

Boat Report

# LINSSEN STURDY 320 AC

*This aft-cabin displacement cruiser has traditional Dutch bullnose styling and a single engine. Sturdy by name, sturdy by nature?*







Dutch builders Linssen's traditional vlet-styled Sturdy range now extends right the way from their neat 26-footer, with its clean sweep through from the cockpit to the wheelhouse/saloon, to their luxuriously appointed 50-footer, with its hydraulically operated soft-top over a raised helm and exterior saloon.

More conservative, and tucked in towards the smaller end of the range, the 320 is a very handy single-engined model, available in several guises.



The aft-cockpit version comes with a similar format to that of its sister the 260, with a cockpit which opens fully into the saloon. The aft-cabin version, with its raised aft deck, comes with the option of a dedicated sleeping cabin or an extra convertible dinette forward.

Linssen also offer two levels of fit-out: Luxe and Royal. Both include a 3.5kW Eberspächer diesel-fired heating system as standard, but with the latter you also benefit from such items as shorepower and a windlass, plus a generally higher level of finish to fabrics and headlinings. Over and above this, the builders offer semi-customised layouts, and will gladly do an owner's bidding within the structural constraints of the design.

We tested a 320 AC, with conventional cabins forward and aft and the enhanced Royal level of fit-out.

## Design

Steel remains the preferred construction material amongst Dutch boatbuilders, although sometimes it is difficult to believe it is not GRP. With their complex plate sections fabricated by computer-guided cutting and welding systems and coated with hard-wearing epoxy paint, Linssen's hulls and superstructures are extremely robust but shapely and well finished.

The 320's hull is of multi-chine design, constructed in 5mm-thick plate with frames spaced at 500mm intervals. The bottom sections are fairly flat, although inevitably they harden as they converge towards what is nevertheless a bluff stem.

A large box-keel runs almost the full length of the boat, with a thinner section of steel bulb-bar attached beneath it. The idea is to promote directional stability as well as to provide a hefty landing and protection for the propeller and rudder.



**Left: the spacious aft deck and two-level side decks are teak-clad, and a wide hatch and half-door lead to the accommodation. Top: the saloon benefits from extensive mahogany joinery, including a characterful ship's wheel. Above: out of sight on a lower level is the galley, with its sensible finish and clever stowage. Top right: owners can opt for two single berths or a double and a single in the aft cabin. Centre right: when a forward cabin is specified, it may have a double or twin bunks, offset to starboard. Below: round portholes, the three-tone paint scheme and a rope rubbing strake help to smooth the 320AC's stumpy profile.**

What could be a rather stumpy-looking boat actually appears well proportioned, helped by the clever way the topsides are broken up by the pseudo-coir rope rubbing strake and the paint scheme. The round ports in the aft cabin and coachroof also make a contribution.

## Exterior

The 320 is easy to board, via a break in the very solid guardrail amidships, where the side deck is at a lower level, making it just a short step up from a pontoon.

Feeling solid and businesslike, the boat immediately gives you confidence. The side decks are no less than 14in (36cm) wide, and bordered by a deep toerail, with a handrail running along the coachroof.

It is a single step up to the foredeck, as the topsides are built up to leave plenty of interior headroom. To ensure the crew's safety, the guardrails are pushed higher too, and they run up to the bullnose bow with a double solid rail. Right at the stem, the foredeck drops again.

In Royal specification, the boat's ground tackle includes a manual windlass, a 15kg Danforth-type anchor nestling into a central hawse pipe and 130ft (40m) of chain. The latter is housed in a good-sized locker accessed through a large hatch, but as ever without a partition to stop warps and fenders becoming entangled with it.

The smart light and signal mast readily hinges down to reduce the 320's air draught to just over 8ft. The sidelight boxes are just below the screen, which is in fact an option, and neatly set back into the steelwork of its coaming.

The spacious raised aft deck would normally be left bare, but our test boat had been fitted with a pair of smart teak-topped locker seats, welded and fully integrated into the deck. We would think these are essential if you want to sit down or stow any deck gear, but they work out at around £2000 extra. There is a break in the combination of bulwark and





rails, for access down a short ladder to the teak-clad bathing platform.

Pairs of good-sized staghorn bits are located forward and on each quarter, while the toerail incorporates midships cleats.

The helm, with its large destroyer-type wheel, is positioned centrally. There is room on the console to fit whatever is required by way of electronics, in addition to the standard engine instrumentation.

## Interior

A wide hatch and half-door give onto a kindly angled set of steps which lead down into the saloon.

Headroom here is 6ft 5in (1.95m), and the joinery throughout the boat is executed to Linssen's usual high standard, in finely matched mahogany.

Immediately to port is a shallow run of cupboards, which accommodate various electrical panels and culminate at the interior helm. To starboard is the main dinette, with well finished lockers beneath the seat cushions.

The helm position is equipped with a characterful wooden ship's wheel and an angled console, with plenty of room for all manner of electronics as well as a folded chart. A couple of pop-out panels give access to the wiring and the back of the instrument heads.

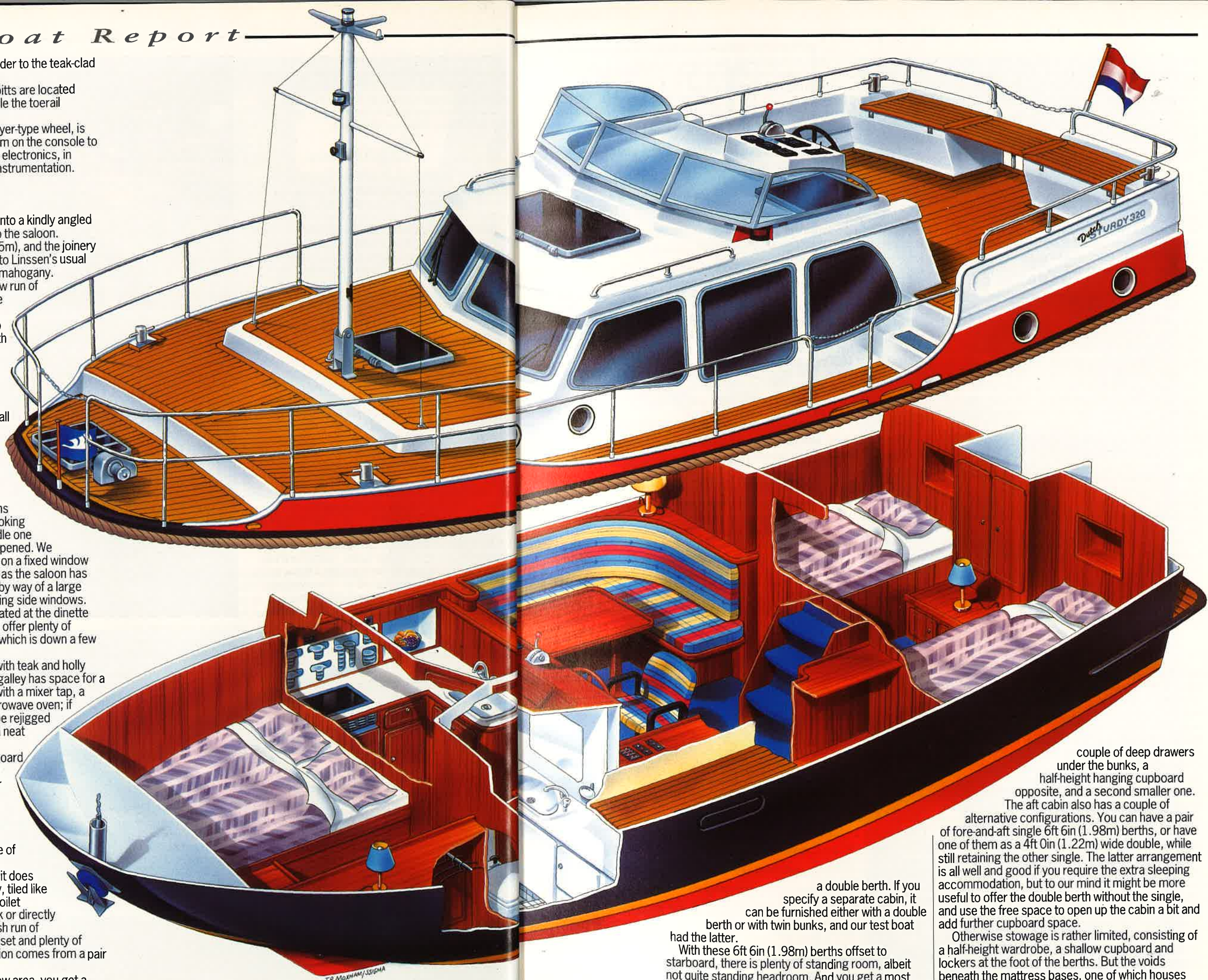
The windscreen is split into three, the fixed outboard sections each being served by a tough-looking pantograph wiper while the middle one forgoes this because it can be opened. We suspect that an additional wiper on a fixed window would be a better arrangement, as the saloon has plenty of ventilation in anycase, by way of a large hatch in the deckhead and opening side windows.

Cut low enough that those seated at the dinette can enjoy the view, the windows offer plenty of natural light, even to the galley, which is down a few steps forward.

Sensibly finished, optionally with teak and holly flooring rather than carpet, the galley has space for a good-sized fridge, a large sink with a mixer tap, a three-burner gas hob and a microwave oven; if required, the whole layout can be rejigged and a gas oven fitted. There is a neat segmented crockery storage outboard, and further bulk cupboard space plus a single drawer beneath the work surface. A pair of opening ports at eye level provide ventilation here.

The toilet compartment opposite is generous for a 32-footer, or indeed for any size of craft, even if it does not have a separate shower cubicle. What it does have is a dedicated shower tray, tiled like the rest of sole. The pump-out toilet discharges into the holding tank or directly overboard, and there is a longish run of countertop with a large basin inset and plenty of stowage built in. Again, ventilation comes from a pair of opening ports.

If you opt for an open-plan bow area, you get a secondary dinette which nevertheless converts into



couple of deep drawers under the bunks, a half-height hanging cupboard opposite, and a second smaller one.

The aft cabin also has a couple of alternative configurations. You can have a pair of fore-and-aft single 6ft 6in (1.98m) berths, or have one of them as a 4ft 0in (1.22m) wide double, while still retaining the other single. The latter arrangement is all well and good if you require the extra sleeping accommodation, but to our mind it might be more useful to offer the double berth without the single, and use the free space to open up the cabin a bit and add further cupboard space.

Otherwise stowage is rather limited, consisting of a half-height wardrobe, a shallow cupboard and lockers at the foot of the berths. But the voids beneath the mattress bases, one of which houses the water tank, are extremely well finished and

a double berth. If you specify a separate cabin, it can be furnished either with a double berth or with twin bunks, and our test boat had the latter.

With these 6ft 6in (1.98m) berths offset to starboard, there is plenty of standing room, albeit not quite standing headroom. And you get a most adequate array of clothes storage, by way of a



painted out, and we liked the way the joiners have gone to the trouble of routing out large holes in the bunk-bases so that the mattresses remain aired.

A lift-out portion of the athwartships cupboards gives access to the steering gear, and a safety hatch is to be incorporated into the transom of future 320s. Natural light and ventilation is by way of circular side ports.

## Engines

Only single-engine installations are available, starting with Volvo Penta's two-litre MD-22, rated at 50hp, which is best suited to inland waterway use. Our test boat had the most potent option, a four-cylinder Volvo TAMD 31L rated at 130hp, giving plenty of power in reserve to combat the wind and waves of coastal passages.

Almost all of the saloon sole can be lifted, in easily handled sections, to uncover the engine compartment, although just two sections will suffice for daily checks. The hatches reflect the boat's overall standard of build, being neatly trimmed in metal strip and fitting together snugly.

There is standing room at both the forward and after ends, and good access to any part of the engine, as well as the sternland. The raw-water strainer, fuel/water separator and battery switches are at the head of the compartment, while the batteries themselves and the holding tank are readily inspected.

The latter can be removed by lifting a further floor panel outboard, while another hatch right forward gives access to the stopcock and to the fuel tank, which has a removable inspection plate. More hatches let into the lower accommodation areas give access to the bilge and seacocks.

The bilge is serviced by a large-capacity Jabsco automatic submersible pump, but there is no manual back-up unit. We were surprised to find the bare minimum of engineroom insulation, covering only the deckhead hatches and not the bulkheads, but the installation is otherwise extremely neat and well found.

## Handling & performance

We took our opportunity to try the Sturdy 320 on its departure from last year's Southampton Boat Show, when it was to return to its berth on the River Hamble. It was a short passage, but with enough variety to demonstrate that the boat lives up to its name, and is well suited to the estuary and coastal cruising for which it is conceived.

Extricating ourselves from Mayflower Park's tightly packed temporary marina was achieved with the minimum of fuss, even with just the one engine. With easy-to-use hydraulic steering, the large rudder and four-bladed prop could really kick the stern around, while the optional bow-thruster helped to augment or steady the swing when required. As a heavy displacement boat with a fair amount of underwater hull and keel, the Sturdy is not easily blown about, but is nevertheless readily manoeuvred.

Once clear of the marina, the number of craft leaving the show site and Southampton's commercial port managed to drum-up a fair amount of wash to help us ascertain the Linssen's seakeeping qualities.

Offered up to the wakes of fast-moving tugs, just off the bow, the hull simply shouldered through

them. Its full stern sections rose to the occasion, with only the dulllest of clonks from below and any water being thrown well clear before it could be carried aboard by the wind.

There was enough below the water, both fixed and steerable, to maintain control when running with the wakes on the quarter. Turning broadside to them produced only a moderate amount roll, with the chunky keel and low centre of gravity coming into play. This showed up again when we put the helm hard over, there being little by way of outward roll.

Performance figures were much as we would expect from a displacement boat, although 8.5 knots flat-out is pretty good on a waterline length of just over 26ft, and just about as obtainable at a continuous rating of 3500rpm as at the Volvo's 3800rpm maximum, with obvious fuel savings to boot.

Dropping back to 2500rpm gave a useful cruising speed of 6.7 knots and fuel consumption of 2.3gph, which is equivalent to about 3mpg. For river work the turbo will be sitting it out, with a setting of just 1500rpm giving the required 5mph (4.3 knots).

Sound levels were good right through the rev range, our meters recording 75dB(A) in the saloon within the 3000-3500rpm band, and much less than that on the aft deck. Even the aft cabin was relatively noise-free, with only minor drumming and 80dB(A) in evidence at full revs.

## Conclusions

You either like the traditional, somewhat cute but businesslike look of the Sturdy range or you don't. But the concept is much more than simply a cosmetic bit of design work to woo those with a weakness for something 'classic': in practical terms there is plenty to get enthusiastic about.

The 320 offers good all-round cruising accommodation, finished to a standard that looks good and will wear well. This applies not just to its internal fit-out, but equally to its steelwork and its high-quality engineering.

The idea that slow craft are only good for inland waterways use is well off the mark, as this is a tough cookie, and well found. With one of the larger engine options, you are every bit as well set up for coastal and offshore cruising as the planing brigade, but with the bonus of more passive handling on the river once you get there. □

## Builders

Linssen Yachts BV,  
Kokstraat 6, PO Box 7172,  
NL-6050 AD, Maasbracht,  
Netherlands.  
Tel: (31) 475 463405.

## Suppliers

RYB (Marine Sales) Ltd,  
Racecourse Yacht Basin,  
Maidenhead Road, Windsor,  
Berkshire SL4 5HT.  
Tel: 01753 851717.

## Linssen Sturdy 320 AC

**Engines** single Volvo Penta TAMD31L diesel, 130hp at 3800rpm, 4cyl, 2.4lt.

**Conditions** wind NE Force 2. **Load** fuel 90%, water 50%, crew 2.

|      |       |      |     |      |        | sound levels dB(A) |         |         |
|------|-------|------|-----|------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| rpm  | knots | gph* | lph | mpg  | range* | saloon             | aft cab | cockpit |
| 1500 | 4.3   | 0.8  | 4   | 5.38 | 409    | 67                 | 63      | 60      |
| 2000 | 5.4   | 1.5  | 7   | 3.60 | 274    | 68                 | 64      | 60      |
| 2500 | 6.7   | 2.3  | 10  | 2.91 | 176    | 70                 | 68      | 61      |
| 3000 | 7.4   | 3.3  | 15  | 2.24 | 170    | 74                 | 73      | 67      |
| 3500 | 8.2   | 4.9  | 22  | 1.67 | 127    | 75                 | 78      | 68      |
| 3800 | 8.5   | 6.0  | 27  | 1.42 | 108    | 79                 | 80      | 71      |

(\* estimated)

(\* allows 20% margin)

**Price** from £81,200 ex VAT; £100,700 as tested with Royal fit-out

**Loa**  
33ft 2in (10.10m)

**Hull length**  
31ft 6in (9.60m)

**Beam**  
11ft 4in (3.45m)

**Draught**  
3ft 1in (0.95m)

**Air draught**  
8ft 1in (2.45m) with  
mast down

**Displacement**  
8.0 tonnes

**Fuel capacity**  
95gal (430lt)

**Water capacity**  
48gal (220lt)