



**BOAT REPORT**

# **BAYLINER 2655 CIERA SUNBRIDGE**

Bayliner are emphasising quality as well as quantity in their '94 Ciera range, so we took an early test to see if the differences are more than brochure-deep.



AMERICA's huge Bayliner Corporation are making a conscious attempt to rid themselves of the 'built to a price' reputation from which they have suffered in previous years, and the first model we have seen that obviously reflects this is the 27ft (8.2m) 2655 Ciera.

Built on a medium-vee 16°-deadrise hull, the Ciera benefits from a clean set of lines to the topside and superstructure, which is topped with

a sturdy wraparound screen, and incorporates higher-quality fittings, fabrics and linings. These cosmetic improvements are backed up by a number of simple but practical design ideas which also caught our eye.

## Exterior

One such detail is the small section of removable cushion fashioned into the main L-settee, adjacent to the console. When this is moved, the GRP seat-base becomes the first in a series of steps, moulded into the console itself (the sidedecks are minimal), which give access to the foredeck via the split screen.

These steps, the curve of the coachroof, the flattened section of foredeck and all other exterior surfaces are moulded with a deep diamond-pattern non-slip. Our test proved this effective on a superstructure which was covered with dew or melted frost. The screen was also rigid enough to give confidence as a handhold, and just as importantly the frame was devoid of sharp snags.

It seems Americans still cannot do without their anchor platform extremity, which in this case adds around 18in (46cm) to the boat's overall

**Above:** move a section of cushion from the settee next to the console and you create the first step up through the screen and onto the foredeck. **Below left:** the midships double sleeping compartment is spacious and allows full sitting headroom. **Above right:** the galley alongside the companionway has only a single burner and an icebox as standard, but a bigger hob and fridge are options. **Right:** access to the engine room is good, and the hatch has some noise insulation.



length. However, at least the Ciera's moulding is now integral with the hull, with no worrying flexing as load is applied.

An anchor is optional, the rode feeding through a spurling pipe to the locker, which can be accessed from the cabin. Sadly, there is no specific item of deck gear for securing an anchor chain or warp.

Mooring warps now have the benefit of rather better-proportioned bar cleats than we remember from previous Bayliner reports, although the foredeck would certainly benefit from having two of them rather than just the one.

From the cockpit there is a wide walk-through to the bathing platform. This has the usual boarding ladder and accompanying handhold, and a short run of steady grabrail also runs across the transom coaming.

The rail along the exterior of the cockpit, below the screen, is not meant as an enticement to use what is merely a ridge of sidedeck, but is useful for holding the boat alongside while belaying or casting off mooring lines, and as an aid to climbing aboard; moulded mid-height steps are also provided on the coaming side.

As well as the L-settee across from the pedestal helm seat, the cockpit has a slideaway



bench aft. Beneath this there is some open-sided storage, supplemented by a good-sized cave locker within the transom.

Also found here is the optional exterior shower. This comes as part of the Cruise package which also includes a hot water system, an alcohol/electric hob, a battery charger, a refrigerator and a 240V mains ring.

The full-headroom canopy which encloses the forward section of cockpit comes as standard.

The whole forward section of helm console moulding is finished in grey gel, to reduce glare. The controls fall comfortably to hand, whether you are sitting or standing, and all instruments (which include speedo, echo sounder and compass, but no power-trim indicator) are easily viewed. Trim tabs are fitted as standard.

The moulding includes a couple of handy angled trays for bits and pieces. We would like to have seen overload protection incorporated within the adjacent electrics panel.

## Interior

Walking through a set of double folding perspex doors, ducking slightly under the strut-supported hatch, takes you into the spacious open-plan cabin. This has a conventional layout, with galley immediately to port of the companionway, the toilet compartment to starboard and the dinette occupying the forward section.

A good width is maintained in the dinette by terminating it in a mini-bulkhead/backrest before it becomes too narrow. The area behind this makes for a useful deep shelf, and a hatch right at the bows gives access to the chain locker. The table is plenty big enough for four to dine around, and drops to form a 6ft 2in x 5ft 0in (1.89 x 1.52m) double berth. Lockers beneath the seat-bases are painted out.

The single alcohol ring and icebox fitted as standard would be rather too basic for most purposes, but the Cruise pack's fridge and twin-burner hob make for an adequately appointed galley. Storage is reasonable, with some small container bins outboard and a double cupboard and drawers beneath the fiddled work surface.

The toilet compartment is not over generous in size but adequate enough. A neatly moulded lower section incorporates not just the shower pan and sink but ridges which should drain splashed water back into the sink, saving washbags from going soggy. The toilettroll-holder is tucked away in a locker.

Midships is a sleeping area with an opening port to the cockpit and a token curtain to give a measure of privacy. The mattress is a full 6ft 6in x 4ft 10in (2.0m x 1.49m), and there is plenty of room to sit up at its head. Bordered shelves are incorporated at both ends to offer a modicum of stowage, and a small hanging locker is sited adjacent to the entrance.

Between the galley and the toilet compartment, headroom is around 6ft 2in (1.89m); this slopes gently away over the dinette, but still leaves plenty of sitting headroom. Ventilation comes from a couple of opening ports and a deck hatch.

Upholstery and lining materials have been improved from previous Bayliners, and certainly the fit-out is more robust. One major niggle remains: the dreaded stuck-down carpet. Whilst

we could hear the forward bilge pump humming away, there seemed no obvious way of getting to it for inspection, or the water tank.

## Engines

Two Mercruiser V8 petrol options are offered: the 5.0lt 230hp and the 5.7lt 260hp versions, both on Alpha One legs. We tried the smaller unit.

Supported on a pair of gas struts, the engine hatch is of a size which still leaves room for a footfall on the deck when hopping in and out of the compartment, or for others to squeeze past in the meantime. It is still of sufficient width that everything can be checked and maintained easily, from the engine itself to the auxiliaries sited outboard, principally the holding tank and pump, the calorifier, the battery box and charger.

Just one battery caters for both domestic supply and engine-starting. We would have been happier to see a second dedicated to starting, and also a stopcock in the fuel line. Neither point would be difficult to rectify, and on the whole it appears a tidy installation.

There is a second electric bilge pump (rather more accessible than the forward one), and the hatch and forward bulkhead are faced with some noise insulation.

## Handling and performance

A demonstration weekend held on the South Coast by long-time Bayliner agents Aquatic Boat Centres enabled us to try the 2655 on rather more open waters than their home base of Windermere. Even so, we encountered only the barest of chops, interspersed with the occasional fast-moving wakes courtesy of the pilot cutter and rolling washes from the Solent ferries.

The chop we enjoyed taking flat-out at 31½ knots, pulling 4400rpm. The wakes we dodged over comfortably at a more demure 18 knots, having throttled back to 2800rpm. Intermediate speeds of 27 and 24 knots were obtained at 3800rpm and 3200rpm respectively.

Expect fuel consumption to be in the the order of 14gph (64lph) at full throttle. Backing right off to 3200rpm should cut this to 8-9gph (40lph).

The 2655 proved simple but enjoyable to drive. It was light on the steering and, if it was not too far trimmed-out, plenty of helm could be applied before the leg hesitated on delivering the power. Short stabs on the trim tabs brought a progressive response when levelling up in any crosswind, and performance was well mannered.

Popping open the throttle produced a 0-20-knot response time of just over 10sec, the Ciera lifting easily onto the plane without any excess bows-up attitude.

Sitting and standing positions were comfortable, and the screen offered a high degree of protection. Cockpit sound levels were reasonable: 80dB(A) at an easy 24 knots, 85dB(A) flat out.

## Conclusions

Bayliner's open-cockpit Ciera Sunbridge range runs from the 2355 to the 3055, all benefiting from the same facelift evident on the 2655.

Of course, beauty is more than skin-deep, but despite our criticisms we came away liking the 2655, especially given its low purchase price. □

## Bayliner 2655 Ciera Sunbridge

**Loa** 27ft 9in (8.46m).  
**Hull length** 26ft 4in (8.02m).  
**Beam** 8ft 5in (2.57m).  
**Draught** 3ft 1in (0.95m).  
**Displacement** 2.25 tons.  
**Fuel capacity** 58gal (264lt).  
**Water capacity** 20gal (94lt).  
**Engine** single Mercruiser 5.0LX V8 230hp petrol.  
**Price** £25,528 ex VAT as standard; £27,225 with Cruise pack.

**Builders** Bayliner Marine Corporation, PO Box 9029, Everett, Washington State 98206, USA.

**UK distributors** Aquatic Boat Centres, Glebe Road, Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria LA23 3HE. Tel: 05394 42121.