

# BOAT REPORT

Finding volunteers to lend a hand for our boat tests suddenly became a problem during the winter we have just endured. But a Scandinavian bestseller tempted the hardy down to Portsmouth, cosseting them with its enclosed wheelhouse and twin heating systems, even in the midst of storm-battered February.

ALTHOUGH it was conceived back in the early 1980s, few 25ft family cruisers can better the versatility of the Flipper 760 in our unpredictable northern climes. A full complement of five can be accommodated and ably catered for come rain or shine, with the enclosed wheelhouse saloon spilling readily into a good-sized cockpit, and further opened to the elements when required by its full-width sunroof.

It remains this Finnish company's most popular model, with sales well above the 2000 mark over the years. So an invitation by Nauticalia, Flipper's UK agent, to assess its adaptability for ourselves was not to be missed, even amid those never-ending gales.

## Design

As with all Flippers, the medium-vee hull of the 760 incorporates a sizeable step or hook in its final run of planing surface to the transom. This, they claim, helps push the boat onto the plane, keeping it there at slower speeds and reducing wetted surface to give improved performance. Further design details to the underwater sections, apart from the more usual spray rails, include a broad

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inwardly-angled chine and a shallow skeg sited either side of the centreline to increase directional stability.

On earlier models the bathing platform was fabricated of teak and stainless steel, but the more recent GRP moulding benefits from the inclusion of a dual-purpose, step-cum-self-draining locker by way of the transom access. This particular boat had also been fitted with the optional, purpose-designed outboard bracket for mounting an auxiliary—a useful touch that is all too rarely seen.

For what is a fair bulk of hull and superstructure, the 760 remains pleasantly proportioned, helped by

both a knuckle and a wide blue style line running down the topsides. The slight rounding of the transom (rather than the usual squared off shape) and radiused corners have prevented the overall style dating. It looks as well now as it did a decade ago.

## Exterior

Deck hardware is fashioned from aluminium, and includes 8in cleats on either quarter, a single larger one sited forward, and a useful spread of good-sized fender beackets. A handrail runs along the coachroof to help you move along the shallow-lipped 6in sidedecks, whilst the foredeck is

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equipped with a well-placed inboard handrail and vertical centrally-placed hoop. A deep locker will take care of warps and fenders, although it is a shame there is no bow roller to cater for an anchor.

The cockpit is self-draining and of a safe depth, topped off for extra security with a teak handrail. Spacious lockers under the sole and beneath the cockpit coaming provide plenty of stowage and house a holding tank, the well-secured battery box and associated master switches out of harm's way. The only permanent seating is to starboard, a locker in its after portion taking care of the gas bottle, but there is plenty of space for a couple of deck chairs and the saloon table to be seconded from below for service outside.

## Accommodation

The helm position and galley area, together with a quarter berth, run down the starboard side of the main cabin, while a raised four-seater dinette and toilet compartment are sited to port. The dinette converts to a 3ft-wide double, and the forward portion hinges over to face forward.

Visibility from the helm is good. The only blind spot is on the port quarter

which is shielded by the toilet compartment, but a quick glance through the sliding sunroof (with its useful full width grabrail) takes care of this. Apart from the usual Volvo engine gauge fascia, Nauticalia fit additional instrumentation to the owner's requirements in this country, ensuring he gets exactly what he requires and at a cheaper price than factory-fitted equipment. Stowage is plentiful both at the helm, where there is adequate room to work on a chart in front of the moulded console, and over the rest of the cabin, with a variety of well-finished cupboards and draws.

In many boats of this size the galley is cramped for work tops. Not so in the 760, which boasts pull-out and hinged surfaces in abundance. Equipment includes a two-burner gas hob (with fold down protective aluminium screens), oven unit, fridge and stainless steel sink. The latter is equipped with both hot and cold mixer tap and saltwater foot pump.

Headroom in the main cabin is 6ft 3in, though it reduces in the forecabin to around 5ft. This is not really a problem, as its occupants will tend to be lounging against the upholstered backrest, which doubles as a shelf, or sleeping on the convertible vee berth.

The forward part of the berth houses the water tank, and side sections provide stowage in addition to the half-height hanging locker. A hatch, with ventilator, gives access to the foredeck.

The Finns sensibly take no chances when it comes to staying warm, the 760 being fitted with two separate heating systems as standard, although strangely the actual calorifier for hot water has to be specified as an extra. Both are ducted hot-air heaters, one gas-fired (mainly for use when moored up), the other utilising the engine-cooling circuit. Windscreen demisters are run off the latter system. Battened down and with heaters on, a soporific fug could result, so the builders have sensibly included a good array of ventilators to all areas.

## Performance and handling

With forecasts hinting at some respite after the morning's frontal system had passed through, we delayed our departure for an hour or two, taking the opportunity to give the engineering systems the once over.

The engine compartment is reached

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through a hinged cockpit hatch which gives ready access to all the service points, including the hydraulics for the outdrive, which have been thoughtfully brought forward and positioned to one side of the engine rather than right aft on the transom. Access to the actual drive mechanics is via a further screwed-down panel aft of the hatch.

The compartment is fully lined with a foil-faced foam which kept noise from our test boat's Volvo AQ41 200hp diesel down to reasonable levels: a maximum of 88dB(A) in the cockpit and a comfortable 80dB(A) in the wheelhouse when battened down for cruising. Wiring, piping and cables were run out of harm's way and securely clipped. Electric and manual bilge pumps are fitted, the latter being sited beneath the quarter berth. Of the two Halon extinguishers mounted adjacent to the companionway access, one is fed through to the engine compartment. Both are manually triggered.

The front passed, the wind dropped to a Force 6, and blue skies beckoned. But as we motored through Porchester lake to Portsmouth Harbour entrance we could see that it would be foolhardy to proceed to sea. Even in the upper

reaches of the harbour the wind kicked up razor-sharp waves over the shallows to create a most unpleasant short, steep sea.

Our radar gun measured a top speed of 31 knots, a knot or two down on the brochure's claim, the shortfall appearing to be due to our runs having to be conducted across wind so that the boat crabbed sideways. Throttling back to 3000rpm gave 22.5 knots and, for comfortable running in the conditions, tucking the leg in to -3° kept the 760 planing at an easy 16 knots at 2500rpm. Consumption at full revs is in the order of 9.5gph (43lph), while an economy-conscious 3000rpm gives an estimated cruising range of more than 200 miles from the 50gal (230lt) tank.

With 25+ knots of wind and short, sharp waves, the medium-vee hull proved a well-mannered, if lively, bundle to handle. The deserted trots of moorings made for an exacting slalom course and, weaving between these, the only time the Duoprop failed to give continuous power was through fast full-lock turns — we suspect this was caused by extra turbulence being set up by the hull step when heeled right over.

## Conclusions

Our test day was far from kind and, although we found it lively to handle in the considerable chop and squalls plying Portsmouth Harbour, the 760 acquitted itself admirably. Its finish is good and the layout works well. The huge number of these versatile boats which have been sold over the past decade speaks for itself.

Loa	26ft 9in (8.16m)
Hull length	25ft 0in (7.60m)
Beam	9ft 7in (2.95m)
Draught (leg down)	2ft 7in (0.80m)
Displacement	2.4 tons
Fuel	50 gal (230lt)
Water	17gal (75lt)
Prices ex VAT	
with Volvo 205hp petrol	£35,596
with Volvo diesel	£41,235

**Builder:**  
Flipper Boats, SF-21530 Paimio, Finland.

**UK Supplier:**  
Nauticalia, Ferry Lane, Shepperton-on-Thames, Middlesex TW17 9LQ.

