

Boat Report

CRANCHI ZAFFIRO 34

Mediterranean waters threw up surprisingly tricky conditions in which to evaluate this sporty Italian thoroughbred.





Italian manufacturers Cranchi have been tackling the mid-size sportscruiser market with gusto of late, with the Endurance 39 launched at the Southampton Boat Show following hard on the heels of a good-looking performance boat unveiled only six months earlier.

We managed to get our hands on a Zaffiro 34 to test it in the manner to which we would like to become accustomed, with a four-day sortie along the French Riviera.

Design

The underwater sections are of variable deadrise, with a medium-to-deep-vee 17.5° at the transom honing up to 22.5° at amidships.

Two pairs of quite shallow sprayrails break up the hull bottom, the outer pair falling clear of the outdrive line, and run almost full length. However the chine-flat is a very much more pronounced affair, not just toed-in, as on most modern planing hulls, but with a slight hook to its outboard edge intended to push back the spray even more effectively.

Above the chine, unpretentious graphics, the port line and the gunwale strip all help to break up what is a fairly bulky topside, whilst the profile of the deck line between cockpit and foredeck is kept nicely in proportion; anchor platforms can be unsightly protuberances, but this one works well.

Exterior

The bathing platform tidily incorporates all the features required of a Med-style cruiser, including an indent in the transom to take the optional passerelle and the telescopic davits, as well as the bathing ladder and shower. However, an extra set of fender-

holders would be welcome, as the necessity to carry more than a minimal amount catered for will clog-up the stowage space in the cockpit.

A decent-sized walk-through leads forward into a split-level cockpit. Aft, a U-shaped dinette converts into a sunbed, and is served opposite by a wet-bar complete with fridge. Forward, the skipper in his comfortable armchair can be kept company by those relaxing on an adjacent L-shaped settee.

The main storage area is the lazaret beneath the textured sole, a portion of which can be raised on a gas strut. Not only does this compartment provide a useful space for all manner of bulky items, but it also allows access to the fuel tank inspection plate and pipework; these are thoughtfully protected by a plywood panel.

Further enclosed stowage is incorporated beneath the transom seat base, whose liner also lifts out to help you get to the rear of the port



Above: the cockpit operates on two levels, with a U-shaped dinette converting to a sunbed aft and the skipper kept company by those who can perch on a settee opposite. Below: the midships cabin makes for a comfortable residence, as our team found when taking advantage of a rare opportunity to stay aboard the subject boat during the four days of the test.

engine. The bar moulding incorporates the gas bottle stowage.

We were glad to see plenty of handholds about, not least the waist-height one that usefully wraps around the bar.

At the helm the driving position is comfortable whether sitting or, with the help of the lifting squab, standing. Instruments are run in three clear tiers extending forward from the wooden wheel, with its adjacent panels of ready-use switches.

The two angled fascias furthest from the wheel, inset with walnut veneer to break up the off-white moulding, house the engine gauges and helm indicator, while the larger fascia directly in front of the skipper will take any navigation electronics the owner might choose; an Autohelm Bidata depth-sounder and log are fitted as standard. The throttles are set on a wide console return, clear of any knuckle-crunching coaming, with trim tab and power-trim controls just ahead of them.

A useful 'bits' tray is fashioned into the moulding, as is a large glovebox below the wheel, but there is no dedicated spot for a folded chart or pilot book.

The swept screen, nicely finished within an aluminium frame, is served on the skipper's side by a single wiper, and the walk-through section allows access to the foredeck, via a couple of easily negotiated steps. This is a better way forward than inching along the 6in (15cm) wide side decks, although in fairness the guardrails here make for safe enough passage, extending right back as far as the cockpit.

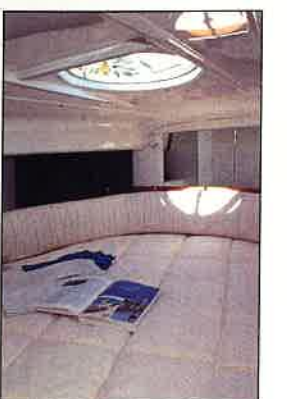
A non-slip surface finishes off the coachroof moulding, but a central handrail along its length would be a welcome addition.

The pulpit is split, and extends forward to offer a helping handhold if you are boarding at the bow. It also helps to explain why the Cranchi design team have opted for the overhang of an anchor platform. This whole foredeck area is clear of obstacles, with the windlass mounted under a hatch which in turn gives access to the chain locker, and cleats set well off towards the toerail.

These and the transom cleats are 10in (25cm), the midships ones measure a less handy 8in (20cm).



Left: the Zaffiro's saloon may seem a little plain to some eyes, but the lightness of look and open layout make the area very pleasant to use for a below-decks meal. Below: the forward master cabin has a large double which can be approached from either side, good storage and standing headroom.



Interior

A large sliding door gives access from the cockpit to the bright, well proportioned accommodation, although it takes a little time to get used to the neatly designed but almost vertical steps down. Just adjacent to the companionway are the battery master switches.

The dinette, set on a slight skew to port, seated four of us comfortably for breakfast when it had rained during the night and we could not use the more expansive cockpit table. The optional extra of a small stool, which neatly clamps onto the table pedestal when not in use, adds more capacity, whilst a cushion infill is available to make up an extra berth here, straightening the curve of the seat base.

Above is a comprehensive but easily utilised electrics panel, together with a couple of eye-height cupboards with lacquered fronts, and a 'bits' locker right forward. Further lockers beneath the seat cushions have removable moulded liners, while the forwardmost one is designed as a flip-out bin for the galley opposite.

We found the latter well appointed, with a useful combination three-burner gas/electric hob, a microwave oven and an adequate-sized fridge for solid victuals (the liquid variety, of course, can be

cached in the cockpit fridge). Just as importantly there are plenty of cupboards, lockers and drawers of various sizes, together with just enough work surface. Above the hob is an opening hatch to give extra ventilation.

The forecabin too is nicely thought-out, with the good-sized double berth measuring 6ft 3in x 4ft 8in (1.91m x 1.42m) set at a slight angle to give more dressing area to port. There is 6ft 1in (1.85m) headroom here, and you can still approach the bed from both sides.

Clothes stowage is most adequate, thanks to a half-height hanging locker to starboard, a goodly amount of shelf and cupboard storage, and a 'boot-locker' in the base of the berth.

The second cabin is equally well proportioned, and one of the neatest midships sleeping areas we have had the pleasure of using. It has two comfortable single berths, which with an infill can be made into a double, running athwartships beneath the helm area. There is sitting headroom over them, and a clear area of standing room near the door.

A dressing table is served by a mini-settee, and there is a useful run of shelf-fitted cupboards plus a hanging locker. Beneath the foremost berth is access to the water tank and bilge. Opening ports on each side allow you to benefit from any convenient cross-breeze.

Opposite this midships cabin is the toilet/shower compartment, a largely moulded affair with a rich-coloured gel used in the sink area to contrast with the off-white GRP. The toilet itself is electric. A covered cave locker beneath the sink takes care of spare loorolls and cleaning gear, whilst above the opening port is a double cupboard for stowing washbags and the like.

The wholesale white and cream of our test boat's interior finish might seem a bit bland to some eyes, although it does have a measure of understated chic, especially when offset by the odd splash of joinery in the form of doors and trim.

Engines

Our test boat had a pair of 220hp Volvo Penta KAD42/DP diesels, although this option is being phased out following the launch of the same company's 230hp KAD43/DP-E, with electronic controls. Alternatives are 200hp AD41 turbo-diesels, or 5lt V8 petrols producing 270hp apiece.

Access to the engine compartment is via a large hatch in the cockpit sole, supported on gas struts. This allows sufficient room to give both units day-to-day checks, albeit with only tight standing room to the head of the compartment. To get better access to the port engine and drives, further loose panels have to be lifted clear, which also makes filters and other service items easier to get at.

It would be better if both fuel/water separators were sited on the forward bulkhead, under the main access hatch, rather than outboard as the port one is. However such a relocation would entail finding an alternative spot for the cockpit table, which stows flush against this bulkhead.

The batteries are set outboard to port, the calorifier to starboard. The fuel cocks are connected by cables to remote shut-offs at the helm.

As ever with Cranchi, the installation is extremely tidy, with all cable, wire and pipework well routed and secured, and the whole compartment painted-out with gel. Bulkheads and hatches are lined with simple eggbox foam insulation.

A small, readily accessible submersible pump services the bilge here, but this is the only consideration.

Handling & performance

Our initial idea was to nip down from Antibes to the Iles d'Hyères, sampling the islands' various anchorages and stopovers before returning via St Tropez to the huge marina village complex at Cogolin and Port Grimaud.

However, as most experienced French Riviera hands can attest, the coastline west of Cap Camarat is prone to the Mistral which funnel down the Rhône valley, and an unrelenting 25-knots of wind literally blew out our detailed plans.

By way of consolation, the conditions could not have been better for putting the Zaffiro under a bit of pressure to test its sea-kindliness. The waves were short in length and just starting to break, all but smack on the nose when we were running west down to Ile de Porquerolles one day, and then lumpier still for our return journey running with them the following morning.

In both directions we were pleased with the boat's performance: happily sitting at a minimum of 20 knots without becoming uncomfortable going into it, whilst bowling along in well-mannered style with it dead astern, all with little spray picked up and blown aboard.

The helm position made for an easy drive, with the throttles well placed for any slight adjustment as we rode the following seas. The cockpit also had a good safe feel for the crew, offering plenty of shelter and handholds.

Once back in calmer water to the east, we could open up fully, and with full tanks, four crew and belongings, not to mention enough victuals to feed a ship of the line, we clocked a top speed of 35 knots with the KAMD42s pulling 3800rpm; this would seem to back up the manufacturers' claim of 36 knots with the slightly higher rated 43s.

Handling at these higher speeds is sportsboat light, and pin-sharp.

Dropping back to 3500rpm, we measured 31.4 knots, while 3000rpm gave 25.5 knots and 2700rpm provided our 20 knot passage pace.

Noise levels were comfortably low at the raised helm area, around the 80dB(A) mark, only really becoming intrusive back in the after part of the cockpit at the highest revs.

We did not have a fuel-meter with us, but our empirical data indicates that consumption will be of the order of 15gph (68lph) at 3500rpm, and 11.5gph (52lph) at 3000rpm. Similar results can be expected from the KAMD 43s now being fitted.

Conclusions

The Zaffiro offers a good balance between interior and cockpit space, and the proportions between and within the cabins make it an easy boat to live aboard in either rain or shine. We had plenty of both, and the rougher weather certainly endorsed the 34 as a useful sea boat and a fun performance drive.

We found the accommodation practical and comfortable. The fit-out may appear a little plain for some tastes, but it is subtle more than bland and tends to grow on you.

Cranchi's engineering is always pleasing, with the bits you cannot see being just as good as the bits you can.



The single toilet/shower compartment is located amidships and contains a useful amount of stowage over and under the basin. Sensibly, the port opens to provide ventilation.

Cranchi Zaffiro 34

Loa 35ft 9in (10.93m).
Hull length 34ft 5in (10.35m).
Beam 11ft 4in (3.49m).
Draught 2ft 10in (0.90m).
Displacement 6 tons.
Fuel capacity 125gal (570lt).
Water capacity 46gal (210lt).
Engines twin 220hp Volvo Penta KAD42/DP diesels.
Price £89,472 ex VAT with twin 230hp Volvo Penta KAD43/DP-Es.
Builders Cantieri Nautico Cranchi srl, Via Nazionale, 45-23010 Piantedo (SO), Italy. Tel: (39) 342 683 359.
Suppliers Crest Marine Ltd, 17-18 The Slipway, Port Solent, Portsmouth, Hampshire. PO6 4TR. Tel: 01705 201506.