

BOAT REPORT

Those looking to buy a mid-range sports cruiser are currently faced by an ever increasing choice. We first saw Sunray's new entry into this market at Chelsea in January, but waited for warmer weather to give it a trial in Solent waters.

UNLIKE the majority of new boats imported from across the Atlantic, the Sunray range owes its allegiance to the maple leaf. Whilst the marque is still relatively new to the European market, the company that produces them has been established for just over 20 years, and is now Canada's third largest builder, with 2000 craft a year emerging from their modern 110,000 ft² factory.

The line-up runs from the Express 16 sportsboat, through a variety of performance weekenders (we tested the 21ft Ciera, now marketed as the Classic, back in April '88) to the new 32ft (9.75m) flagship, the Corsaro. We initially saw this open cockpit fast cruiser at Chelsea Harbour during the Earl's Court show and were intrigued by its bold, almost bullet-shaped profile, and impressed by the versatile space this offered.

Fundamental to this boat's ability to handle the British climate is a well-braced, full head-height canopy which being double-skinned, changes the Med style cockpit into a snug but exceptionally roomy extra living area when the weather closes in.

Design

Designed in-house, the hull is medium vee in form, with an almost constant deadrise of 16.5° running from midships to transom. Additional lift and directional stability come from two pairs of spray rails—the inner pair fading out in their run aft to reduce turbulence into the propellers—together with a wide chine flat. A concave curvature to the stem, rather than a steady continuous rake from the forefoot, has been used to fill out the forward sections, increasing

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◀ reserve buoyancy while still keeping the actual forefoot shallow. Both factors should help prevent the boat from broaching in a following sea.

Sunray have taken the current trend of incorporating the bathing platform into the main hull moulding one stage further and have really done away with it altogether. Swimmers can climb the couple of well-spaced treads to the cockpit and still dry off adjacent to the transom access, while the wedge shape remains to protect the outdrives, and create extra space.

Of course, this feature makes specifying hull length even more difficult than is sometimes the case these days. The actual measurement from transom to stem is 28ft (8.5m); the extended area aft brings this up to 30ft (9.1m), with the LOA figure, including anchor platform increasing to 32ft (9.8m).

With a home climate that varies even more dramatically than our own, Sunray construct their craft with a view to building in as much insulation and strength as possible. While the underwater sections are of solid GRP lay-up, the topsides and decking are of a balsa/GRP sandwich construction which is then sprayed with an insulating foam. Voids between

mouldings are filled with closed-cell foam which the manufacturer claims will give positive buoyancy should flooding take place.

Exterior

Although not exactly dominated by this area, the Corsaro offers a versatile, well appointed split level cockpit of generous proportions. The lower aft section sports twin L-settees that comfortably seat four apiece. The port hand one forms a sunbed or small double berth with its accompanying table dropped, or with the two seater bench settee hinged over from its forward facing stance adjacent to the helm, a six seater dinette. We were pleased to find that in its forward position, this helm seat has a useful grab rail sited across it; this also lends a handy purchase for those passing through into the accommodation.

Stowage is found under the transom portion of the settee in well-finished lockers, while battery and fuel cut-offs are sited conveniently, but out of harm's way, beneath the side benches. Just forward of the starboard seating is a wet bar, complete with a hinged serving area that drops to reveal a sink with a perspex-fronted drinks cupboard below.

The helm is provided with both an adjustable seat and wheel, the former has room for a small navigator to perch alongside the skipper, while the latter usefully pivots for driving either sitting or standing.

Ready use switches lie either side of the wheel, the single lever throttles mounted comfortably outboard on a wide coaming extension. This moulding has plenty of room for the rest of the hands-on controls, but on the test boat, only the tabs were sited here: the outdrive controls being mounted by the skipper's right knee with their respective gauges also poorly located, on a vertical portion of the fascia, next to the wheel.

A Ritchie compass is located in front of the helm, and safely clear of any significant stray magnetic fields, while a perspex-covered chart area is set to the right of the helm. Hour meters, water tank gauge, gas detector and fire extinguisher controls are sited beneath the main console. The only thing missing is stowage, with the helm position devoid of handy cubby holes.

The Corsaro's designers have seen the shortcomings of diminutive side decks and while the cockpit arch and coachroof grab rails provide a good



Above left: the large cockpit has a double-skinned canopy which allows the area to be used whatever the weather. The crew can easily be kept fed and watered thanks to the galley (above), and a wet bar in the cockpit (above right). Top right: the folding windscreen and ladder give a safe route to the foredeck.

number of handholds, the easiest access to and from the foredeck is via the split windscreen. A short teak and stainless steel ladder adjacent to the helm provides ready access for the foredeck party and although the majority of the coachroof has a moulded non-slip finish, the portion directly in front of the screen is slightly indented for a sunbed mattress and is alas, devoid of any textured finish.

The coachroof itself extends well forward so any actual flat foredeck space is limited, but with the well braced pulpits and adequate run of handrails, this certainly isn't cause for concern. What did cause us some consternation though were the fender baskets mounted outboard of the pulpits, just at the point of maximum bow overhang. Murphy's Law prevailing, we managed to entangle them in the only dockside

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hardware present within a hundred yards. Although we disengaged with the minimum of fuss, such protrusions will always cause a problem. It has to be said that this is not easily solved, as unless you fill the cockpit lockers with fenders, there's little alternative.

A 15kg Bruce anchor and 100ft (30m) of chain connected to 200ft (60m) of warp come as standard and feed through the moulded anchor windlass into the enclosed, self-draining chain locker. Slim well-sited cleats take care of mooring.

Interior

Although very much in the outdoor Med style the Sunray 32 is more than a 35 knot sunbed, offering comfortable extended weekend cruising accommodation for up to six people. The open plan saloon — with its galley lying to port — sleeps the customary two on the large convertible dinette, with a second couple in the separate under cockpit cabin. The third pair will find a home on the cockpit dinette which benefits from a lined canopy.

Back in the main cabin, the U-shaped settee seats the full complement and a further guest or two at a squeeze. Under-berth lockers are

lined, and together with a pair of cave lockers and a hanging closet adjacent to the companionway, provide just sufficient stowage. A mirrored panel at the head of the dinette gives access to the chain locker.

The galley is equipped with a large Norcold fridge freezer that runs off 12V or mains supply while the two-burner hob is either mains electric or alcohol fired. A microwave of the owner's preference is fitted as standard in the UK.

With the number of ac appliances fitted as standard, the Corsaro comes complete with mains ring, step down transformer, and battery charger. Both the galley and the rest of the accommodation is well catered for with ac outlets, the shore supply also powering the extremely competent Sea-King reverse cycle heater/air conditioner which was fitted to our test boat. This was one of the few items not included in what is an otherwise comprehensive spec, and costs just over £1300 ex VAT.

Due to the cavernous capabilities of the fridge, further general victual stowage is limited but still adequate, being found in cupboards and drawers under the stainless steel sink and small lockers running outboard at

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eye-level. A rubbish bin housed under the countertop nearest the main access is conveniently located for both the chief bottle washer and cockpit loungers alike.

The toilet compartment with shower lies to starboard and being a GRP moulding, requires the minimum of wipe-clean attention. Stowage under the small but sensibly deep sink also gives access to the sea cocks.

Adjacent to the toilet compartment is the access to the separate aft cabin. This really does qualify as a cabin rather than the usual claustrophobic slide-in niche so often shoe-horned under cockpits. The double berth has good sitting headroom with full standing headroom extending over the dressing area. Stowage is limited to a pair of cave lockers lying outboard, one of which is already occupied with shower drain, deck wash and domestic pressure pumps, and a shallow under-berth compartment. The 12V and mains breaker panel is also located within this cabin, above a handy seat outboard of the standing area. Although tucked out of harm's way where it is, many skippers may prefer this important console in the main cabin where they can keep an eye on the status of the electrical system.

Engines

A full range of OMC, Mercruiser and Volvo twin outdrive options are available, with the most potent installation comprising a pair of 340hp OMC Cobras or Mercs priced at £58,250, which the manufacturers claim give a top speed around 50 knots. Our test boat had a mid-power and mid-price rig of twin Volvo 205hp petrol Duoprops, with the smallest and least expensive option, equipped with Volvo AQ131s giving a starting price of £48,539. The above are all drawn from the respective manufacturer's petrol ranges although diesel installations are available starting with a pair of Volvo 130hp AQAD31s at close on £60,000. All prices are ex VAT.

Access to the engine compartment is via a pair of GRP panels that have to be lifted clear, with no method of holding them up. Once safely stowed out of the way, there is plenty of room around both the engines and drive units, all service points being readily accessible. A raised platform running along the forward bulkhead provides a safe landing for the 12V/240V charger and battery boxes: each engine has its own starting unit with a separate

battery for domestic use. The reverse-cycle heater/air conditioner is also sited along this bench, with its pump and filter adjacent.

The calorifier is adjacent to the 30 gal (136lt) plastic water tank, lying forward of the engine room bulkhead and is actually accessible from the under-cockpit cabin. Pipework and wiring is soundly secured and run clear of hot spots and clumsy feet.

Aluminium fuel tanks — 60 gal (270lt) apiece — are housed in their own compartments outboard of their respective engines. Fuel lines are of annealed copper but there are no fuel/water separators apart from the standard filter on the engine.

The compartment is without any specific sound insulation although with the tanks effectively baffled by their ply bulkheads and coated with an acoustic foam, these act as sound absorbers rather than accentuating the engine noise. Heat sensors alert the skipper to any dramatic change of temperature in the compartment, allowing for an earlier investigation and swifter action than relying solely on the automatic extinguishers. Further safety equipment includes an electric bilge pump with float switch, and large blowers.

Handling and performance

Although the Solent was clear of any residual swell or white water, a stiff afternoon breeze against the tide brought things to life during the latter half of the test day. The Corsaro's medium vee handled this on any point with a sound, sure ride without any wearisome or uncomfortable pounding or finicky constant attention to trim. Finding a lack of any larger seas, the formidable wake of one of Her Majesty's training subs substituted for some serious wave hopping. Again, the Sunray showed no obvious vices and with Duoprops trimmed in slightly to negotiate tight full power turns, the hull remained well mannered without any sideslip.

Pulling their maximum 4600rpm, the AQ205s will consume around 29.5gph (132lph) at a top speed of 35.5 knots, giving just over four hours running time — a range of 142 miles. Dropping the revs to 4000rpm still gives a fast cruising speed of 31.5 knots but reduces consumption considerably to 17gph (77lph), enabling the 32 to cover a creditable 222nm on full tanks. Throttling back

still further does little to alter the mpg figure which hovers around the 1.8 mark, although for reference, a comfortable 28 knots obtained at 3500rpm enables a full weekend cruising, given that 10 hours is a sufficient time spent actually motoring. Without full sound insulation, noise levels were reasonable, although reaching nearly 90dB(A) in the lower cockpit at full revs, while at the helm this was a more comfortable 83dB(A). Our weekend cruising 28 knots gave 86 and 79dB(A) respectively with an acceptable 78dB(A) for those down below.

Conclusions

The Corsaro is a successful combination of the larger open cockpit performance craft normally associated with the sunnier, warmer climes of the Med, and a fast family cruiser, capable of offering enjoyable boating even when our Northern European weather closes in. The only criticism we can level at this competitively priced Canadian is its somewhat limited stowage both above and below decks. Bearing in mind the boat's overall spaciousness, this is a shortcoming that with some careful thought, could be overcome. We liked the Sunray for its simple but well planned layout, predictable safe handling combined with a good measure of speed and its bold individual styling.

LOA	32ft 0in (9.75m)
Hull length	30ft 0in (9.14m)
Beam	10ft 6in (3.20m)
Draught (legs raised)	2ft 0in (0.61m)
Displacement	3.85 tons
Fuel	2x60 gal (270lt)
Water	30 gal (135lt)
Price (as tested) with twin Volvo AQ205	£51,150 ex VAT

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