

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Bayliner 300

Cheap diesel is about to become history, so is this low price petrol-powered 30-footer the face of the future?

REPORT BY JUSTIN OLESINSKI

BOAT REPORT

BAYLINER 300

“This cruiser has a reassuring and solid feel to it”

Bayliner is the original value for money builder. Low cost, accessible boating is its motto and this latest 30ft offering is no exception, with an £85,000 price tag that includes twin engines and a separate mid cabin. That's the kind of spec that the competition are asking over £100,000 for. But there's a hitch. The twin engines we tested were wallet-thumping V8 petrols, a factor that might keep the asking price down but could push the boat's running costs into orbit. But with marine diesel now set for a November price hike, the save now pay later argument starts to stutter. Is petrol really on the comeback?

Design and Build

The Bayliner 300 isn't the type of boat that people stop to take a photo of, in fact, you'd be hard pushed to pick out this boat in a marina. Similarly, there are certainly other 30-footers out there, like the Sealine SC29 or Doral's Prestancia, that are better finished. But the bottom line is you will pay half as much again for these other boats.

The new 300 really makes 30ft boating affordable and easy. The two cabin below decks layout is intelligently laid out, offering privacy and space. Being affordable often means manufacturers cut corners but apart from the flimsy cabin and shower room doors the rest of this cruiser is well put together and has a reassuring and solid feel to it. Who cares if the

cleats and transom gate aren't designed by Italian stylists? They still get the job done. Like the old Bayliner 2850, the hull looks slightly deeper in the vee than other models, and without side decks and an aft sunbed the open plan cockpit is maximised for sociable entertaining, using rotating seats to good effect. As with most adjustable seats, the helm seat suffers from being a little wobbly but it does offer lots of adjustment.

If there is one annoyance, it's with the canopies. Open boat covers are always a pain but with poppers every six inches these are real thumb breakers. Some piping on the covers, running into groove tracks on the screen and arch would have been a much simpler and less painful solution.

Design & build

No frills, practical design, but awkward canopy



FACT FILE
Bayliner 300
 LOA: 31ft 8in (9.65m)
 PRICE: from £85,340
 TOP SPEED:
 41 knots





The main cabin is lit up by two long windows and features a fixed forward berth that still leaves enough room for a comfortable family size sofa



All-in-one toilet and shower unit



A decent galley has room for a two-burner hob, sink and fridge



The separate mid cabin is a real privacy plus

Exterior

Bayliner has added a few things that make this boat really easy to use. Right from the off, or rather the aft, a transom boot is on hand to swallow up fenders and lines. From here you can tread very safely as the sole runs clean and level all the way forward to the companionway door and helm.

With a quick flick of a lever the double helm seat rotates 90° and sits against the cockpit sides. You will have to pay £730 for this luxury, though, but if you spend a lot of your time entertaining outside then it will certainly be money well spent. A small wet bar area, with cool box stowage

Exterior

Spacious cockpit lends itself to al fresco entertaining



Accommodation

The forward and mid cabin berths are good-sized doubles, which are both generous in terms of length and width. With above average headroom of 6ft 1in in the saloon, there is plenty of space below decks and the long skylights to port and starboard easily introduce enough light into the saloon. That leaves the small, opening port lights to let a bit of fresh air in. The galley to port is a good size and doesn't intrude into the saloon too much. It's fitted with a gas hob, microwave and an adequately sized fridge. The toilet cubicle to starboard is a standard all-in-one shower and

“V8 petrols might keep the asking price down, but they could push the costs into orbit”

Accommodation

Private double mid cabin may not suit squabbling children



Engine Options and Access

The big question for buyers will be whether to take the initial saving offered by the 5.0L 260hp MerCruiser petrol engines and pay for it in the

long run or fork out the extra £10,000 or so for the twin 250hp Cummins MerCruiser diesels.

The answer to this question became all too clear to us an hour into the test when we suffered an MBM first. The combination of a vague fuel gauge and typical V8 thirst meant we actually ran out of fuel (no laughing at the back). It was during the 30-minute tow back to port that we wondered who exactly would buy a twin V8 powered craft? Clearly they'd have to have better foresight and deeper pockets than us.



We tested the 5.0L 260hp V8 MerCruiser petrols



The two seater helm works well in its day job, but will also rotate round for a more social cockpit setup



There's lots of flexible seating in the cockpit

The engine hatch is accessed electrically but it is reassuring to know that if power fails it is still possible to lift by hand. Additionally, you can keep the seat cushions in place because as the hatch opens the aft seat rotates up with it. Two steps guide you down into the engineroom but once below there isn't much space to move around, especially if the you opt to include the optional

£6250 4kW generator, which sits up against the forward engineroom bulkhead.

The cockpit table and legs are stowed under the hatch freeing up space elsewhere on the boat. The bay comes with sound insulation but, judging by the fairly high dB(A) figures the petrol boat recorded, a noisier diesel set up could be a problem.

Engine options & access

The choice of twin diesel or petrols will satisfy most needs



Handy cool box stowage

Transom boot for fenders and lines

Performance and Handling

All this talk of economy and common sense ignores one important point – the roar of a pair of V8s will make a grown man grin like a child and is scientifically proven to make you more attractive to the opposite sex. Well, the first bit is pretty much true anyway.

At 41 knots this Bayliner certainly makes you feel young and very happy. This boat relishes speed with a remarkable acceleration, and all the way through the rev range the boat just does what you tell it. Even the mounting swell just outside Poole Harbour was ironed out by its strong hull design, producing a soft dry ride. Where other boats would have been forced off the plane the Bayliner simply carried on. At 25 knots it was a laid

back dream to handle but even with the throttles fully opened the hull felt well-placed in the water, balanced in turns and a real pleasure to drive, and way smoother than say the Bavaria 30 (tested May 07).

Performance & handling

Balanced throughout speed range up to 41 knots



Specification and Value

Even specified with the 200hp diesels this boat stays below the £100k mark, which is simply great value for a two cabin 30ft cruiser that performs as well as this one. The base price is on-the-water and includes most of what you need with no nasty hidden extras, which is always good in our books. The swinging helm seat is a bit pricey at

£730, but it's an optional extra so the choice is yours. On quality you get less frills compared to some, but it's good to see that canopy frames and fittings are now stainless steel.



Specification & value

Superb value for a twin-engined 30ft cruiser



Verdict

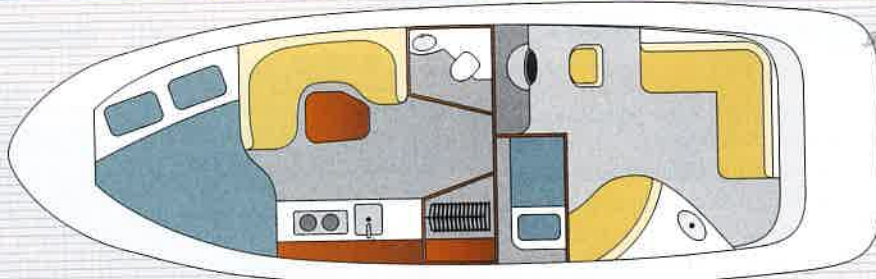
Bayliner has gained a fair few reputations but none of them usually include great handling, which is odd given many of its boats run very well. This 300 is no exception and adds a proper separate cabin into the bargain. As to whether we can justify twin petrols as a useable UK engine spec, the answer was rather poetically acted out on test.

7/10

MBM rating



Bayliner 300 technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	31ft 8in (9.65m)
HULL LENGTH	30ft 6in (9.30m)
BEAM	10ft 0in (3.05m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 1in (0.94m)
DISPLACEMENT	4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	120gal (454lt)
WATER CAPACITY	33gal (125lt)

key dimensions

HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 1in (1.8m)
HEADROOM IN MID CABIN	5ft 7in (1.7m)
HEADROOM IN SHOWER	6ft 0in (1.8m)

performance

ENGINES	Twin MerCruiser 5.0L MPI/B3 260hp petrols
CONFIGURATION	V8 5.0lt 260hp @ 4800rpm
CONDITIONS	Wind SW, Force 4, Sea moderate
LOAD	fuel 50% water 0% crew 4



Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
3000	21.4	62	13.6	1.57	151	82
3200	24.2	70	15.4	1.58	153	82
3400	26.3	76	16.8	1.57	151	83
3600	28.6	82	18	1.56	150	83.5
3800	30.4	90	19.8	1.54	148	84
4200	34.5	114	25	1.38	133	86.5
4400	37.5	124	27.2	1.36	130	86.5
4800	41.6	162	35.6	1.17	112	89

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, air, water, engine temp, crew numbers, hull fouling, and fuel quality. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken at the helm.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with Twin MerCruiser 5.0L 260hp petrols	£85,340
With Twin 250hp Cummins diesels	£95,920
CANOPIES	STD
4kW GENERATOR	£6250
NORTHSTAR NAV PACKAGE	£810
ROTATING HELM SEAT	£730
BOAT AS TESTED	£99,850

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