

Boat Report

# VEHA 35

*Look beyond the open-plan layout. The baby of this Dutch range has a nicely handling hull and versatile accommodation.*





Although established for 25 years or so, the Dutch yard of Veba have enjoyed little exposure in the UK, where they have often been overshadowed by other steel boatbuilders. But after last year's Southampton Boat Show we took the opportunity for a closer look at the smallest boat in their line-up, the single inboard-powered 35, in its open-plan layout.

## Design

The hull is of single-chine construction, with a full run of box keel which extends to protect the sterngear and support the large rudder.



Above the waterline, the topsides push out aft, neatly coddling the integrated bathing platform, with the transom given a gentle curve to further soften the boat's appearance. The bow entry has a useful amount of deadrise to reduce head-sea slamming, but fills out heartily above the chine. Although there is plenty of window area, there is no forward-facing expanse of glass in the coachroof.

Hull, deck and superstructure are all fabricated in 4mm steel, shotblasted and then sealed inside and out with a two-pot epoxy primer. Hard-wearing Sikkens paints are used over all exterior surfaces.

We liked the substantial inverted L-shaped engine beds, which obviate the need for box sections with areas of 'hidden' badly shotblasted and painted steel, a potential source of corrosion problems. Water and fuel tanks are also well isolated from the main structure, making inspection and maintenance of the internal hull much easier.

## Exterior

The side decks are a very generous 14in (35cm) wide. Unlike on most steel craft, they are devoid of a toerail or gunwale, presumably to limit the slab-sided appearance of the topsides; the solid guardrails mean they are not missed.

In standard specification the boat has ordinary steel guardrails, but our test boat had been fitted with the smarter option of stainless ones. The double-rail arrangement is very secure, the side-deck breaks are at a good height, and the coachroof top has some well positioned handrails,

although we would question the wisdom of designing the bow rails to drop away just as you really need their support.

The non-slip deck coating is effective, although the way it is painted in patches for cosmetic reasons is not altogether practical, as the areas of ordinary paint in between tend to become scratched more quickly than pukka deck paint.

Deck hardware forward comprises a manual windlass and bow-roller, complete with appropriate ground tackle, but there is no access at deck level to the chain locker. The pair of 9in (23cm) high horned bollards at the bow, and those on each quarter of the aft deck, should take able care of mooring lines; the midships ones are smaller, which is a pity if you want to double up on springs.

A deep, drained locker beneath the port side deck will swallow a couple of 7kg gas bottles.

Like many craft which feature a raised aft deck, the 35 is completely devoid of stowage or casual seating in this spacious area, so locker boxes will need to be considered as a priority. And whilst a canopy infill between the screen and the radar hoop is listed as an option, it really is a necessity, with this being the boat's only helm position.

The only seating is a single helmsman's pedestal seat, located centrally. The console layout ahead of this is simple and tidy, with a raised fascia for adding electronics, although we would have liked to see more thought given to protecting the instruments.

The aluminium-framed screen, served by a single wiper, can be folded down if required, although dropping the radar arch with the aid of its gas struts will reduce the air draught to a reasonable 9ft 2in (2.8m). The arch has been thoughtfully engineered to include a dedicated mount for an electronic compass sender.

## Interior

The companionway to the main saloon from the aft deck is via a large hatch which looks aesthetically unpleasant when raised on its gas strut, sticking up above screen level, and steps which are inclined somewhat awkwardly.

The boat we tested had a very 'northern continental' open-plan layout, with two spacious seating/sleeping areas separated by a full-width galley, but only one completely separate cabin, aft, with en-suite access to the sole toilet compartment. Alternative plans include having a twin bunk or vee-berth forecabin, and a smaller galley with either a second WC or a dinette opposite.

The window line around the upper seating area is low enough for most to be able to see out, and the adjacent and opposite areas are fitted out with a useful array of cupboards and cubby-holes to house everything from an entertainment centre to a built-in bar; the electrics panel and battery isolators are also tucked away in the run of sideboard.

The table here is free-standing, and could do with being more substantial, although it is possibly the forward settee arrangement, with its attractive 3ft (0.9m) round table, that is the real dinette. This table drops to form a 6ft 3in (1.91m) long double berth, with feet tucked under the backrest.

Ahead of the dinette is a further useful cupboard, which in turn gives access to the chain locker.

The main part of the galley is to port, fitted with a four-burner gas hob and a stainless steel sink set into textured Formica worksurfaces. Beneath these there is loads of cupboard and drawer space, but



above there is no built-in stowage for crockery and the like. Opposite, to starboard, there is a similar situation, with just the opening ports above counter-top level. Here there is a good-sized fridge and room for the optional built-in microwave, the Veba being fitted with a mains ring as standard.

Aft, a couple of steps lead down to the separate cabin, passing the toilet compartment, which is moulded for ease of cleaning and has a sink unit with stowage underneath. A separate shower cubicle is accessible from the cabin itself. The latter has a transom-spanning array of cupboards and drawers, a double hanging locker forward, and a pair of large drawers, plus access to the steering gear, beneath the 6ft 4in x 4ft 6in (2.03m x 1.37m) central berth.

These aft compartments are well ventilated with plenty of opening ports, although we would usually expect to see a larger opening hatch in the cabin.

The beech joinery is adequately finished throughout the boat, and we especially liked the way the ports are set into the panelling. There are the usual large lockers beneath all the seat-bases, although the insides are not properly finished. Veba also offer oak, teak and cherry wood finishes, at additional cost.

Headroom is extremely generous, with as much as 6ft 4in (1.93m) in the saloon.

## Engines

Just two engine options are listed, both single Volvo diesel installations. The choice is between the 4cyl 100hp TMD31, as fitted to our test boat, and the smoother and less hard-worked 6cyl 150hp version of the 41-series.

For everything but the most serious of servicing,



Above: you enter the Veba's accommodation via a hatch which looks ungainly when raised. Top left: the open-plan layout features no interior helm or separate forward sleeping area. Below left: the aft cabin has a good array of cupboards and drawers. Top right: the galley straddles the full beam of the boat, with the cooker and sink to port. Right: a single pedestal seat faces a neat but unprotected console.

you can get at the engine below the steps leading to the aft cabin, which lift on gas struts. There is ample room to crawl in and squat while you work either on the engine or on any of the auxiliaries, although the unguarded shaft close to where you enter the compartment really needs some protective cover; the shaft log would also benefit from being more accessible for maintenance.

The fuel/water separators and filters look easy enough to reach should there be a problem while underway, with the former having a handy shut-off adjacent to it. On the downside, there appears to be no remote fuel cock outside the compartment. A balance pipe connects the two 55gal (250lt) fuel tanks, located outboard.

The water tank, pumps and calorifier are forward, together with the batteries. Whilst not in a dedicated compartment, the latter are well secured and easy to inspect.

Only the deckhead has any sort of insulation, in what is a barn of an engine compartment. Despite this, noise levels are pretty good.

We were surprised to learn that the Webasto heating system is included in the standard inventory, whilst the holding tank and associated macerator in the engineroom are merely options. Also down on the list as standard is a single electric bilge pump, but its whereabouts eluded us; in fact the bilge areas generally were not very accessible, a situation that should be addressed by the manufacturers.

## Handling and performance

We had reservations about the high topsides and superstructure of the Veba when taking her off the berth for the first time on a breezy day, equipped with one engine, no bow-thruster, just four smallish fenders and acres of shiny new paintwork. However, it quickly became apparent that the 35 is well sorted below the waterline, with the box keel providing plenty of grip. Neither bow nor stern showed any great waywardness, giving us a lot of confidence in confined areas.

The rudder's effect when moving astern was minimal, with wind quickly overruling helm. But it more than compensates by having enough area and throw to allow the boat to turn almost within its own length, in either direction, on a burst of forward power alone. This makes marina manoeuvring very easy for anyone who has got to grips with the principles.

Selecting gear on the single-lever Volvo control is a treat. It is a good installation by the manufacturers, and without the added drag of a mixer unit for a second helm control this often stodgy unit is transformed. The hydraulic steering is similarly pleasurable to use, not too light but still easily spun lock-to-lock with a finger, except when moving astern at speed.

Initial bursts of ahead and astern were a bit of a surprise, the pick-up of thrust being more gentle than expected, with only slight evidence of paddlewheel effect to starboard when going astern. We started to guess that the Veba is fitted with a three-bladed propeller, even more so when an annoying cavitation grumble was heard through the steelwork at 3000-3300rpm.

It is notoriously difficult to select the right prop for some displacement boats. Most Dutch builders have resorted to four-bladers for their Volvo TMD31s, to avoid cavitation and give plenty of bite and useful paddlewheel, but the disadvantage is that this

engine often shows signs of overloading, pushing out unburnt fuel and black soot when worked hard. However, the Veba's twin exhaust outlets remained impressively oil and smoke-free, from manoeuvring right up to maximum speeds, and this is the cleanest TMD31 installation we have seen on a displacement craft. Despite the cavitation under certain loadings, three blades are perfect for the job.

Out of the Hamble River, the 35 barged its way with little fuss into a typical Southampton Water wind-against-tide chop. Despite the lack of a chine or sprayrail at the bow, most water was thrown sideways, with only light spray blowing back aboard. No doubt the sheer height of the topsides and buoyancy of the full bows section helps to keep the worst effects at bay.

Any fear that its bulk above the waterline would make the 35 too tender was alleviated when we used it as a photoboat for a 65ft planing boat. It rolled readily through the first few degrees, but started to stiffen just at the moment we felt it needs to, surviving mountain-sided wakes from our guest performer at any angle of approach. The responsive helm and good fore-and-aft trim helped a lot, allowing for firm control, even downwind when a playful sea started to swing the stern around.

Performance was very much as expected, with the Veba propped just right to achieve 8.4 knots at the engine's maximum one-hour-in-twelve rating of 3800rpm, and a sensible hull speed being reached at 2800rpm for a shade over 7 knots.

Estimated fuel consumption at the latter speed is around 2.5gph (12lph). Pushing the hull harder drops this to an unnecessary poor level, for just half a knot or so extra.

The noise levels we recorded at cruising revs were also useful, at 79dB(A) through the accommodation and only 68dB(A) on the aft deck, but open the throttle beyond 3200rpm and they increase noticeably, especially in the aft cabin, due to the prop.

For estuary and river work, the throttle barely needs to be pushed past tickover, 2000rpm, giving 5.5 knots. When you ease off further, the 35 produces a below-average amount of wake for a boat of this type, with little more than a ripple at river speeds.

## Conclusions

The Veba 35 is something of a surprise package. Its layout appears to have been designed for the German market, where two-person comfort is a priority, and this may have put off some British buyers. But it deserves a closer look, and the alternative interiors, to suit a larger number on board, seem highly practical, hopefully without compromising the copious storage space.

The boat's engineering is sound, its finish is fair and its handling is in keeping with the reputation enjoyed (but not always deserved) by single-engined Dutch displacement craft. A bow-thruster would be handy, but only if it was powerful enough to assist when it is really needed; the 6hp model on the options list should do the trick.

Our final wish-list would include a raised pulpit rail, a hatch for the aft cabin, and more thought given to the helm and windscreen arrangement. With those points answered, we would be looking at a very useful vessel indeed, and one which is priced as keenly as can be expected for a strong boat from a country with a strong currency. □

## Veba 35

**Loa** 35ft 1in (10.70m).  
**Beam** 12ft 0in (3.65m).  
**Draught** 3ft 1in (0.95m).  
**Air draught** 9ft 2in (2.80m).  
**Displacement** 9.4 tons.  
**Fuel capacity** 110gal (500lt).  
**Water capacity** 88gal (400lt).  
**Engine** single 100hp Volvo Penta TMD31.  
**Price** from £104,487 ex VAT.  
**Builders** Veba Jachtbouw BV, Sluiskade 1A, NL-9601, LA Hoogezand, Netherlands.  
**Tel:** (31) 5980 91064.  
**UK suppliers** Val Wyatt Marine Sales Ltd, Willow Marina, Wargrave, Berkshire RG10 8DY.  
**Tel:** 01734 403211.