

Bavaria Virtess 420

This is Bavaria's first ever flybridge cruiser but can the German yard bring anything new to such a crowded 40ft market? REPORT BY NICK BURNHAM

BOAT REPORT
BAVARIA VIRTESS 420



PHOTOS: Graham Snook



The brief...



Very much a company on the up, Bavaria takes its first step into the flybridge market with the brand new Virtess 420. This one of the most hotly contested markets, so has the 420 got what it takes to challenge the establishment? **Nick**

LOA: 44ft 7in (13.6m)
PRICE: from £348,212
TOP SPEED: 31 knots
BUILDERS: Bavaria Yacht
ENQUIRIES Tel: 02380 605060
www.clippermarine.co.uk

Think about 40ft flybridges and just three names come to mind – Princess, Sealine and Fairline. It is, quite frankly, insane that after all these years this British trio has so little competition from the rest of the world. The Italians have tried, and largely failed. The Americans simply don't get it. Only the French are offering any kind of resistance, but no one is really mounting a proper challenge to the Brits. Until now. Bavaria is hoping to give things a proper shake-up with its Virtess – a fresh, affordable fly that comes loaded with lots of sliding bits and three cabins.

Design & build

At first glance the new 420 Virtess looks like a case of 'same again' – a conventional-looking

hull, a long-windowed superstructure, a flybridge stretching back to the transom, even its radar arch looks suspiciously like that of a Princess 42. But the innovation starts as soon as you step into the cockpit through the transom... or lack of a transom. Two double seats sit at the back edge of the cockpit, flanked by wide stainless steel transom gates; there is no conventional transom coaming at all. And those seats are where the fun starts. Pull a couple of knobs either side of the base cushions and the backrests fold flat to create a sunbed. Slide those bases forward and lift up what was the squab and you have rear-facing seats, which are ideal for relaxing at anchor and enjoying the view. Nor does it stop there. By releasing 'hand brakes' at the sides, the seats slide along tracks built into the cockpit floor, so you can push them against the side

coaming facing inwards. The cockpit table can also slide over to the other side on its own track. Fold back the transom gates and - bingo - you have your own private terrace. It's a concept that shows fantastic fresh-thinking and we haven't even stepped inside yet. The saloon beyond the flush threshold (a wide gully stops any water flowing in from the cockpit) looks fairly conventional, with an L-shaped dinette behind a raised double-helm to starboard, a sideboard to port and, at the same height, the galley pushed into the forward corner of the saloon. Where Bavaria has made a difference is in the details. Just look at the headlining. Here, there are no ceiling lights, just thin translucent fillets that break up the cloth panels. Flick the light switch and these fillets fluoresce as full-beam lighting strips. Even the two footstools are more than they seem.

Slide back and flip over the stools' square upholstered lids and you can have two free-standing chairs to provide extra seating around the folding saloon table -- a simple but hugely effective piece of innovation. Down below there's a massive owner's cabin forward. Just inside the door on the port side there's a neat vanity unit, complete with four drawers and a locker. This is in addition to a big hanging locker and a large shelved locker either side of the cabin. There are also two further drawers under the central double berth. As well as the usual ceiling lights, there's a separate switch to operate mood lighting in the form of rope lights concealed in the headlining panels,

under the steps and under the bed itself. Natural light (and a great view out) is provided by two large hull windows. Even the en suite toilet compartment is a good size. The guest cabin has twin beds and good storage, plus a large hull window. Indeed, the only area below that suggests compromises have been made is cabin three, where there's low headroom over the bunks and limited storage due to the encroaching galley floor. But there's still standing headroom in the entrance, the berths are a good size and a large hull window keeps things bright. And don't forget this is just a 42ft boat; conventional wisdom says this cabin shouldn't even exist.

"It's a fantastic fresh-thinking concept"





FLYBRIDGE HELM

On deck

Clever ideas and a huge flybridge

The optional tracked seating is genius, but it's just one example of the clever ideas on deck. Cut-outs on alternate steps allow the open-tread flybridge ladder to be used like stairs, so that you can

descend facing forwards not backwards. The flybridge itself is huge, extending all the way to the transom to create a large dinette area with a wet-bar and gas barbecue. Further forward the double helm is augmented by another forward-facing double seat alongside. This combines with a small sunpad ahead to form a large sunbathing area.

As ever, Bavaria has laid

on wide side decks, over 12in across, that are easy to use thanks to handrails built into the superstructure sides. However, the pulpit rails are a little too low for comfort, and the flybridge moulding overhang slightly at shoulder height.

An optional hydraulic bathing platform features neat steps that lie flat when raised but extend into the water when lowered.



SUNPAD



FORWARD-FACING FLYBRIDGE SEATS



LARGE DINETTE



SIDE DECKS



FUEL FILLER



GAS BARBECUE



OPEN-TREAD LADDER

HYDRAULIC BATHING PLATFORM >>



CLEVER SEATING >>



MODULAR-TRACKED SEATING >>



HUGE OPEN TERRACE



SALOON

Interiors

Surprising and delightful detail

From those smart inset saloon lights and clever footstools that turn into seats, to the storage trays neatly incorporated into the

deckhead next to the galley, a great deal of thought has gone into this interior. The fundamentals are right too, with three proper cabins, two generous en suites and a comfortable saloon. There's even space for a washing machine under the companionway stairs. It's not perfect – headroom in the third cabin is very limited and what



looks to be two good-sized lockers under the galley worktop are in fact a fridge and two large bins, so the saloon sideboard will have to be pressed into service as

additional galley storage. But we can forgive it all this because accessing this level of accommodation would have required a 46ft boat not long ago.



POP-UP TV

GALLEY



STOOL TO SEAT >>>



EN SUITE TOILET



GUEST CABIN



OWNER'S CABIN



THIRD CABIN



GOOD STOWAGE

VANITY UNIT

From the helm

Quirky gimmicks are a letdown in practice

The chartplotter screen is mounted centrally in a light grey, non-reflective dash for easy viewing and convenient operation, and the mirrored engine instruments allow quick and easy cross-checking. The double helm seat is sociable but fixed and it desperately needs an armrest to stop crew toppling off the side.

The test boat featured Volvo Penta's new keyless technology – a tiny fob replacing keys, allowing the engines to be started at the touch of a button. This is an interesting idea but what will a new fob cost to replace when it (inevitably) goes missing? However, as useless gimmicks go it's nothing compared to the helm's touchscreen controller. There are no switches at the helm bar the horn; everything else is controlled via a small colour LCD panel not much bigger than an iPhone screen. This is fine, until you're bumping across a choppy sea that's throwing intermittent sheets of spray across the windscreen. You need wipers? Stretch across the dash to the panel, touch it to illuminate it, seek out the wiper icon on the totally smooth face and press. Then reach, find and press again to stop them. Repeat every single time the wipers are needed. It's madness.



LOWER HELM



TOUCHSCREEN CONTROLS



UPPER HELM

BOAT REPORT BAVARIA VIRTESS 420

Performance & handling

Interestingly, Bavaria offers this boat with IPS or, unusually for a flybridge boat of this size, sterndrives. Even more interesting is that our test boat came with the smallest option of twin D6-370 sterndrives.

Sterndrives can be a challenging choice on a flybridge boat, running the risk of a sense of excessive heel from the flybridge and flighty low-speed manoeuvring – just ask anyone who has ever helmed a 1980s Sealine 305.

With a wide beam and sensibly limited lock, the Virteess banked enthusiastically into turns on our test yet never gave the unnerving feeling that the flybridge was cranked over so far on that you were likely to get your ears wet. At low speeds

the boat was more planted than we expected, even in the brisk breeze of our test day, although it clearly wasn't as docile as a shaftdrive.

With so much accommodation squeezed into a 42ft hull you might expect a degree of compromise at sea and you'd be right. Point the Virteess 420 straight into a Force 4-5 at 24 knots from the lower helm as we did, and there was a lot of banging and creaking of internal joinery. But let's keep this in perspective. Those two guest cabins sit just where the waves impact the hull and act like soundboxes, amplifying the heavy thuds. In essence, the upwind ride is nowhere near as harsh as it sounds. Things improved dramatically when we pointed the boat off-wind – the ride from the raised and rather upright helm was balanced and

comfortable. What was particularly impressive were the noise levels – the engines are buried so far back they are whisper-quiet.

But the real revelation is just how well this boat goes with these engines. Even with five crew, a full tank of water, half a tank of fuel and a kit list that included a generator and a heavy hydraulic bathing platform, the Virteess rose swiftly onto the plane, cruising comfortably at 25 knots and making 31 knots flat out. Opting for sterndrives over IPS saves about £30,000, but forget about the joystick option. At £16,000 it halves the cost-saving, doesn't work as well as IPS joystick control and introduces that vague, delayed reaction to the helm that we have experienced on other fly-by-wire sterndrive boats. If you really need the joystick, go the whole hog and opt for IPS.

Specification & value

The Virteess 420 starts at a headline-grabbing £348,212 inc VAT for the sterndrive D6-370 version, while the IPS500 – same engines, IPS drives and joystick control – comes in at £379,200. Factor in UK delivery and commissioning of £15,000 and you bring those figures to £363,212 and £394,200.

The IPS price comes in some £62,000 less than a Sealine F42, but the F42 does pack in the larger IPS600 435hp engines. The similarly innovative but shaftdriven Fairline Squadron 42 comes in at £420,120.

So the Virteess is launched at a competitive rather than bargain price. But Bavaria offers something the others don't – a proper three-cabin layout and an astonishing level of detail.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	44ft 7in (13.6m)
HULL LENGTH	39ft 2in (11.9m)
BEAM	13ft 10in (4.21m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 8in (1.11m)
AIR DRAUGHT	16ft 4in (4.97m)
DISPLACEMENT	11.4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	264gal (1200lt)
WATER CAPACITY	90gal (410lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	1ft 1in (33cm)
HEADROOM IN CABIN	6ft 6in (1.98m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 4ft 10in (1.98 x 1.47m)
MID CABIN BERTHS	6ft 7in x 2ft 4in (2.01 x 0.69m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	Twin Volvo Penta D6-370 DuoProp
Configuration	6cyl 5.5lt, 370hp @ 3500rpm
conditions	WNW force 5, sea state slight
Load	fuel 50%, water 100%, crew 5

RPM	KNOTS	LPH	GPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1000	5	8	1.8	2.8	591	70
1500	7	28	6.2	1.1	232	70
2000	9	59	13	0.7	148	74
2500	15	85	18.7	0.8	167	75
3000	25	101	22.2	1.1	232	77
3400	31	155	34.1	0.9	190	78

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin Volvo D6-370 DuoProp diesels	£348,212
ADVANCED PACKAGE	£14,712
DIESEL GENERATOR	£17,880
HYDRAULIC BATHING PLATFORM	£23,880
DURADECK FLYBRIDGE FLOORING	£4140
HARDWOOD COCKPIT TABLE	£1140
FLYBRIDGE GAS BARBECUE	£834
SALON LEATHER UPHOLSTERY	£3540

BOAT AS TESTED £468,098*

*Boat as tested price may include alternative options



Enginebay

Due to the option of IPS (which would see the engines sited further forwards) the engineroom in our sterndrive boat was simply vast. Illuminated by a single rather pathetic lamp, there were acres of space in front of and around the engines to let you work on them. In fact, if you opt for sterndrives it's a shame the forward space can't be separated off and used for storage because there is no lazarette. There is too much exposed wiring, that should really be in trunking, while the batteries are not boxed. That said everything seemed well secured and accessible.

THE VERDICT

It's a brave, but intelligent move by Bavaria to dive into the most hotly contested sector with its first flybridge. Rather than create a clone of what's already out there, the German yard has cleverly conjured up a different concept, overlaid it with a level of innovation that's a delight to use and then produced it at a competitive price. All in all, the Virteess is a genuinely 'alternative' alternative.

The rivals



Princess 42 from £414,696

LOA: 43ft 5in (13.23m)
Nine years old and there are no signs of this safe, solid, high-quality, traditional shaftdrive cruiser being changed soon.

Meet the family



Bavaria 420 Coupe from £338,276

LOA: 44ft 7ins 13.6m
Exactly the same hull and layout as the Virteess but with a huge sunroof and sunpad above the saloon to replace the flybridge.

Fairline Squadron 42 from £420,120

LOA: 42ft 6ins 12.94m
Another solid shaftdrive boat from another premier builder but this 42-footer is more modern than the Princess.



Sealine F42 from £441,480

LOA: 42ft 6in (12.94m)
Bigger IPS engines and massively roomy with a three-berth mid-cabin.