

Bavaria 28 Sport

Bavaria, well known for its affordable cruisers, has been a bit quiet of late. But now the yard is back and boy has it discovered some attitude

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON

BOAT REPORT

BAVARIA 28 SPORT

Carl says...



A big style shift might give me something fun to write about but how will it transfer into delivering a useable cruiser – something the old Bavarias certainly were. Most of all, will it be something buyers respond to?

FACTFILE

Bavaria 28 Sport
LOA: 29ft 3in (8.9m)
PRICE: from £88,788
with twin petrols
TOP SPEED: 37 knots

“This might be one of the best sub-30ft hulls we’ve ever tested”





The low-profile windscreen forces the wind over your head when seated

This is a completely new kind of Bavaria. It looks different and it feels different, much of which can be put down to the exciting decision to get BMW involved in the design process.

The 28 isn't the first fruit born from the loins of this Germanic love-in, that honour goes to the Deep Blue 46 launched some 12 months ago. But

the 28 Sport is a far more important boat as it represents the key entry-level market. If Bavaria gets this boat right, then the rest of its new model range stands a far better chance of succeeding.

Design & build

Like the 46, the 28 Sport really stands out from the crowd with the kind of in-your-face design

that Sealine pioneered with its SC range. The 28 comes with a daringly different look that is bound to see the re-emergence of the Marmite (you'll either love it or loathe it) tag. It is a particularly brave move given that previous Bavarias were the epitome of safe sportscruiser style. Now the hull dominates, with the topsides making up most the entire boat, a smidgen of lift

There is only one forward-facing seat at the helm

to the coachroof and a small lip of windscreen exaggerating the hull's muscle. As a functioning design though, the low-slung deck raises two questions. Firstly, will there be enough headroom for the interior? And secondly, what protection will there be for the skipper at the helm?

Aside from its progressive exterior, the 28 offers a pretty conventional four-berth interior. This convention though is smashed by a separate mid cabin, making this one of the smallest and cheapest boats to manage the feat. Jeanneau's smallest sportscruiser, the Leader 8, and the boat that the 28 is most likely to compete with for buyers' affections, manages the same trick. If these £100,000 boats can truly be considered entry-level cruisers, and it is a big if, then this is a seminal moment in design.



Seating for four around the teak cockpit table, with LED lights above and a decent wet-bar laid on

Much more effort has gone into the 28's fitout with Lewmar hatches, stainless steel fittings and a mass of colour and cabinetry choices for the cabin and cockpit. The finish looks better too, with less silicone showing up around the interior joins. That said it is still scruffy in places, as demonstrated in some of the cabinetry.

Three diesel engine options, two twin and one single, represent a strong line-up but our test boat came with twin petrols. Inside the enginebay big stringers sit across a neat bilge. Access is tricky however, the main reason being the sunpad cockpit layout Bavaria has opted for – you have to hoist yourself over the sunpad's

Design & build

Fresh new design is what the sub-30ft market needs



GRP base to gain access to the bay. This layout has been unpopular with buyers in the past, as more space was given over to sunbathing than seating.

Exterior

The 28 has a similar cockpit layout to the Bavaria 30 – the one that Bavaria redesigned to deliver more seating and less sunpad – but it does have a couple of factors in its favour. The deck access on this boat, gained via a couple of steps either side of the sunpad, is good right up to the radar arch, whereupon the ankle-high windscreen makes you feel a little exposed as you head further forward. The sunpad also delivers a huge stowage compartment under its upholstered top, and we all know that you can never have too much space to sling gear on a boat. A useful wet-bar sits to starboard housing a smart stainless steel fridge, with LED lights shining down from the radar arch.

The remaining cockpit squeezes in a U-shaped dinette set around a teak table, that will easily take a family of four. The squared-off seating plan is ideal for the cockpit, and far better than a crescent style, as it allows you to wedge yourself into a corner when underway. The upholstery comes in an array of solid and two-tone colour options, with everything from subtle greys to bright orange available – so all personalities are catered for.

There's no getting away from the fact that there is only one forward-facing seat though. You will be relieved to learn this is the helm position, but it does make for a lonely life for the skipper. A single helm is the Bavaria norm but if many 25ft sportscruisers manage to squeeze in two seats at the helm, why can't Bavaria on a 28-footer?

Another Bavaria oddity is placing the shorepower inlet at the helm. We have often wondered why any designer would place it here instead of the transom, where it would be out of the way, but we might have cracked it. Has the yard put the outlet here so you don't forget to unplug before casting off? We've only



The new design looks good on the water and handles even better, the sunpad layout is the only issue

come to this conclusion as the fellow next to us did just that, and ripped his shorepower lead clean out of the pontoon point.

Cockpit canopies are always a bit of a pain, especially when they set you back £3500, and they only get worse in the kind of freezing

Exterior

Will that sunpad be embraced by buyers?



conditions we tested the 28 in. But these canopies seemed unusually difficult and unwieldy to put up, so you may be better off paying for some bespoke canopies to be made.

Accommodation

Bavaria needed to update its old, slightly ornate mahogany cabinetry and I'm glad to say it has. The new style is smoother, more contemporary and better finished. OK, so the standard spec is

still mahogany, but you can select a light oak or walnut finish for £1186, which is pretty good value and a rarity on boats of this size.

With its overhead skylights, oak sole and white panelled sides, the main cabin on the 28 is a bright and inviting place to be, although as feared the headroom isn't amazing – just 6ft in the entrance way. A plethora of lockers are laid on, with eight of them surrounding the convertible dinette seating, plus a larger hanging locker. The galley features a fiddled countertop with some useful workspace. There is a deep sink, a fridge and space for a microwave, which is just as well as in our experience the ceramic hob fitted here is pretty much useless.

Running off the main cabin are two doorways, notable for their head-thumpingly low frames. One of these low doors leads to a small toilet compartment, which is barely worth taking the risk to enter unless you really need to go. The



Only a single seat at the helm for the lonely skipper



Deep coamings and a useful side-deck step



New fitout looks better and, for the most part, is finished better. Three timber options are offered

other one leads to the mid cabin and is well worth ducking through. Within lies a cosy retreat – cosy in this case meaning a comfortable place in which you will like to spend time, rather than just small. There is a long bench seat inside, two opening ports, a useful 5ft 10in of headroom in the entrance and plenty of stowage space.

Overall, while the space on offer can't be compared to a 30ft cruiser, it is a noticeable step up from your average 26ft model, and it will hold its own against the Leader 8. The Jeanneau feels slightly more spacious in the main cabin but the Bavaria's mid cabin is the clear winner.

Accommodation

Separate master cabin is the big news



Performance & handling

This test served as a reminder of why we prefer diesel engines. A recent 'Ask the experts' question enquired as to which of diesel or petrol was the best choice for entry-level sportscruisers. Our answer was balanced and objective and we said

that you could buy either depending on certain personal wants and needs, but that was before we spent a day inhaling petrol fumes. Now we'd say that you should absolutely, definitely buy a diesel boat.

The test boat's twin 225hp 4.3lt V6 petrol engines are a smooth, powerful and cheaper option than either a single 260hp/300hp D4 or twin 160hp D3s, but they gave us a headache. There was nothing wrong with the set up, nor was there a gaping hole in the fuel tank (we checked, twice), petrol just smells.

On test we hit close to 37 knots with 450hp on tap but Bavaria has recorded 34 knots (with four crew) from the single D4-300, so whichever option you go for you're going to be getting places pretty fast.

But the real story isn't the choice of fuel or even the speed but how good the new hull is. In short, it must be one of the best sub-30ft cruiser hulls we've tested. We were utterly gobsmacked by how this tubby-looking hull dealt with the kind of seas sub-30ft boats don't usually venture out in to. It was very smooth, responsive and lots of fun. As ever, landing on the chine delivered a hard slam



The dinette converts to a large double berth

but if you keep the hull level, something that's easy to do with the trim tabs working well, you can cut through the chop with sporting prowess.

The only issue is the amount of water that was allowed to come back aft; most of this missed the helm but friends, family or in our case German marketing people, won't be so lucky. If it weren't for the boat's bluff bows we would simply put this spray down to the conditions, but the hull form does look like it could struggle to push water outboard.

Another surprise is the superb job the tiny lip of windscreen does if you helm while seated.



Once you're in, there is room to get at the engines

Although you actually look over the screen, its design pushes the wind over your head.

Performance & handling

Great hull, fun handling but go diesel



Admittedly, you will rarely want to helm this kind of sporty craft sitting down but should the conditions deteriorate, it's good to know you can seek shelter if you want to.

Specification & value

The criteria for entry-level cruisers seem to increase every year – so, unfortunately, does the price. As with the Leader 8, the 28 Sport has to be viewed as an entry-level boat but one that offers more attitude and space. The question is how much more will you have to pay to gain those attributes? Working on the basis that you can still buy a 26-footer for around £75,000 and that you really need to fit a diesel engine to the 28, you are looking at around £25,000 more. The base price for a single 260hp D4 diesel is around £100,000 and that increases by a whopping £10,000 for the 300hp diesel version.

Specification & value

A bigger, better entry-level model but it costs more



This compares pretty closely to the Jeanneau, so buying the 28 Sport is still one of the cheapest ways to gain a separate mid cabin.

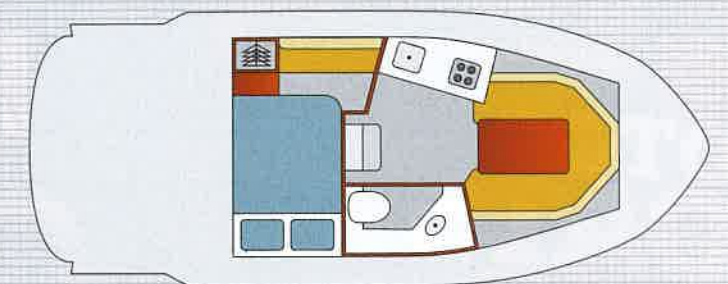
MBM verdict

Bavaria is back and it means business. We're still not sure if this is a big small boat or a small big boat but the mix of progressive styling, good handling and smart fitout is just what this market needs.



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Bavaria 28 Sport technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	29ft 3in (8.9m)
BEAM	9ft 9in (2.9m)
DRAUGHT (DRIVE UP)	1ft 8in (0.6m)
AIR DRAUGHT	9ft 3in (2.8m)
DISPLACEMENT	4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	115gal (520lt)
WATER CAPACITY	24gal (110lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	6in (15cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 0in (1.8m)
HEADROOM IN MID CABIN	5ft 9in (1.7m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 3in x 4ft 8in (1.9 x 1.4m)

performance

Engines	twin Volvo Penta 4.3GXI
Configuration	6cyl, 4.3lt, 225hp @ 4800rpm
Conditions	wind SWly, Force 4, sea slight
Load	fuel 50%, water 0%, crew 3

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
3000	18.6	48	10	1.86	170	84
3200	20.0	56	12	1.66	150	85
3500	24.5	62	14	1.75	160	86
4000	29.0	92	20	1.45	132	86
4500	34.2	122	27	1.27	114	88
4700	36.3	138	30	1.21	110	89

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken at the helm.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 225hp petrol engines	£88,788
with single 260hp diesel engine	£99,108
with twin 160hp diesel engines	£115,150
DELIVERY	£4053
BOW THRUSTER	£2091
TEAK COCKPIT SOLE	£3630
CANOPIES	£3548
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£951
COCKPIT FRIDGE	£1245

BOAT AS TESTED £103,061

ENQUIRIES Clipper Marine Tel: 023 8060 5060
www.clippermarine.co.uk

the rivals



SEALINE SC29

From £134,890 with twin D3-190hp diesels Similar size, interior and equally strong handling but the SC roof adds another level of user-friendliness. www.sealine.com



MONTEREY 315

From £115,000 with twin D3-190hp diesels Outstanding value, big-boat feel, great sportscruiser looks and another strong performer but no separate mid cabin. www.southwater.com



JEANNEAU LEADER 8

From £96,027 with single D4-260hp diesel Next generation Jeanneau design means lots of light and space. Separate mid cabin too. Might be the main rival. www.jeanneau.com



Light, bright mid cabin sports two ports and a locker



A bench seat, good stowage and some standing headroom make this a masterful mid cabin for a 28-footer