

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Paragon 31

With a few more feet to play with, does this 31-footer outshine Paragon's excellent debut model? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

Mark says...



Interesting designs can backfire, especially when the designer is trying to fuse together opposing forces such as style, practicality and performance. Will this smart looker offer the lot or fall short?

“The exterior helm is a fun place to be”

FACT FILE

Paragon 31
LOA: 32ft 4in (9.8m)
PRICE: from £202,595
TOP SPEED: 35.5 knots



However, as we discovered with the 25, Paragon isn't concerned with looks alone. The whole design concept reeks of common sense, from the thick band of fendering that makes up much of the topsides to the heated, panoramic forward windscreen. And when it comes to the internal layout, in addition to the wheelhouse, the 31 benefits from two double cabins fore and aft. Outside there is a seat-bordered cockpit and a

Design & build

Great mix of innovative looks and good sense



decent-sized foredeck. The latter is an under-utilised space as there is nowhere much to perch but better placed is the barely noticeable raised helm position to the rear of the wheelhouse.

Exterior

The 31's easy-to-move-around deck areas feel very open yet protected at the same time, thanks to the combination of deep gunwales and sturdy guardrails rather than solid coamings. Openings either side of the transom bench seat also allow the bathing platform and cockpit to form one



Solid guardrails rather than coamings work well



Bow roller and anchor hinge inside the chain locker



Wide side decks make it easy to move around

flush area of deck. The rear of the wheelhouse is equipped with a drop-down bench and a wooden table can be set between the two rows of seating. The transom bench provides some storage, plus there is a lazarette area beside the engine hatch. Additionally, a large locker let into the bathing platform should help solve your fender stowage problems.

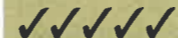
Stepped into the aft end of the wheelhouse is the excellent exterior helm with its single, adjustable skipper's chair to starboard and a cosy twosome adjacent. This raised helm station allows you to feel well tucked-in and out of harms way, making it a fun place to be, rather than feeling perched up and exposed. Furthermore, the seats are a good size, which is great for long-distance cruising, and the well-thought out anti-glare, grey console includes a plotter. We also liked the fact that there is always a grabrail to hand, these are particularly useful on the seat backs to assist with the mild ascent.

The 25 has an aft door to connect the cockpit with the wheelhouse, which makes sense as it helps create a larger cockpit-cum-wheelhouse combination, however the 31's cockpit is large enough to do its job unaided and the omission of the aft door allows for the inclusion of the exterior helm. For deck access the 31 easily makes do with two wide, sliding side doors.

The side decks past the wheelhouse are a generous 14in-wide and even with the doors slid back in their open position there's plenty of room to get by. Up on the foredeck seating may only consist of a cursory wood perch on the coachroof, but the designers have managed to keep clutter to a minimum – the bow roller and anchor hinge back to lie hidden in the chain locker.

Exterior

All the walkaround benefits without the bulk



A breath of fresh air for the midships cabin



Great handling starts with the deep-vee hull and finishes with a silly grin all over your face

Accommodation

The deep, uncluttered window line to the wheelhouse gives an excellent view out, and although the rear-most part is moulded panels, ports in the rear bulkhead allow the skipper to glance behind when underway to see if anything is approaching before putting the helm over.

“The whole design concept reeks of common sense”

Additional light and ventilation is provided by skylight hatches set in the deckhead and although there is nothing to stop you keeping either of the doors open (they lock in several positions), you don't even feel cut off from the outside when they are closed up.

A raised L-shaped bench seat skirts two sides of the wheelhouse with a lift up portion providing access to the aft cabin, while the portion opposite the helm – which incorporates a comfortable armchair – can be swung through 90° to face forward. When not required, the accompanying dinette table can be



There's room for three at the raised exterior helm, which is well protected from the elements

With the launch of its first and very sharp looking 25ft wheelhouse model, this new Scandinavian yard did a great job of demonstrating that exciting looks and practical boating aren't mutually exclusive. However, we came to the conclusion that the Paragon 25 was more of a very capable dayboat than it was a cruiser. So if you hankered after the Paragon's eye-catching style but craved more elbow room, the 31 could be just the boat for you.

Design & build

Like its feisty, smaller sibling the 31 sports a hull with a deadrise of 24.5°, which pushes into deep-vee, race boat territory, and in doing so promises to balance speed with ride comfort in equal measure. Above the waterline its lines are just as interesting – the 31 works hard to juxtapose curves and hard-edged scalloped detail to catapult the staid and sensible wheelhouse design into something that belongs on the boating catwalk.



The heated, panoramic forward windscreen offers spectacular visibility



Everything is shipshape and sharp-looking, and the Paragon 31 isn't bad either



The skipper's seat houses the drinks cabinet

Easy access makes single-handed cruising an option



The inner helm is tidily laid out with an anti-glare grey finish



The moulded WC has good stowage

moved out of the way by sliding it up to the deckhead on a floor-to-ceiling strut, but at the end of the day it's the skipper who's in charge of the rum rations as he is sitting on the drinks cabinet.

The inner helm is finished in the same anti-glare grey finish as the exterior one, and as well as being tidily laid out it incorporates a Raymarine C120 Widescreen plotter. Engine

instruments find themselves tucked up on the overhead console together with the standard-fit VHF. The vertical, rounded windscreen is heated and to get round its tricky shape the screen is equipped with two banks of wipers that work in tandem to overcome its curvature.

The aft cabin is accessed by ducking through a gap in the rear seating and once down here there is full standing headroom and the two

berths that run either side are easy to clamber into. At 3ft 6in the port-hand one could count as a snug double but both benefit from plenty of unrestricted leg room, and there is enough room to sit up should you wish to. A couple of side ports and a hatch let in the aft bulkhead take care of ventilation. However, stowage isn't so well catered for as although there are a couple of cupboards located between the berths they are pretty shallow, while the voids under the berths accommodate various tanks. The battery switches are also housed here.

The forecabin fares decidedly better on the stowage front, with cabinetry running down either side, while the area beneath the U-shaped seating has been separated into a number of smaller, handy sized compartments. The cushion width is generous but the lockers and a lack of backrests in the cabin mean it falls a little short of being a mini saloon-style retreat.

The galley is situated next to the open hatch that leads up to the wheelhouse and boasts a useful mix of storage. Countertop space is limited, however, as much of it is taken up with the three-burner gas hob and circular sink. A decent-sized fridge is tucked under the work surface, beside the nest of drawers.

The nicely etched detailing that brings the exterior mouldings to life have also been utilised in the moulded toilet compartment, so that it isn't simply an expanse of white gelcoat. The compartment is plumbed for a shower and there is plenty of moulded-out stowage.

Accommodation

Unfussy interior that's inviting and comfortable



Performance & handling

Only single sterndrive engine options are offered on the 31 – perhaps due to the acute shape of the hull – with Volvo's D6 unit available in 330hp or 370hp ratings. Either engine sits neatly in the moulded compartment that is boxed in with perforated aluminium-faced insulation. Access is

good and, if needs be, you can drop down onto treadplate areas either side of the engine, rather than slip into the bilge.

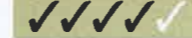
When it comes to handling, the 31's hull wants to stride out and be noticed without creating a fuss. The keenness of its hull flicks waves away smoothly and keeps uncomfortable slams to a minimum, yet it still remains an easy, relaxed drive – which isn't always the case with deep-vee hulls. As one might expect, it banks steeply into turns but then levels out without fuss, ready to romp off on its new tack.

On test we recorded a top speed of 35.5 knots, which is a couple of knots shy of what the yard claims but a little tweaking of the prop size might help the last few hundred rpm wind in a little easier. However, for general cruising you are going to settle for something closer to 25 knots with an mpg of over 3mpg and a very useful 250-mile range.

The interior driving position and viz through that window-like-screen is excellent, however it's the raised exterior helm that really impresses – you feel protected and tucked-in and being seated this far aft gives a particularly easy ride.

Performance & handling

Runs as well as it looks, plus choice of helm positions



Specification & value

Now for the broken record, or rather pound. The Paragon 31 clearly isn't a cheap boat, especially as it only sports one engine, but then things that look this tasty rarely are. In its defence the price includes plenty of kit – from the heated screen to the two, well-equipped helm stations. However, there are several items that seem to be missing,

the most notable being shorepower, a windlass and a bow thruster.

Overall, if you can get your head around the base price it doesn't need too much work to get a fully equipped boat.

Specification & value

A designer-looking boat with a price tag to match

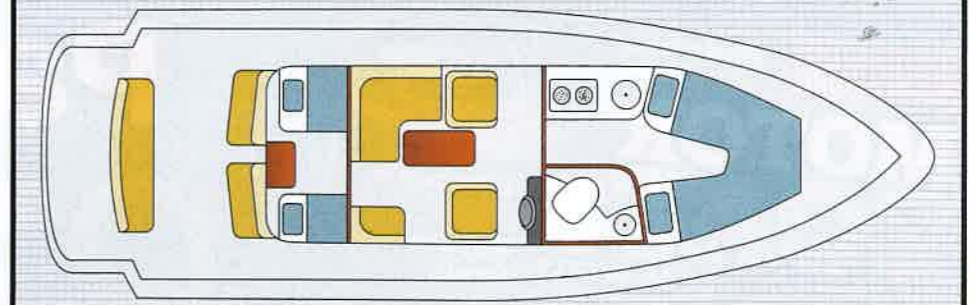


MBM verdict

So how virtuous is this Paragon 31? It's just too handsome and well finished not to stand out and be noticed, which rather culls any moral rectitude. But looks aren't everything, and the 31 has all the right ingredients to take you cruising in comfort, safety and style.



Paragon 31 technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	32ft 4in (9.8m)
BEAM	10ft 10in (3.3m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 7in (1.1m)
DISPLACEMENT	4.9 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	99gal (450lt)
WATER CAPACITY	44gal (200lt)



key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	14in (35cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in (1.9m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 10in x 2ft 0in (2.1 x 0.6m)
MIDSHIPS BERTH	6ft 9in x 3ft 6in (2.7 x 1.0m) and 6ft 9in x 2ft 0in (2.7 x 0.6m)

performance

Engines	single Volvo D6-370hp diesel					
Configuration	6cyl, 5.5lt, 370hp @3500rpm					
Conditions	wind NW'ly, Force 3, sea calm					
Load	fuel 30%, water 75%, crew 2					
Rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
2300	17.6	5.5	25	3.20	256	72
2500	21.2	6.6	30	3.21	257	72
2700	24.7	7.9	36	3.13	250	74
3000	28.8	10.3	47	2.80	224	75
3200	31.4	12.8	58	2.45	196	76
3500	35.5	16.3	74	2.18	174	77



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 in the wheelhouse.

prices

STANDARD BOAT with single Volvo D6-370	inc VAT £202,595
BOW THRUSTER	£3261
HEATING	£3237
TEAK DECKING	£7837
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£2812
SHOREPOWER	£1849
COMMISSIONING AND ANTIFOUL	standard

BOAT AS TESTED £220,150

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the rivals



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AQUADOR 32 CABIN
From £205,000
This Finnish builder manages to deliver a walkaround wheelhouse boat with two good sleeping cabins, but it lacks an exterior helm.
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NORD STAR 31
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This tough-looking boat benefits from a raised outside helm, two separate cabins, a door out to the cockpit and side access to each deck.
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Good storage but no backrests mean less lounging



The compact galley lacks countertop space



Access to the roomy twin-berth aft cabin