just have to take my word for it.

The master stateroom also has an LCD TV with DVD/CD player set-up and while it doesn’t have a desk, it does have a well-appointed head featuring a VacuFlush head system, a roomy shower stall with acrylic screen, vanity cabinet with stainless steel sink and a mirrored medicine cabinet. There is also

forced-air ventilation to protect the innocent.

The guest/day head situated between master and guest staterooms has a double-door set-up opening to both the guest stateroom, and passageway. It has a shower with curtain, VacuFlush head, vanity cabinet with sink, mirrored cabinet and forced-air ventilation.

Back up the short stairway, the shapely full galley features an almost-full-size fridge/freezer unit, convection/microwave, recessed three-burner cooktop and two deep sinks. The sinks are also recessed and, like the cooktop, feature infills for when not in use to create extra bench space (or hide a lazy dishwasher!). The mahogany flooring adds a nice finish.

The cupboards house a lazy Susan rack, slides to store the aforementioned bench inserts, a garbage drawer and some shelves (some with lips for the rough days). Combined with small compartments above the bench, the galley offers ample storage for crockery and food to cover weekend entertaining and longer cruising trips for small groups.

Anyone planning longer trips can rest assured that the total storage space on offer throughout the 441 would accommodate any extra stores.

The raised (one-step) dinette opposite the galley affords comfortable elbow space for four diners, but you could squeeze in an extra or two if everyone knows each other well. The dinette converts to a double berth.

The saloon lounge also converts to a double berth, making comfortable sleeping arrangements for eight.

A CUBBY HOUSE?

The large carpeted floor hatch as you enter the saloon from the cockpit makes you look twice. It seems too far forward for an engine room entry—that’s because it’s not. Greg Wright from Avante Marine’s Big Boat Centre on the Gold Coast affectionately refers to it as the “cubby house”. It’s a huge storage space that could hold four or five stowaways—packed without care. Or, if you’re in an honest trade, there’s enough space for some fishing rods, several tackle boxes, snorkelling and diving gear, a beach cricket set, frisbee and maybe a couple of inflatable kayaks with two-piece paddles. Drunken sailors might see potential for a dozen slabs—make that a baker’s dozen... just in case.

Above the cubby house, the carpeted saloon

seats two in armchairs that flank a small cabinet suitable for storing drinks, snacks, or reading material; and three with ease on the Mirage Leather lounge, who may be asked to take their feet off the handsome solid-cherry freestanding table. An LCD TV with DVD and CD faces the lounge and is at eye-level when seated. An icemaker lives underneath storage that looks suspiciously like a liquor cabinet. Both are close to the lounge... just in case.

Cockpit access is via a locking sliding glass door set in an elegant stainless steel frame. The cockpit is fitted with removable carpet, concealing the lockable access hatch to the spacious engine room. The comfy transom lounge will be popular with sun lovers. There is a freshwater washdown, hot and cold hand shower and transom door access to the swim platform. The fender lockers (with drain holes) accessed via gunwale hatches on either side are of generous size—almost too big to be pseudo ice buckets for wine, or just right for several smaller bottles when entertaining.

The swim platform features a recessed

telescopic boarding ladder. It also has a cleverly designed perpendicular flip-top recess for running shore power and shore water lines to the respective connections in the transom locker. It’s only a simple thing, but it adds to the presentation of the boat when docked and avoids tripping hazards. It reflects the attention to detail and thoughtful design found throughout the 441—as does the ability to pressurise the shore water.

ON THE BRIDGE

Up the moulded staircase through a large hatch to the bridge reveals another spacious entertaining area with removable carpet and an L-shaped lounge dinette that can be converted to a sun lounge. The entire bridge is shaded by a hard top (with three skylight hatches) and is enclosed by clears for weather protection, sections of which can be zipped open for fresh air.

This area includes a recessed electric barbecue grill (with infill), sink, storage cupboard, good size counter, small bar fridge and the option of an ‘entertainment centre’, which can include an LCD TV



Windlass, fender locker, raw and freshwater outlets under a smart two-hatch set-up.



The bridge helm is impressive; a lower helm forward of the dinette is optional.



Great 360-degree views can be enjoyed from the saloon, dinette and galley.



The two grab rails on the gunwale walkway aid safe passage to the bow.

TEST || MERIDIAN 441 SEDAN BRIDGE

and DVD/CD player. The bridge aft lounge is ideal for soaking up the views while enjoying an outdoor breakfast or afternoon canapés.

This lounge also features a storage compartment suitable for filling with ice and drinks, or bits and pieces to be kept out of the weather. There is more storage under the aft seat.

The helm has a single bucket seat for the skipper. The passenger seat is a comfy mini-lounge, for want of a better description—it's big enough for two adults, or three inquisitive kids who want to check out the action and see what all the buttons do. A large glove box compartment runs under the grab rail at almost equal length to the passenger seat, all set in a vinyl dash with a finish fit for a car.

AT THE HELM

The helm itself is impressive. The dash is housed in a tilt-top panel for access to all wiring. It features two Northstar 6100i GPS/sounder/radar combo units with big 12in screens. I was baffled to learn that the sounder component of both units is left unconnected and that a separate sounder, with a comparatively small screen, was added to compensate for this. The fisherman in me was crying at the missed opportunity of having sounder capabilities in the big-screen units and not utilising it. Even if you don't have that voice in your head, I still think it's a good option.

All other information of interest is visible on either of the Northstars or the two four-in-one gauges and two 5in tachometers. SmartCraft technology is also included and the entire set-up ensures the skipper is up-to-date at all times.

The 441 is fitted with Brunswick/MerCruiser's Total Command Integrated

Vessel Control system, which combines the yacht's forward and reverse engine thrust, and bow and stern thrusters, which enables excellent finger-tip manoeuvrability in close quarters. It was handy for manoeuvring into the exact position I needed while photographing another test boat that day—subtle and responsive. It's so easy to use that anyone will get the hang of it and be controlling the 441 like a pro. There is a separate switch pad for independent operation of the thrusters.

The Gold Coast Broadwater didn't offer a worthy challenge for the sea kindly combination of Meridian's new hull design and the twin 480hp V-drive Cummins diesels. The 441 was up onto the plane quick enough and reached 27 knots at 3400rpm heading into a strong wind and run-out tide. The true test for this boat would be a weekend cruise up the coast, which I'm sure it would pass with ease.

ANCHORS AWAY

Finally, once you get to your destination, anchoring is easy. Access to the bow is via gunwale walkways with grab rails either side. You'll pass two sun beds with clip-in cushions and nearby beverage holders on the forward deck, to a two-hatch set-up concealing the windlass and controls, a pop-up cleat, fender holder and two pump outlets—one for raw water and one for a freshwater wash-down. Another smart arrangement in the 441.

There are heaps of ceiling lights; the 441 must look a pretty picture anchored at night. There are also plenty of 12V and 240V (powered by a 9.5kW generator) outlets throughout the yacht.

Attention to detail is the mark of a quality boat, and the new Meridian 441 Sedan Bridge is testament to that. ⚓



Every boat should have a cubby house.

MERIDIAN SEDAN BRIDGE 441

ENGINE ROOM

Twin 480hp V-drive Cummins diesels and Brunswick/MerCruiser TCIVCS.

PERFORMANCE

Into a headwind and strong outgoing tide, the Meridian 441 recorded the following figures:

RPM - KNOTS

2000 // 9
2500 // 16
3000 // 21.8
3400 // 27
LOA // 14.3m (47'0")
Beam // 4.3m (14'2")
Draft // 1.2m (2'11")
Bridge clearance // 5.2m (17'6")
Fuel capacity // 1635L
Water capacity // 545L
Holding tank capacity // 208L
Weight (dry) // 13,636kg
Total berths // 8
Cabin headroom // 1.96m (6'7")



The brand new Meridian 441 Sedan Bridge gets onto the plane with ease.

