

tested Tahoe Q5i Ski Fish



Go Ski, Go Fish

Tahoe Q5i Ski Fish

Tahoe has been getting families into boating for years by following a few simple rules: give them a boat with loads of standard features, make it attractive, fun to drive and price it right. If it ain't broke don't fix it seems to be the template for the new Q5i Ski Fish, which brings a whole new level of user-friendliness and capability if you want more than a one-trick pony.

BY ALAN JONES

It's easy to board, and entering the cockpit doesn't require you to stand on the full sunpad courtesy of the starboard walkover. You don't have to walk on the stern bench seat bottom either thanks to a sectional that slides rearward and out of the way for boarding.

Tahoe has upgraded the storage in the bow section with hinged hatches on the SF model rather than having to remove the entire cushion/bottom unit to access the fully finished compartments. They also made sure you have quick access to a beverage with a carry-on cooler under the stern bench and another on the swim platform, which can also be used to store wet items.

Performance

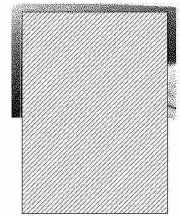
Tahoe doesn't confuse prospective

owners with myriad engine choices that can lead to a buyer choosing an under- or over-powered boat. The designers have figured out what will power their boats properly and give you a choice of carbureted or fuel-injected engines in a fairly narrow range – in this case, 190 to 220 horsepower. This is smart because typically a hull works most efficiently with a specific engine that's in what we writers call the "sweet spot," just like on a golf club. Too little power and you will be prematurely aging your engine whenever you put it on plane or run it too high into its rpm range. Conversely, too much power usually doesn't give a commensurate return of performance for your investment.

Our test boat was powered by the

Unique Factor

The Tahoe's attractive styling sets it apart from some other fish and ski models. Its profile isn't marred by an overly large, upright windshield, but it's tall enough to do the job. The extra-large, integrated swim platform makes



190 hp carbureted version of MerCruiser's 4.3LV-6. In the old days having a carb meant pulling the power lever sideways to put it in neutral and priming the engine with a magical number of pumps of the lever and then when it catches, skillfully feathering the throttle until it stays running. This talent is now relegated to the same category as being able to work a slide rule thanks to MerCruiser's Turn Key Starting system (TKS), which like its name implies, only requires you to know how to twist a key.

Our Q5i was clearly dialed in as we got on plane in the extremely fast time of 2.6 seconds and streaked to 30 mph in 5.3 seconds. Top speed was a robust 52 mph, which is 1 mph more than Tahoe lists on its Web site as the boat's predicted top speed. We tested a prototype model of this boat earlier in the year and that boat wasn't as fast, topping out at 48 mph. Not surprising since they tend to be heavier than production models, not to mention that the prototype had a four-blade prop vs. our three-blade model.

Handling

The Tahoe Q5i was a blast to drive. Its cornering ability was superb, and we were able to keep turning the sport wheel all the way to its stops without blowout. Some sterndrive-powered bowriders in this size are prone to porpoising at moderate cruise speeds with the trim up, but the Q5i didn't display this trait.

The Q5i's PowerGlide hull has 16 degrees of deadrise at the stern, which is fairly flat, but with a beam of 7 feet, 7 inches, it's a good call by Tahoe because if it had a deeper-V hull it might be too tippy. It's all a trade-off; while this might make it a little less comfortable in rough seas, it helps give you more lift to get you out of the hole faster and allowed us to stay on plane at only 17 mph.

Best Uses

For fishing aficionados, the Q5i SF is rigged to handle multispecies angling with features like the wireless 12v MotorGuide trolling motor in the

bow. Some setups have a large foot control that looks like a giant, truck accelerator pedal with a huge cable attached, but the standard wireless foot control unit is compact and unobtrusive. You can even get an optional key fob-like controller and guide it from anywhere on the boat. When you remove the stern pad it reveals a large casting deck with a receptacle for another fishing seat. This is more of a lure-casting boat, but live bait anglers still have a livewell under the stern bench that is fairly small at 8 gallons.

Although the Q5i resembles the smaller Q4, it is a far better boat for skiing, since the latter is rated for only a four-cylinder 135 hp motor. With more horsepower along with a larger swim platform, aft sunpad and full stern bench, it's more capable of handling up to eight passengers than the less expensive model. It's rather small 23-gallon fuel tank means its range will keep you from venturing too far without planning your fuel stops carefully.

Preferred Setup

Rigged with the fishing package, you only need a few add-ons to bring out the Q5i's potential. Tahoe offers the optional Lowrance X51 fishfinder, which is a lower-end black and white model. You'd be better off heading to Bass Pro Shops and picking up a color Lowrance X67C or Eagle FishEasy 350C on your own. Don't get carried away with screen size, because the Tahoe's sporty helm setup is pretty compact and only has room for smaller bracket-mounted units.

For ski buffs, there is a wide center-line locker that's just deep enough to store your slashing weapon of choice. Those who are into skiing more than fishing might opt for one of several wakeboard tower options, but this would prevent the angler on the stern from casting rearward with any distance. The standard ski tow is located at the top of the transom and will get the job done, but a good compromise would be a pylon where the rear fishing seat inserts, but it would need reinforcement.



TAHOE Q5I
SKI FISH

SPECIFICATIONS

Length	19 ft., 5 in.
Beam	7 ft., 7 in.
Capacity	8 people
Dry Weight	2,722 lbs.
Fuel Capacity	23 gals.

PERFORMANCE

	mph	rpm	mpg	miles	dBa
Peak	52	5000	3.3	68	96
Cruise	28.3	3000	4.7	97	84
Time to Plane					2.6 sec.
Time to 30 mph					5.3 sec.

POWER

Test	MerCruiser 4.3L 190 hp
Cylinders	V-6
Displacement	4.3L
Weight w/outdrive	848 lbs.
WOT Range	4600-4800 rpm
Base Price (w/MerCruiser)	\$22,995

VALUE-ADDED STANDARD FEATURES

Color-coordinated trailer, MotorGuide 12 wireless trolling motor, 8-gal. livewell, removable fishing seats, Jensen stereo w/MP3 input

MUST-HAVE OPTIONS

Fishfinder, helm seat w/flip-up bolster, automatic bilge, bike seat w/pro pole

BUILDER

Tracker Marine

www.tahoSPORTBOATS.com

Circle 15 on reader service card, page 49

FINANCING:

\$184/month based on 15% down for 15 years at 7.75% interest

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Owner Feedback

Mindy Pritchard and 13-year-old son, Hunter, Lawton, Okla.

PURCHASED AT BASS PRO SHOPS, BROKEN ARROW (TULSA), OKLA.

What we liked:

- Has both ski and fishing features
- Attractive styling
- Good fuel economy
- Plenty of power to pull skiers
- Great trailer
- Good stereo

Things we would change:

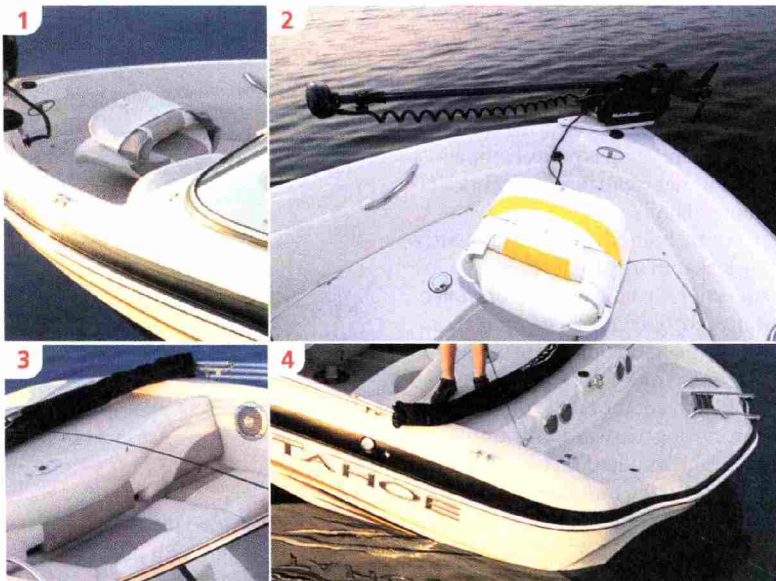
Since it's a fishing model, it should come with a depth-finder/fishfinder.

Why we bought it:

Although my son and I have been jet skiing together for years, this is my first boat. I wanted something that was easy to tow and small enough for a single mom like me to handle, both on the water and on



land. It's very easy to drive and has plenty of power to tow skiers, but still gets good fuel economy. I love the swing-away hitch on the trailer that allows it to fit in my garage. My son and I love to fish for walleye, crappie and catfish, and the Tahoe's perfect for us. **BW**



IN BRIEF: FEATURES

- 1 Bow seat cushions are removable and have hinged lids and finished storage compartments underneath
- 2 MotorGuide wire trolling motor adds to the Tahoe's stealthiness
- 3 Full sunpad is removable for fishing
- 4 Integrated swim platform has a cooler and recessed ladder
- 5 Stern bench with carry-on cooler underneath