

# Azura 650 WA

Does cutting-edge outboard power offer this French sportsboat something extra in a competitive market?

REPORT BY JOHN WOOD



## highlights



### WRAPAROUND WINDSCREEN

The helm position is very well protected from spray.



### OUTBOARD POWER

High-pressure direct-injection (HPDI) motors from Yamaha offer quiet-running and fuel economy as well as performance.

Yamaha's former allegiance with defunct British builders Fletcher proved their willingness to market their outboards in complete boat/engine packages. They are now repeating the exercise with the Azura range of sportsboats from French manufacturers Kelt, best known in the UK for their White Shark range.

There are eight Azuras, from 15ft to 21ft, of which the biggest is the 650. It is available with a full-width cabin or in a walkaround layout with a basic cuddy cabin, and we tested the latter version.

### DESIGN & LAYOUT

The 650WA manages to combine plenty of forward and aft seating plus a cuddy in a limited space, which makes it a multi-

purpose sportsboat suitable for a number of aquatic pursuits.

One major appeal is its outboard engine, whose high-pressure direct injection, delivering smooth, quiet, economical power, is it at the cutting edge of engine development in a market sector where most craft have sterndrive power. In terms of overall layout, this also frees up more space for stowage.

To prospective purchasers comparing it with North American imports, the Azura will appear fairly basic, because its standard specification has been kept very simple, helping owners to tailor the craft to their own use.

If you want to add more, you can pick from the optional extras, which include such items

as a deck shower, hydraulic steering, plusher upholstery, a bimini top, a radio/cassette player and a toilet.

### ENGINE OPTIONS

Engine choices are simple, coming down to two Yamaha outboards: the 150hp two-stroke Z150PETOL, as tested here, or the 115hp four-stroke F115AETL.

### PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

This is the second Kelt hull we have tested, and once again we were impressed by its competence.

It likes a lively sea, and will continue at pace unworried by the frequency of the waves. There is little slamming, and it corrects itself at the earliest opportunity to

## accommodation

Space in the cuddy cabin is limited by the walkaround design, but makes the best of what is available.

You get decent sitting headroom over the vee-berths, with an infill that can be deployed if the cuddy is to be used for sleeping.

There are no lockers under the berths, but there is space under the cockpit for mounting the pull-out chemical toilet that is an optional extra.



cuddy cabin Furnishings and fittings are basic, but there is room to sit or sleep.







**helm** The dashboard is basic but its layout is good. There is a small console area for the two Yamaha multifunction gauges, a compass set in front and a handy lift up cover for charts. The throttle is well located in a recess to the right and the few electrical switches are located under the steering wheel.

deliver good tracking.

The only handling limitation we encountered was the steering. With four turns from lock to lock, it is never going to test the limits of the hull's abilities. This is a shame, because it would have been fun to explore what the 650 is really capable of.

Given the smooth, purposeful power delivery of the Yamaha 150, there is no shortage of potential. We saw a top speed of 42 knots, in blustery conditions, with the outboard pulling 5100rpm.

This is the maximum recommended horsepower for the boat, but the hull dealt with it easily. Easing back to 4000rpm saw 30 knots on the GPS, for a comfortable and more economical fast cruise, and if you want to take it easy then 3000rpm equates to 20 knots.

A second drawback with the steering concerns the wheel itself, which is not adjustable, and is set too far forward of the helm seat. This is fine when you adopt a stand-up driving position, but not very comfortable when you are seated.

The helm seats are not very supportive, but you get good protection from the wraparound screen.



## decks

The layout gives excellent access to all parts of the craft, and the walkways on either side of the helm console are a good width.

The bow cockpit area has a forward-facing seat set into the console moulding, and an aft-facing seat which doubles as a step from the bow. Under the latter is a large locker which supplements the bow locker.

A simple anchor roller is a standard fitting, and guardrails offer a handhold to complement the steel frame of the windscreens.

Behind the swivelling pedestal seats at the helm, there is generous aft-cockpit floor space in front of a transom bench seat.

The centre section of the bench hinges to reveal a very large locker, which also gives access to engine ancillaries and the fuel tank. Narrow lockers in the



**stowage** A pull-out bin in the bathing platform's port locker is part of good storage provision.

coamings provide more stowage.

A recess in the seat-back to starboard offers a step through the transom to the bathing platform, which is set well above the waterline but effectively split in two by the outboard well. The starboard section has a pull-down boarding ladder and grabhandle, whilst to port there is a locker with a removable bin and further stowage.



**forward cockpit** Seats face both forward and aft, and there are guardrails outboard.



**aft cockpit** There is generous floor space around the swivelling helm seats and aft bench.

## conclusions

### LAYOUT

The walkaround layout gives great access to all areas. Although the cuddy is just for shelter, and the privacy of using a toilet, it would suffice for the occasional night on board. If you want more sleeping space, you need to opt for the cabin version of the boat.

### BUILD

In heavy use there are a few rattles, and some of the fittings are not of the highest quality, but then the Azura is at the budget end of the market. We found only a few rough edges, and all the surfaces look to be durable.

### PERFORMANCE

The very capable Yamaha outboard brings an impressive turn of speed, the only limitation being the number of turns at the wheel to get from lock to lock.

## MBM verdict

The 650 WA is a likeable craft, with a capable hull and engine, at a very competitive price. Its walkaround layout makes it suitable for a combination of uses.

## specifications

<b>BUILD</b>	glass-reinforced plastic
<b>RCD</b>	design category C
<b>LENGTH OVERALL</b>	21ft 3in (6.48m)
<b>BEAM</b>	8ft 2in (2.50m)
<b>DRAUGHT</b>	1ft 5in (0.45m)
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b>	1.23 tonnes
<b>FUEL CAPACITY</b>	28.6gal (130lt)
<b>ENGINE</b>	single 150hp Yamaha Z150PETOL HPDI two-stroke outboard
<b>SUPPLIERS</b>	Yamaha Motor UK, Sopwith Drive, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0UZ. Tel: 01932 358000 <a href="http://www.yamaha-motor.co.uk">www.yamaha-motor.co.uk</a>
<b>BUILDERS</b>	Kelt, 55 Rue Alain Gerbault, 56037 Vannes, France. Tel: +33 297 541 789
<b>PRICE</b>	£25,074 inc VAT as tested

## the rivals

### WELLCRAFT 22 COASTAL

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Slightly larger, and boasting more facilities in the cabin.

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