



Four Winns 205 Sundowner

In the eternal battle between cockpit and cabin space, it is the exterior that prevails on this 23-footer.

REPORT BY JOHN WOOD



Designers of small cuddy-cabin sportsboats are usually aiming to offer everything to everybody. Often, their strategy for tempting potential buyers is to maximise cabin space.

Four Winns have taken a different route with their 205 Sundowner, which seems to be intended mostly for dayboating families.

DESIGN & LAYOUT

We are not too sure where the Sundowner nomenclature comes from. This is a craft built for fun in the sun; when it comes to sundown, not too many will want to stay on board.

The cuddy is fairly compact, and has no galley facilities. Its effective role will be mainly down to being a place to throw stowage, and a home for the portable loo.

Any overnight stays are not likely to be planned, although if they are, and it is warm enough, a canvas canopy can be erected over the cockpit to extend the living space.

The cockpit is what this boat is really all

cabin • single petrol sterndrive • 35 knots • £28,881 as tested

highlights



COOLBOX

A neat underseat moulding in the cockpit offers a place to keep chilled food and drink.



BATHING PLATFORM

An extended platform with good stowage helps to keep watersports separate from cockpit seating.

about. It feels like one you would expect to find only on far larger craft. A good aft settee takes care of sunbathing and seating, whilst a small cockpit bar keeps the crew supplied with drinks.

A bonus is an enormous extended bathing platform, which in effect keeps any watersports preparations out of the main socialising area.

POWER OPTIONS

Engine choices outnumber all other items on the options list, and will give some buyers a headache. There are 16 in total, nine from Volvo Penta and seven from Mercruiser.

All of them are single petrol installations, and some are available with twin-prop outdrive legs. They range in horsepower from the 190hp Volvo Penta GL/SX to the 300hp Mercruiser 350 MPI/Bravo III.

Our test boat had a 225hp Volvo Penta 4.3 GXi/SX.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

The 205 has very responsive handling, which endows it with a real sportsboat feel.

Cornering is real turn-on-a-sixpence stuff.

The ride is fine for this size of boat, though it would be challenged in more than the



helm The dashboard, with its burl wood trim, displays all you need to know in an ergonomic format. The standard specification includes a compass, a digital depth-sounder and stereo controls. This leaves little room to fit extra navigation aids, but owners of this type of craft will probably only consider a handheld GPS anyway.

decks

The cockpit is dominated by the wraparound U-shaped seating at the transom.

A small table can be mounted in the centre, handy for the small wet-bar to starboard which incorporates a sink and drinks holders. A removable coolbox is in the seat base to port.

A starboard section of the seating can be removed to leave a well designed walkthrough from the bathing platform, and unless you need the seating capacity this

is likely to stay stowed most of the time.

Helmsman and co-driver each have a comfortable swivel chair, with fore-and-aft adjustment and lift-up bolsters for a lean-back driving position if preferred. Once the boat is moored, they can face aft to complete a sociable arrangement.

As the bathing platform extends well aft of the topsides, the boat is very easy to board from alongside. The platform is well above the water level,



stowage Lockers on the bathing platform and under the walkway into the cockpit will swallow watersports and deck equipment.



cockpit Swivelling the forward seats make for a sociable layout around a table when at rest.

so the starboard fold-out boarding ladder, which is hidden in its own locker, is essential. A transom shower also comes as standard.

The locker to port is self-draining, so it is ideal for storing wet watersports clothing, keeping them tidily out of the cockpit. There is also a cavernous locker under the walkway through to the cockpit; stretching well forwards, it is perfect for housing waterskis or wakeboards. The angled transom houses a wide but shallow locker.

Access from the cockpit to the foredeck is through the centre opening section of the windscreen, which is a bit of a leg-up. Short guardrails offer some type of handhold at the bow, where there is a small anchor locker.

BOAT REPORT Four Winns 205 Sundowner • 23ft sportsboat • 35 knots • £28,881

choppy waters of our test day. The fact that the ride is a bit lively is down to the boat's lack of length rather than hull design.

Though we did try to induce it, we did not get any hard slamming. Also there is no skip-out on the tighter turns, and the performance is well matched to the hull.

Top speed comfortably classifies this as a sportsboat. Flat-out, we saw 35.3 knots at 3900rpm. But the Four Winns is just as happy at a relaxed 3000rpm, registering

26 knots, with a low-cockpit noise level of 83dB(A). Ease back the throttle further and 2500rpm gives 21 knots with just 80dB(A).

With the seat adjustment and the tilt-adjustable steering wheel, it is easy to get comfortable at the helm. The wraparound screen and cockpit styling add up to a protected driving position if you are seated, and some shelter from wind and spray when you adopt a lean-back standing position. A wiper comes as standard.



accommodation



toilet The chemical loo pulls out on rollers from under the cockpit.

vee berths These can be infilled to create a double berth for overnighting.

It is all fairly comfortable in the cuddy, if compact. Headroom is fine, once you are seated.

The vee-berths have three lockers under them, and these are not taken up by an infill because you use the seat back cushions for this. A chemical toilet tucks away on a roller system under the cockpit, without taking up cabin space.

Two small portholes and the deckhead hatch provide daylight. Velour-style upholstery, soft furnishings and a stereo system all help you feel at home.



engineroom

The aft cockpit sole and seat pivot up on an electric ram for access to the enginebay.

A tidy installation gives good access to all you need to check on a day-to-day basis, with a wide enough opening to work in if things get more serious.

As you would expect from a mass manufacturer, standard parts are used rather than high-specification fittings, but pipe runs appear fairly simple and wiring is well coded and neatly clipped.



the rivals

GLASTRON 229

£30,792 inc VAT

A bigger cabin features twin lounge seats.
Tel: 01753 496999.
www.glastron.com

MAXUM 2100 SC

£26,360 inc VAT

Slightly smaller, with more distinctive styling.
Tel: 01202 701707.
www.maxumboats.com

WELLCRAFT 230 EXCALIBUR

£32,495 inc VAT

A wider beam, and more powerful engine options.
Tel: 01634 843576.
www.welcraft.com



specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category C
LENGTH OVERALL	22ft 8in (6.91m)
BEAM	8ft 1in (2.46m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 9in (0.84m)
DISPLACEMENT	1.54 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	30gal (135lt)
ENGINE	single 225hp Volvo Penta 4.3 GXI/SX petrol
SUPPLIERS	Atlas Marine, Deacons Boatyard, Bridge Road, Bursledon, Hampshire SO31 8AW. Tel: 023 8040 6222. www.atlas-marine.co.uk
BUILDERS	Four Winns Boats, 925 Frisbie, Cadillac, Michigan 49601, USA. www.fourwinns.com
PRICE	£28,881 inc VAT

conclusions

LAYOUT

Baised towards cockpit rather than cabin space, the layout is highly adaptable for a family's dayboating needs. It takes care of sunbathing, eating, drinking and watersports, assisted substantially by the extended bathing platform.

BUILD

The craft has a solid feel, with a good standard of finish and attention to detail. In choppier conditions, there is little rattling from any of the fittings.

PERFORMANCE

Its handling characteristics mean this could be an ideal family boat or first-time buy for newcomers to boating.

MBM verdict

Is the 205 Sundowner the complete all-rounder? For a dayboat, yes, with its sociable cockpit and enjoyable performance. For a sportscruiser, it is a bit lacking in cabin space, but alright for the occasional night if you are caught short by the weather.

The boat's short options list attests that this is a pretty complete package. Interestingly, there is a reduction in price if you opt not to have the cockpit carpet, and we would put the saving towards the optional stove and cockpit canopy.