

Aquador

25 Cabin

Betraying its Finnish origins, this clean-cut cruiser has its emphasis firmly on internal accommodation.



Now built in Finland by Bella Boats, the Aquador range of wheelhouse, cuddy-cabin and open-cockpit craft from 21ft to 32ft seem to have acquired the solid feel and clean-cut styling that is typical of Scandinavian cruisers.

In northern climes, the need for effective shelter is higher on a buyer's list of requirements. Also popular are high freeboards and well protected cockpits, all of which come with these boats.

In many ways the Aquador ethos mirrors that of Swedish builders Nimbus. One key difference,

however, is that the latter do not have a 25-footer with the accent on accommodation, as their 26 Coupé concentrates on outside seating.

In contrast, Aquador's 25 hull is available in a choice of two forms: one is a walkaround version with an open cockpit and a small cuddy cabin; the other has a

wheelhouse/saloon and a spacious forward sleeping area.

We tested this, the 25 Cabin, in a choppy Solent after its UK debut at the Southampton Boat Show.

Design & layout

The Cabin version of the boat necessarily has a taller profile, but

the design retains a good balance, helped by the raised gunwales and railings. A raked windscreen, a cabin roof projecting slightly over the cockpit and a radar hoop add some sporting style, as does the graduated stern which integrates the bathing platform.

If you want the second gelcoat

colour, it is an optional extra, but a two-tone hull has become very much a part of Scandinavian boat styling, and makes the 25 Cabin appear longer than it is. The bow graphics seen in our photographs were only for the boat show.

The boat we tested was crying out for a door leading forward from

the aft deck into the wheelhouse/saloon; instead, the only access was via side doors. This is obviously convenient for getting quickly from the helm onto the decks, especially if cruising singlehanded, but you need to stoop and twist on entry and exit.

In response to this, we are told

that the 2002 model will feature a fore-and-aft route, although the side doors will be retained too.

With clean lines from good-quality mouldings, some nice cherry wood finishes and plenty of headroom in all the main areas, the open-plan wheelhouse/saloon and cabin areas are a very pleasant and sociable environment.

Engine options are a single 210hp or 260hp petrol unit from Mercruiser, or a diesel from Volvo Penta, starting with the 170hp KAD32/DP. We tested the most expensive installation offered, the 260hp KAD44/DP.

Our test boat added £12,000 worth of extras to the base price, which included a Wallas Nautic 30D diesel heater and teak decking.

Performance & handling

As you would expect with 260hp on tap, performance is suitably brisk. Pick up from tickover is good once the revs have built up a little, and the hull is soon into its stride and on the plane.

We recorded a top speed of 36 knots, with 3800rpm showing on the rev counter. In flat water, we would expect to better this.

At a steady cruising speed of 26 knots, at 3000rpm, noise levels

Decks

The boat's walkaround deck layout ensures easy access to all parts of the boat, but with a limited aft deck there is no formal outdoor seating.

The side decks are narrow to maximise cabin space, but the gunwales are high enough to give you a real sense of security, and with outboard handrails there is no need for inboard handholds along the coachroof. The step-through gap in the railing at the bow is a typical north-European feature, for easy boarding



when moored bows-to.

Scandinavian craft rarely come with a bow-roller, but this will be added by the UK importers as a standard feature.



Bathing platform

The integral bathing platform, finished in teak as standard, is a good depth, extending aft of the topside returns so that boarding from alongside is easy, helped by handholds.

There are two stowage spaces, one a handy draining locker and the other hiding the swing-down boarding ladder.

The latter is located centrally, and we would have preferred to have seen it further away from the propeller. Although it is vital to switch the engine off when people are boarding from the water, they could still injure themselves on a sharp prop.



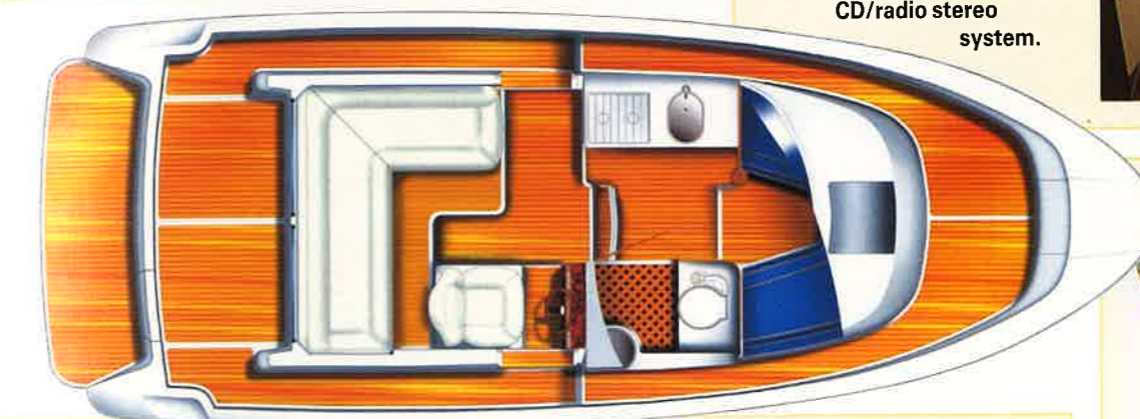
Galley



You step down from the saloon into the middle section of the accommodation, where the galley is to port opposite the toilet compartment.

The layout is very tidy, with a neat stainless sink with mixer tap and an optional twin-burner Wallas diesel ceramic hob in the countertop, above a 12V fridge (another extra) and two drawers. A shelf stretches outboard of these.

Given its location, the whole area is well served by natural light, and there is a neat spotlight for after dark.



Forward cabin

The forward vee-berths are open to the rest of the accommodation. They are a good size, and the infill cushion can stay in place permanently as the main seating position is back aft. Lined lockers in the seat-bases add to the voluminous stowage provision.

Plenty of natural daylight is provided by a hatch, and spotlights add to the comfort of the berth, as do the loudspeakers for the optional CD/radio stereo system.



Toilet

Even though it is squeezed in under the helm, there is still standing headroom in the toilet compartment.

A sea toilet and holding tank come as standard, and the moulded unit has a stainless steel sink and a mixer tap on a wander lead. Oddly, the latter is not meant to be used as a shower head, as there is no drain under the wooden grille floor! No doubt this could be adapted, however.

There is a locker in the base of the unit, and a mirror set on the back of the helm. Accessible via an opening under the mirror is a very large stowage space stretching under the helm floor. This is very useful, but might have been more so if a hatch or opening from outside the compartment could have been worked into the design.

Helm

The dashboard console is compact but well thought-out.

The main gauges, in a pod directly ahead of the helmsman,

are easily read. A digital trim gauge, an Autohelm ST30 digital depth/log, a rev-counter and engine instrumentation give all the information you need when underway.

A tray near this is ideal for

small 'bits' stowage and charts, and has a hinged perspex top. The compass is well placed just forward of the steering wheel, with the throttle control to starboard and minor controls (including those for the optional bow-thruster) filling the other spaces.

Two banks of lit rocker switches on the angled surfaces either side of the wood-rimmed steering wheel take care of the rest of the boat's functions. Trim tabs come as standard, and the switches for these are conveniently mounted on the starboard bank, close to the throttle.

There is no space on the dashboard for mounting any electronic navigation aids, but the headlining may provide a location for these.

Benefiting from ventilation as well as wipers, the windscreen always offers clear forward

vision, which is important in a fully enclosed craft.

The seat is a comfortable bucket affair, with a lift-up forward bolster to enable a lean-back driving position to be adopted if you prefer.

To effect this, however, you will also need to open the excellent glass hatch in the cabin roof, and then the roof itself is in your eyeline. For those of average height, it might be better to stand fully, and poke your head completely through the hatch for very good all-round vision.

Having the side door alongside you also means you can open this for a better view when needed.

The seat adjusts fore and aft for a fairly good sitting position, with both steering wheel and throttle falling nicely to hand. Two drawers are set into the seat base.



Wheelhouse/saloon

Attempts to keep the cabin top as low as possible has compromised the headroom inside the wheelhouse, which is especially noticeable as you enter through the side doors. The aft access promised on future boats will solve this problem.

Once you are inside, there is

good access throughout the accommodation, and excellent headroom along the centreline. The various floor levels make for a spacious feel, with plenty of headroom where it is needed.

Aft, an L-shaped seating area is set around a removable table. But the fixed glass and panels here have the feel of a conservatory, and the design really needs looking at again;

hopefully this will happen when doors are fitted leading to the aft deck.

The forward section of the settee to port also needs a better seat-back, and the builders will probably opt for a movable cushion that can also be fitted across the forward end of the seat.

There is stowage in both the starboard and port seat bases. Battery switches are set behind a vertically opening hatch to port, in the forward section of another locker accessed from under the seat cushion.



Engine room

The engine bay is accessed through the twin panels that make up most of the aft deck area.

They hinge outwards, with just elasticated clips to hold them open. On a boat of this price, gas struts might have been expected, although fitting these could effect the width of the available opening.



There is room to get down either side of the engine, and chequerplate strips provide a good foothold for inspections. All the main engine functions are easily in reach once you have clambered down.

The quality of fit-out is very good, with all wiring and piping clipped. The compartment is also well insulated, which contributes to the boat's low noise level readings when underway.

were comfortable. We recorded 85dB(A) on the sound meter in the wheelhouse, partly a testament to the boat's build quality, as there are very few rattles and squeaks.

Slow down further, and you can potter around all day on the plane at 2500rpm, which equates to 18 knots, with noise levels down to 75dB(A).

With the DuoProp leg, there is

minimal propeller ventilation on tight turns. Strangely, our test boat was less willing to come round to starboard than to port, and we suspect the steering was not adjusted correctly.

Otherwise it responded very well to the helm, any corrections being transmitted directly. The mid-range performance of the KAD44 encourages you to use the power

through the turns as well, and there is good pick-up again when the wheel is straightened.

A brisk wind strengthened during our test day in the Solent, producing a short wave length and a 1m-1.5m chop. The hull dealt well with this, riding the waves capably. It was caught out a few times, and the ride hardened when we encountered oncoming waves, but it never got out of shape and remained comfortable, with minimal jarring.

We briefly pushed the boat to top speed in these conditions, and these characteristics remained true.

Conclusions

The typically British weather on our test day really summed up what the Aquador 25 Cabin is all about.

In an open cockpit, we would have donned full waterproofs; in the wheelhouse, as we beat into the wind in a fruitless search for some flat water, shirt sleeves were the order of the day and we could take notes at the saloon table from the comfort of wraparound seating.

If you think wind in your hair and flies in your teeth is what motorboating is all about, look elsewhere. If you appreciate a little more comfort, but do not want to have to rely on a larger craft to achieve that aim, this could be the boat for you. □

Aquador 25 Cabin

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RECREATIONAL CRAFT DIRECTIVE

Design Category C: Inshore (voyages in coastal waters and estuaries in wind up to Force 6)

DIMENSIONS

LOA

25ft 3in (7.70m)

BEAM

9ft 4in (2.85m)

DRAUGHT

2ft 11in (0.90m)

DISPLACEMENT

2.6 tonnes

FUEL CAPACITY

55gal (250lt)

ENGINE

single 260hp Volvo Penta KAD44P/DPdiesel

PRICE

£67,706 inc VAT as tested

SUPPLIERS

Aquador UK, Sea Ventures, Lymington Yacht Haven, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 3QD. Tel: 01590 672472.

BUILDERS

Bella Veneet Oy, Valikontie 10, FI 70700 Kuopio, Finland. Tel: +358 17 2883 800.

