



**MOTOR
BOATS TESTED**

Bavaria 32 Sport HT

This ambitious German yard has furnished its best-selling, super-sensible sports cruiser with a voguish lid. So is it hats off for the hardtop?

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON

FACT FILE
Bavaria 32
Sport HT
LOA: 33ft 5in
(10.2m)
PRICE: from
£127,035
TOP SPEED:
37 knots

“Hop aboard, and it's easy to see why so many boaters have fallen under the 32's spell”

Bavaria's 32 Sport has proved a major success in the UK since its 2003 launch. It has been so successful, in fact, that we couldn't get our hands on one! But recent developments have given the boat some added topicality with an interior makeover and a new, optional hardtop. So we grabbed both cruiser incarnations to answer the question any potential buyer will be asking: is the more expensive hardtop really worth it?

And will the Sport HT still deliver the sports cruiser

goods? Or is the open cockpit still the only way to experience the ultimate in performance cruising?

Design and build

Hop on board the 32, and it is not hard to see why so many motorboaters have fallen under its spell. The cockpit is immediately impressive. Space is maximised by doing away with a moulded transom and pushing the aft bench right aft, as is done with pocket cruisers. The cockpit is incredibly bright – even when covered up with a hardtop – and intelligently laid out with

plenty of seating, including the all important crescent bench by the helm. Yep, it certainly ticks all the boxes.

Move below decks, and the ambience warms up as Bavaria's ability to create space is aided by improved cherrywood cabinetry. Then there is the mid cabin. Offering two bunks, standing headroom and a long bench, it is a class leader. At this point you may want to hop back out to the deck to check that the badge on the side does indeed read 32 and





New cherry wood cabinetry really sets off a spacious and friendly saloon.

not, say, 35. You can almost feel your cheque book being charmed out of your pocket.

While back out on deck, double checking the decals, you can scrutinise the hardtop. This is a proper integrated hardtop complete with solid GRP, push-button sliding roof, not one of those uncomfortable add-ons that look like a particularly bad hat. A total redesign from the deck level up delivers a smooth, quite rounded superstructure with a far taller window line than the Sport.

For visibility forward and out to the sides, it's worth sticking here a moment because hardtops live and die by the viz they offer. The Elan 35, a boat we loved for its cool looks and hooligan handling, has been left in the wake of more recently launched competition because of their improved view from the helm. Reducing the weight of the hardtop – with finishing panels

placed over a honeycomb structure – has allowed Bavaria to deliver a wall of thinly framed windows to the front and sides, leaving two A-pillars aft as the main support. We are pleased to see a deflector (or spoiler) designed into the front of the roof, in order to reduce the spray sucked back into the cockpit.

There is no doubt that Bavaria's stock is on the rise. And while the silicon gun operator is still in gainful employment, he has certainly become a far more skilful artisan. The finish is clean and practical where it needs to be – such as in a cockpit detailed with stainless steel fixings – and more luxurious below decks, where some real charm and style is starting to emerge.

At a lower level, we now have five years' worth of Bavaria production to reflect on, and so far there have been no structural issues reported (unless you know differently) which backs up the

yard's build techniques. One area that can be improved, though, is the engine bay. Bavaria is still, sadly, sticking to its zero-tolerance policy on insulation. Regardless of whether people are bothered about what goes on 'under the hood', they will surely be bothered by the harsh roar of four-cylinder diesel engines under a hardtop. *Bitte, meine Herren*, soften those sound levels.

Design & build

Proper hardtop delivers genuine choice
✓✓✓✓

Exterior

So Bavaria's quality is on the rise, but for some the standard cockpit may be a tad clinical, with its all-white glare. We would definitely recommend the full teak deck option as the finishing touch to lift the luxury levels, because otherwise it is pretty much all laid out for you. For the niceties of

cruising life, there is a newly designed wet-bar area right by the main seating, perfect for afternoons at anchor, and if it all gets too much then a simple fold here and a hinge there produces a sunpad. Point-scoring details include stainless steel cup holders and, at night, low-level LED lighting adds the glitz.

Further forward, a separate crescent bench comes into play when underway. Raised up, it gives the crew the perfect vantage point and is an excellent addition for a boat of this length.

With the hardtop included, the question for us is whether the designer has got it right with the split between those who want to be in the sun and those who don't. If your idea of weather protection is Ambre Solaire (other suntan lotions are available) then the open Sport model is clearly going to be favourite, as the main seating on the HT is shaded, although the final swathe of upholstery aft is left open to the sun. The sunroof is good and wide, opening up the forward sections of the cockpit. So from the helm, there is very little al fresco feeling lost between the two boats.

The sun, though, is only half (or maybe just a quarter) of the story. The HT comes into its own when the dark clouds gather. In place of the mild panic that any command to "hoist canopies" instils, here you simply push a button. And as Ancasta sales manager Alistair Shove confirms: "Everyone showing an interest in this boat or any of our HT range is looking to leave canopies behind."

But boating practicality is something shared by both 32 variants. Good decks are a Bavaria trademark, and these are quite superb, both in terms of getting to and walking on them. Easy, safe access is supplied from the deep bathing platform, even with the aft canopy up. And from there on, it's plain motorboating as the decks roll forward.

Back in the cockpit, the clever seat-to-sunpad framework has one more trick up its sleeve with two useful lined storage bins found beneath its

base. And with the fender rack aft, it need not get clogged up. A manual bilge pump by the stainless steel transom gate finishes the job.

Accommodation

With so much emphasis on the new hardtop, it must not be forgotten that the 32 has much to offer down below. The fact of the matter is that



The choice is yours: open (left) or hardtop (right), the Bavaria 32 is still a stylish yet practical proposition



this boat offers what must be the best mid cabin in its class, certainly in terms of space, headroom and specification.

And it is pretty much the same story in the saloon. The addition of a mid-cabin door can cramp a 30-footer's saloon, but not here, not at all. By pushing the cabin walls out to the hull, width is maximised, deckhead hatches bring light and ivory-coloured upholstery does the rest. Simple, really.

But there is a danger of blandness with this approach – an issue side-stepped with an

intricate deck head and the new cabinetry that brings depth and warmth, not mention plenty of useful stowage.

Sticking with the cabinetry, we were pleased to note the inclusion of fiddled edges, a rarity on today's boats, but massively useful for – say – putting things down without them falling off! The galley is finely equipped and looks the biz with its smart stainless steel fridge. Less impressive is the small sink and alcohol stove, but a microwave and plenty of locker space help out.

A fairly simple toilet compartment works well as a loo, but as a shower it's a bit limited. And we are still not sure about the holding tank mounted



Aft stanchions and a shallow step for deck access



New style wet-bar and optional teak add luxury feel



...and sunpad loafing!



Two for one: that backrest folds for watersport fun...



That high-glare white dash is lifted by a clear layout



Doorways promise privacy, but do not close in on social space



A usable size toilet compartment



A winning mid cabin: space, seating and stowage



New window line affords great visibility from the helm



Those clean, safe decks run right the way forward



Master switches are neatly tucked into the cockpit



The lined stowage locker can be split or left as one

behind a locker door. Who wants to see that?

The forward berth is left open to the saloon with a privacy curtain used to separate day and night use. The double berth is surrounded by lockers, and will be fine for occasional use or maybe the kids. But

Accommodation

Superb mid cabin adds that dollop of cruiser kudos

✓✓✓✓✓

that's all, mainly because you will be cosied up in the mid-cabin with its privacy, its standing headroom, its seating...

Engine options and access

Regular readers will know of our dislike of any electric hydraulic engine hatch that does not offer secondary, manual access. This is not a criticism of Bavaria – they're all at it – but the fact remains that if you lose battery power or just run them down, you can't gain access very easily. Anyway, our thirst for pushing buttons must be quenched, and so the 32 has a very straightforward access, whereby no cushions

need be disturbed and the table remains in its place. Just remember to close the transom

gate first – or you'll need a new one!

Bavaria offers twin installations of Volvo Penta's 5cyl D3 (160hp or 190hp) or the D4 in its 225hp guise, as tested here. Top rated at 260hp the D4 is boisterous but quite wonderful. At 225hp, though, it's just boisterous, especially without any soundproofing.

The 4cyl engine's 660kg weight also makes it a heavy choice for the hp, when you

The helm's multi-function keypad is a boon

consider that the D3 comes in at only 330kg. This makes us think that you should bypass the more expensive D4 and try the smooth-running D3 instead. If the performance stands up, you are then free to enjoy its automotive-grade engine instrumentation, including fuel economy.

The physically smaller D3 will also open up the

engine bay, which is neat – if basic – in finish, with just the eyeline of the bay painted out, and no step down. There are no tread plates and

Engine options & access

Go for the D3s and ask for some insulation

✓✓✓✓✓

plenty of cabling is visible, but it is neatly clipped back. Our main concern was the exposed fuel feeder pipe for the optional heating. It's sat right where you are most likely to kick it.

Performance and handling

Like the Bavaria 35 that we tested last year, this is an easy boat to control. With the D4-225s installed, the 32 stomps along at close to 37 knots at 3550rpm, but we don't think the D3 will be far behind. The hull remains pretty neutral and unfazed by leg trim, all the way up to +3 where it simply loses a bit of speed rather than getting too flighty. Push hard into a turn, and the bow lifts out and slows the speed of approach. The pronounced chine that flares out from the bows can slam, but that is the price of interior volume.

For your most economical cruising, simply stick below 30 knots. The D4s return a fairly level power/economy curve below that. There is little rattle or annoying noise from the mouldings as you bash along in the open Sport. From the HT's helm, the soundtrack unsurprisingly louder.

The HT's visibility is as good as we hoped it would be. Turning hard to port you can still view the horizon with a slight dip of the head, while a clear view down to the stern quarter is also possible. But it is noisy, and remains so until you drop the revs back to 2800rpm and 28 knots, where a 2dBA reduction has a big effect on onboard tranquillity. And there it stays all the way down to the 20-knot speed you probably won't want to drop below. The deflector mentioned earlier seems to work well, too, with no spray reaching the aft seating from the wake.

Both boats share the same seat and helm console. It's impressive, although the HT could do with a footboard to raise your head up through the sunroof. The dash is still decked out in high-gloss white, but it is neat and tidy, especially the new schematic control pad that tells you the what and where of the most used onboard systems – such as lights, audio, anchor, sunroof

Performance & handling

One part sports fun mixed with three parts dependability

✓✓✓✓✓

and engine bay. The bolster offers a good seated position with plenty of support, while the raised throttle pedestal keeps the controls within reach when standing.

Value for money

Value was always Bavaria's trump card. But has the upturn in quality and specification – not to mention popularity – had an effect?

Well, yes, it has – a little. £120,000 inc VAT (£127,000 for the HT) for a boat of this size still represents good value, and Bavaria includes some impressive kit as standard. Those bow-thrusters, for example, would normally set you back at least £2500.

That said, the £8258 charged just to get your boat to the UK and commissioned is quite painful, but with that you get a full handover with Volvo Penta and Raymarine engineers, plus some Bavaria fleeces (wahey!), some lunch, and even a bottle of champagne (bingo!). All very nice.

And there's more: those industry murmurings that prices for second-hand Bavarias would fall through the floor have been proved wrong. So buying this marque is a safe bet for the longer term, too.

Specification & value

That £5k premium for the hardtop does make sense

✓✓✓✓✓

Verdict

By introducing a well-worked hardtop to its 32, Bavaria has completely shored up a range that already offered much in the way of choice and value for money. But which is best – open or hardtop? Well, it's the latter, and at only £5k more, the hardtop option costs less than you'll spend in replacement canopies. But plenty of us will still buy that open boat because it's so much fun!

8/10

MBM rating

STOP PRESS!

As noted, our test boat was installed with Volvo D4s, which we felt were too heavy, considering the horsepower they offered. So we made that precise point to Bavaria's distributor, Ancasta. It appears that someone somewhere has heeded our advice, for the D3s are now the only option for this model. That's great news, and it means you'll get a smoother ride at a cheaper price.

Bavaria 32 Sport HT technical data

specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	Category B
LENGTH OVERALL	33ft 5in (10.2m)
HULL LENGTH	32ft 3in (9.84m)
BEAM	10ft 5in (3.6m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 3in (0.7m)
AIR DRAUGHT (HT)	9ft 5in (2.9m)
DISPLACEMENT	5.7 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	121 gal (550lt)
WATER CAPACITY	33 gal (150lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDEDECKS	8in (0.20m)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 2in (1.88m)
HEADROOM IN MASTER CABIN	6ft 2in
MASTER CABIN BERTH	6ft 4 x 5ft 0in

performance

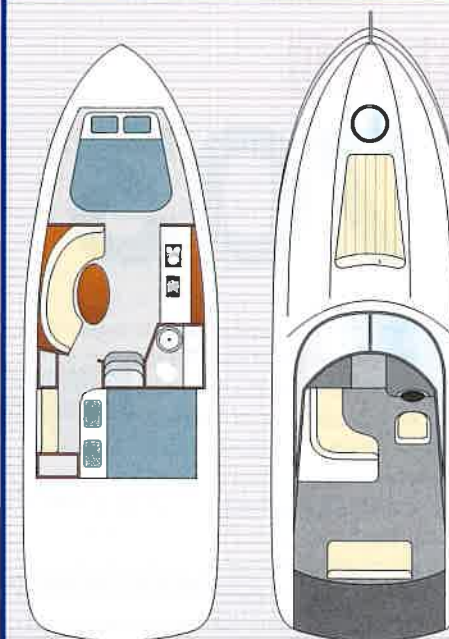
Engines	Twin Volvo Penta D4-225EVC					
Configuration	4cyl 3.7lt 225hp@5600rpm					
Conditions	wind S'ly, Force 2, sea state slight					
Load	50%o, water 25%o, crew 2					
rpm	knots	gph	mpg	range	noise	
2300	19.1	7	2.7	260	80	
2500	21.8	8	2.7	260	82	
2600	24.7	9	2.7	260	82	
3000	30.4	13	2.3	220	84	
3400	34.5	19	1.8	170	84	
3550	36.7	21	1.7	160	84	

Range figures in miles, based on standard tanks and include a 20% margin. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in the below-decks saloon.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
SPORT with 190hp Volvo diesels	£119,799
HT with 190hp Volvo diesels	£127,035
UK DELIVERY & COMMISSIONING	£7693
BOW THRUSTER	£5TD
TEAK DECKING	£2856
CAMPER CANOPIES	£3605
COCKPIT FRIDGE	£692
BOAT AS TESTED	£141,881

ENQUIRIES Ancasta Hamble, Port Hamble, Satchell Lane, Hamble, Hants SO31 4DD. Tel: 023 8045 0001, www.ancasta.com



Electric hatch opens up a neat (if basic) bay

the rivals



SESSA 30

£114,210
Italian sportscruiser recently benefitting from stylish revamp, no hardtop but similar interior layout and low price.
Tel: 01932 571141,
www.bateswharf.co.uk



SEALINE SC29

From £125,610
The smartest sportscruiser in town. A radical hardtop and clever onboard layout means this smaller boat keeps pace.
Tel: 01562 749100,
www.sealine.com



FINNMASTER 310C

£129,000
Streamline hardtop offering Scandi-sense and strong performance. Interior has separate mid cabin.
Tel: 01752 667655,
www.finnmarin.fi



Rain or shine, shelter or sun tan: all yours at the touch of a button. Opening side screens are another plus



Stainless steel and style: this 32 packs a punch