

# Princess V46



**With its prestige brand name and its neat retractable hardtop, this boat pledges enjoyable cruising come rain or shine. Does the reality live up the promise? REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

It's hard work convincing people to spend £300,000 on a new boat. The days of simply sticking a few bikini-clad girls on board and promising buyers that all this could be theirs if they'd just sign the cheque are long gone.

Thankfully, Princess's new V46 is far more than just a lifestyle enhancer. Built to plug the gap between the ageing V42 and the vastly more expensive V50, the latest sportcruiser from this prestigious Plymouth-based boatbuilder offers a heady concoction of style, performance and

all-weather cruising ability.

Much of this is due to the V46's appealing retractable hardtop, hitherto available only on bigger boats in the Princess range. This folding roof claims to offer the space and freedom of an open cockpit, along with the weather protection of a closed one — the transformation being achieved by the flick of a switch.

A blustery summer's day gave us just the right opportunity to put the hardtop through its paces, and discover whether the V46 really is a boat for all seasons.

## DESIGN & BUILD

The hull and much of the overall design concept is the handiwork of Bernard Olesinski, which is good news in anybody's book. His underwater lines, typically of a variable-deadrise medium-to-deep vee, are renowned for their kind running and good handling, all without giving away too much in terms of interior volume.

The V46's accommodation is no exception, offering two roomy cabins with en-suites, separated by a comfortable saloon and an open-plan L-shaped galley.

Up top, the cockpit is well thought out and again offers plenty of room, both when motoring and when moored, while the inclusion of a garage beneath the sunpad, taking a RIB or PWC up to 9ft (2.8m), makes for an uncluttered bathing platform.

But where Princess have stolen a march on some of their nearest rivals is with the fully integrated retractable hardtop. Of course, there are a number of boats that can be supplied with a fixed hardtop, which can be partially opened to the elements via a sunroof or two. But here the roof is more along the lines of a readily deployed canopy, such that much less of the cockpit finds itself left in unwanted shade.

Given the sizable midships cabin, the

tender garage and a lazaret, you might be wondering where there is room for engines. The answer is beneath the cockpit dinette, quite well aft. This being the case, we were expecting to find a V-drive installation, but not so. In fact, there is a conventional, straight-through shaft.

Olesinski's trick here is that the underwater part of the hull extends almost to the end of the bathing platform, so there is more boat abaft the engines than at first appears to be the case. Couple this with the

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**Good balance between inside and out. Hardtop makes perfect sense.**

tunnels which help to accommodate the propellers, moderate the shaft angle, and hey presto!

## ACCOMMODATION

The descent from the cockpit into the saloon is unproblematic. With the galley immediately to starboard, and the good-sized fridge right next to the companionway, this means it is easy to pass up provisions for al-fresco dining.

For food preparation itself, there is plenty of countertop space — interrupted only by a twin set of circular sinks and a two-burner hob. The facilities are all-electric, courtesy of a 7kW generator fitted as standard.

Stowage is a useful mix of variously sized lockers and a run of rather narrow drawers. However, it is disappointing that although the cupboards earmarked for crockery are segmented, the bulk of them are devoid of fiddles. On the plus side, the galley area has





**forward suite** The generous berth is surrounded by elegant joinery, and its WC has a shower cubicle.

practical wood-block flooring.

Adjoining the galley is a sideboard incorporating a cocktail cabinet, while across the way the convertible settee will seat six at a pinch. Running at eye-level above this are a number of wood-lined lockers (again without fiddles), while the voids within the seat-bases are simply painted out.

Similarly, in the otherwise well appointed

midships cabin, the large spaces under the twin mattresses back straight onto the hull bottom; surely a moulding, with a false bottom to access the bilge, cannot be that tricky or expensive to provide?

That aside, the cabin is well proportioned, with good sitting headroom over the twin 2ft 6in wide berths, as well as an adequate amount of clothes stowage. It also

benefits from en-suite facilities.

Both this WC and the forward one are pretty plain, with moulded sinks and little to lift the rather uninspiring ensemble of white bulkheads and mouldings. The forward one has a dedicated shower cubicle, but the midships equivalent relies on a couple of rather rickety pieces of Perspex that swing together to make a temporary enclosure.

More impressive is the forward cabin, which makes the most of the elegant style of joinery and finish featured elsewhere in the accommodation. The berth is generous, at 6ft 6in long by over 5ft wide, with plenty of sitting headroom and a handy raft of lockers courtesy of tables and sideboards.

To starboard is a mirrored dressing table, so you have somewhere to perch while making up. And clothes storage is well catered for, thanks to a decent-sized

hanging locker which includes some shelving, and drawers let into the end of the berth.

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Comfortable and well appointed, although the WCs are rather plain.

**galley** The flooring is practical, but lockers lack fiddles.

**midships cabin** Besides their own WC, the guest berths have good space and stowage.



**saloon** The comfortable settee could seat up to six, and can be converted to sleep two. Opposite is a handy cocktail cabinet next to the galley.



**retractable 'hardtop'** The infill is actually of fabric, sliding open or closed at the touch of a button.

**helm** A chart area is squeezed into a busy dash.

## EXTERIOR

You can order a V46 with a fully open cockpit, but to date every buyer has opted for the hardtop arrangement, with good reason. With this system, the extent to which you expose yourself to the elements can change as quickly as the British weather itself, simply at the press of a button.

'Hardtop' is not really the right word, because the infill is actually of sliding fabric rather than solid panels. One benefit of this is that, when open, it rouches up, so that only a small part of the cockpit remains in its shadow. Another is that the area above the side portions of the screen are filled in, which adds significantly to the protection offered, whether the canopy is closed or open.

On the down side, headroom over the forward part of the cockpit is a mite restricted, although you soon get used to this.

The layout is well proportioned, with a good-sized double helm seat forward and a

lounger-type settee across the way. Further aft, a generous dinette, with a smart wooden table, can accommodate six people, served by a combined wet-bar and barbecue opposite.

Aft again, the sunpad mattress which tops the garage is thoughtfully shaped with a headrest, and fashioned so that the port edge flips back, making it easier to open the gas-strut supported hatch to the lazaret.

Here, a ladder allows you to drop down onto a treadplate, although the more portly might find it tight going. Once inside, there is access to the batteries, the boxed-in steering gear and the generator, which sits amidships. And there is still room for loads of cruising paraphernalia, including any fenders which cannot find a home in the chain locker's integral basket forward.

The garage itself opens on a pair of hydraulic rams, and will take up to a 2.8m mini-RIB, helped up on a raft of supporting rollers with the aid of an electric winch.

A locker houses the fuel cut-offs and a manual bilge pump, and a cupboard takes the mains power hook-up and cable. Further stowage is found beneath the helm seat, which hinges forward to reveal a cavernous locker, and also in the main settee base.

Access to the 8in (20cm) side decks requires a short-cut across the sunpad if you are required on the starboard side, even though the designers have etched some dinky treads into the transom; on the port side there are better steps. With a decent height of guardrail and a handrail, moving along to set fenders and lines feels pretty assured.

Our only gripe is that the builders have seen fit to supply midships cleats of only 7.5in (19cm), in stark contrast to the

10in (25cm) ones fitted forward and aft. It sounds like there is an accountant about!

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Lots of space come rain or shine. The garage tidies away the tender.

**cockpit** A wet-bar and barbecue to port, plenty of stowage under the aft sunpad, and a smart dinette to starboard are features of the generous deck space.





## Princess V46 technical data

### specifications

BUILD	glass reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	48ft 7in (14.81m)
BEAM	13ft 2in (4.01m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 4in (1.02m)
DISPLACEMENT	12.3 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	300gal (1365lt)
WATER CAPACITY	80gal (364lt)

### key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	8in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in
HEADROOM IN FORWARD CABIN	6ft 1in
HEADROOM IN MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 1in
FORWARD CABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 5ft 3in
MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTHS	twin, 6ft 0in x 2ft 6in

### performance

engines twin Volvo Penta TAMD75 EDC diesels.  
configuration 6cyl, 7.3lt, 480hp at 2600rpm.  
conditions wind westerly Force 4, sea slight.  
load fuel 75%, water 50%, crew 3.

saloon cockpit									
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise	noise		
1400	13.4	—	28	1.73	199	70	78		
1600	16.6	—	42	1.55	178	73	79		
1800	20.6	—	66	1.44	165	76	79		
2000	24.5	22	98	1.11	192	76	82		
2200	27.5	26	118	1.06	196	78	84		
2400	30.2	30	138	1.01	163	80	85		
2700	33.7	41	188	0.82	222	81	85		

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin.  
Noise figures are in dB(A), for saloon and cockpit.

### prices

STANDARD BOAT (HARDTOP VERSION)	
with twin 480hp Volvo Penta diesels	£316,354
with twin 430hp Volvo Penta diesels	£309,288
(includes electric windlass, ground tackle, teak cockpit decking, cockpit fridge, log/depth-sounder, VHF, autopilot, trim tabs, electric toilets, 7kW generator)	
COMMISSIONING	£1,845
BOW THRUSTER	£4,010
COCKPIT BARBECUE	£506
EBERSPÄCHER HEATING	£3,454
FLAT-SCREEN TELEVISION & DVD PLAYER	£2,120
FURUNO 1833C RADAR/PLOTTER	£5,410
LEATHER UPHOLSTERY	£2,850
BOAT AS TESTED	£336,549

**ENQUIRIES** Princess Motor Yacht Sales, Salt Quay House, Sutton Harbour, Plymouth, Devon PL4 0RA.  
Tel: 01752 600657. www.princess.co.uk

### ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

Just two diesel engine installations are listed, both from Volvo Penta.

The less potent one is a pair of 430hp TAMD74Ls, while forking out an extra £6000 bumps these up to 75s, which push out an extra 50hp apiece. Our test boat had the latter units, which appear to be the favoured option for most buyers.

Access to the engineroom could not be simpler, via a good-sized, gas strut-supported hatch adjacent to the cockpit dinette, and down a short ladder to a treadplate between the engines. It is surprisingly small down here, but then all that's here is the engines and fuel tanks; the ancillaries are further aft, in the lazaret.

Access around the engines is good enough, with room to get at filters, pumps and belts as well as sufficient height over them to allow you to top up oil and water without having to mess about removing any panels in the sole. Readily accessible on the forward bulkhead, immediately in front of you as you step down the ladder, are the primary fuel filters and raw-water strainers. Most flat

areas, including the bulkheads and tank sides, are clad with a 'loaded' noise insulation.

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Easy access to the compartment and space enough inside.

### PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

With the canopy open, it is possible to stand at the helm while mooring, the front squab of the seat pushing up to give you more legroom. Slide the canopy closed and you will have to remain seated, although there is plenty of headroom to ease in and out of the helm area.

In practice this is not a boat that makes you feel the need to pop your head over the screen in order to be comfortable with the view, and visibility to each side and along to the aft quarters is also unencumbered.

The screen is served by a pair of dual-speed wipers, with demisters an optional extra.

Close-quarters manoeuvring is predictable, and, with the sterngear set about as far back in the hull as possible, the propellers and rudders give plenty of bite. That said, we suspect most buyers are going to specify the bow-thruster as an extra.

Knocking both engines into gear gives 6 knots for easing along in restricted waters, which is always preferable to a faster pace that obliges you to shift constantly in and out of gear.

Once out of the boat's home waters of Plymouth Sound, we nipped off 'downhill' as quickly as possible, which meant a shade over 33 knots at full throttle. This, in a good Force 5, the hull took keenly in its stride.



**engineroom** A ladder leads down to a treadplate.



**garage** There's room for a 2.8m RIB, on rollers.

Tucked behind the good-sized screen but with the canopy open, we found the ride extremely comfortable and the boat easily controlled. The wheel, throttles, engine instrumentation and navigation electronics are all well placed.

Having got several miles out to sea in a fairly irregular chop, we were not looking forward to the bash back to the coast. However, our misgivings were misplaced, and we scooted back at a well-mannered 24 knots with the throttles set at 2000rpm, still nicely protected from wind and the odd

blast of spray by the high side screens and, this time, by the fully deployed canopy.

Testing its handling back in the shelter of the Sound, we found this quite sizable craft a real joy to drive. The steering is light enough for one-handed operation, but still firm enough to be precise. The hull and engine package is responsive, and there is so little fuss about getting onto the plane that, without looking at the log, it is difficult to judge what speed you have stepped up to.

Our only disappointment was with the noise level readings in and around the cockpit, which were above 80dB(A) at

anything over 20.5 knots (1800rpm). Whether the canopy was open or closed made no difference.

### SPECIFICATION & VALUE

Although the retractable hardtop is a £16,000 extra, we have included it in our consideration of the overall price of the V46 because it is what sets the boat apart, and because to date every purchaser has thought likewise.

Otherwise, the standard inventory is pretty useful, including a generator together with a good base fitment of electronics. This leaves just a navigation package to add on, and, almost inevitably, a bow-thruster.

Economy looks pretty impressive, at a useful percentage above 1mpg, even if the boat on our test day was running in fairly 'light' condition.

Compared with other craft of a similar size (and note that Princess's usual competitors Fairline do not have a comparable model at present), the V46 stacks up well in terms of price, given its finish and specification. The only areas where it slips up are its toilet compartments, which we would have

expected to be more appealing, and its tucked-away stowage points, which could do with lining out.

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Essentially good value. A few niggles over finish in hidden areas.

### the rivals



**SUNSEEKER PORTOFINO 46**  
from £289,050 inc VAT

No hardtop option, but apart from that a similar layout, except that the dinghy is not housed in a garage but launched via a hydraulic platform.  
Tel: 01202 381111.  
www.sunseeker.com



**GOBBI ATLANTIS 47**

from £330,700 inc VAT  
The layout is on a par with the Princess, incorporating two en-suite cabins and the tender garage, but again there is no hardtop option, just a canopy.  
Tel: 01932 242977.  
www.gobbiboats.com



**WINDY 43ST TYPHOON**

from £345,918 inc VAT  
A supremely comfortable, classy twin-cabin cruiser available with a hardtop as a £23,265 extra. Being slightly smaller than its rivals, it lacks a garage.  
Tel: 01590 673312.  
www.windy.no



## Verdict

Princess' claim that the V46 hardtop offers the best of both worlds is no empty promise.

With the roof back, it delivers the full sun-on-your-face and wind-in-your-hair experience that is central to the appeal of any large open sportscruiser.

However, unlike with the majority of its similarly-sized rivals (and cricket!), rain doesn't stop play. Press the button to shut out the sky, and you and your friends can carry on enjoying yourselves whatever the weather.

A generous cockpit, well proportioned accommodation, a solid hull and enough performance to back up those sporty looks should ensure there are ticks in most of the right boxes for owners and guests alike. Only lacklustre en-suites are a disappointment.

That this 46-footer does all this without compromising the sleek exterior lines that are the hallmark of the V range is a minor miracle. In fact, with a package as strong as this, those bikini-clad girls may just find themselves out of a job.

**MBM RATING** 7/10  
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