

Boat Report

CRANCHI PERLA 25

*This neat pocket-cruiser fills a gap in an attractive Italian range.
But would twin diesels really do it justice?*



The Perla's lines are sleek, its wraparound screen and integral bathing platform sculpted in smoothly, but it has plenty of beam for its hull length. Unusually for a sportscruiser with a folding split screen, it also has usable side decks.

Having dropped their previous pocket-cruiser, the Clipper, a few years ago, Cranchi have finally filled the gap towards the bottom of their range with a neat, cleanly styled 25-footer.

We caught up with a twin-diesel outdrive-powered version, courtesy of their South Coast dealers Crest Marine, to check out the Italian builders' approach to fitting the proverbial quart into a pint pot.

Design

The Perla has a fair amount of beam for its length, and this width is carried well forward, maximising the boat's interior volume and the size of its cockpit.

The hull is medium-vee, with a deadrise of 18° at the transom, toning up slightly to 22½° amidships. However, the vee sections are modified aft, with the keel flattened considerably. There are just two sets of sprayrails, the inner ones fading out early on, and the chine is angled in slightly to push water downwards rather than allow it to squirt sideways and flick back inboard on the breeze.

The topsides and coachroof have soft curves, with the wraparound screen and the integral bathing platform sculpted-in smoothly. In fact the Perla's proportions and curves are unobtrusive, placing the boat fairly and squarely in the midst of currently popular boat styling — not perhaps the most distinctive approach Cranchi's Italian origins might suggest, but commercially sensible.

Exterior

Boarding via the integral bathing platform is easy enough. There is also a step moulded into the starboard coaming to help you clamber out of the cockpit, but this is really to help the crew up onto the side deck rather than for boarding or disembarking from alongside.

Indeed the design here really falls between stools. Most boats which have a split screen do away with side decks to maximise the available cockpit space. But the Perla boasts decks of a usable 5in (13cm) width, guarded by a run of substantial rail extending all the way back to the cockpit, and complete with split pulpit.

If you prefer to go forward through the screen, a couple of decent-sized steps adjacent to the helm help you up onto a coachroof finished almost fully in moulded non-slip.

At the bow an optional electric windlass is tucked beneath a hatch which also gives access to the chain locker. Other deck hardware amounts to pairs of 8in (20cm) cleats fore and aft, plus 6in (15cm) ones amidships for springs.

Back in the cockpit a good-sized U-settee, which

doubles as both a dinette and a sunbed, faces a wet-bar area that includes a fridge/coolbox and a sink. A further two-seat settee lies opposite the comfortable bucket seat at the helm. The latter is in fact fixed, making it a tight fit for those with long limbs, although most skippers will anyway prefer to drive while perched on the flip-up squab.

The controls and engine gauges, including a log, are attractively laid-out in a split-level veneered dash, but there is only limited space for extra instrument heads within the console area. Tucked within the footwell are a couple of lockers.

With the space under the main settee left open, the only other covered storage in the cockpit is within the transom seat, but for bulkier items there is a useful-sized compartment beneath the sole. Here you can also gain access to the fuel tanks, whose remote shut-offs can be activated from the helm.

Interior

A sliding door and a set of fairly steep steps take you down into the well proportioned and pleasantly light main cabin area. Immediately to port there is a smart galley, and towards the bows a comfortably upholstered U-dinette.

The galley area is well appointed, with plenty of storage space for sacks and sacks of pasta. There is also a fridge, but only a single-burner electric/alcohol hob. It seems you can have your spaghetti and bolognese, but not necessarily at the same time.

Opposite, the toilet compartment is most roomy. Doubling as the shower cubicle in the usual style, it is a mainly moulded affair, but nevertheless set-off with an Avonite sink. We were pleased to find the edge of the countertop moulded with a lip which can also be used as a handhold, and there is plenty of stowage. Ventilation comes by way of an opening port.

The dinette's table drops to form a berth which is shortish, at 5ft 6in (1.68m), but makes up for it with a generous width of 5ft 4in (1.63m). There is a modicum of stowage beneath the seats, although most of the space here is taken up by a pair of cross-fed water tanks.

Additional storage is limited to a cupboard beneath the electrical panel just abaft of the dinette, plus a useful hanging locker, incorporating some shelves, on the way through to the curtained-off midships cabin.

The latter has a 6ft 1in x 3ft 8in (1.85m x 1.11m) berth with reasonable sitting headroom, and a narrow bench seat near the entrance. This has a storage box beneath it, and at the foot of the mattress area there are a couple of cupboards and



Above: the curtained-off midships cabin has a bench seat in addition to its single berth. Above right: dropping the dinette's table creates a double berth in the bow.

Below left: ahead of the fixed bucket seat is an attractive helm position, but with limited space for added instrumentation. Below: there is space to clamber down into the engineroom, although this leaves you standing in the bilge itself.



a broad shelf; there is access to the bilge and batteries beneath the berth itself. Light and ventilation come courtesy of a pair of opening ports.

Engines

Our test boat was fitted with a pair of Volvo Penta's TAMD22/SX four-cylinder diesel outdrives, rated at 105hp apiece. Other options include twin petrols up to a total of 410hp, and a large single diesel by way of Volvo's 230hp KAD42P/DP.

Access to the engine compartment is via a couple of hatches, supported on gas struts. There is plenty of room to reach right around the engines, and get to grips with all the usual service points, including the fuel/water separators on the forward bulkhead. There is also space at the forward end of the compartment to clamber down inside, although it would be nicer not to have to stand in the bilge.

The calorifier is situated outboard to port, and the rest of the auxiliaries are equally easy to get at. The whole installation looks solid and tidily executed, which is what we have come to expect from Cranchi.

There is just simple egg-box foam insulation throughout, and the bilge is serviced by a rather small Jabsco 750 submersible pump.

Handling & performance

A blustery offshore Force 4, picking up to a 5, was kicking up a fussy sea in the Eastern Solent. It was comfortable enough to run out on, and even place on the beam, but tucking back into it was something of a wet chore for any boat.

However, the Perla was not to be put out of its stride. Once settled, with the throttles set at 3800rpm, it pushed around whatever was thrown up at just over 21 knots. And when trimmed out in some slightly flatter water, we clocked a drier 25.5 knots at 4200rpm, and 27 knots at a full-throttle 4500rpm.

All the same, we felt something more lively under the engine hatch would have shown the Perla hull off

to better advantage. For those who want more performance, Cranchi's own test data on a boat fitted with a pair of 205hp V6 petrols claims a top speed of 37 knots at 4600rpm, 31 knots at 4000rpm and, for easy cruising, 26 knots at a lazy 3500rpm.

However, the diesels make for cheap running costs, as you would expect. At the cruising revs of 3800rpm you should consume around 7.5gph (34lph), and at 4200rpm around 10gph (45lph), so you can get a weekend's cruising from a tank which is larger than normal for this size of boat.

Throttling back further, to 3500rpm, we expected to come right back off the plane and drop into the 'hole'. But, of course, having plenty of torque, the diesels were happy to maintain a steady output wherever the throttles were set, and with the beamy hull giving plenty of lift we could still amble happily along at 17 knots.

The driving position is comfortable, with the helm and throttles well placed whether you prefer to sit or, more likely, perch on the upturned squab.

Noise levels have been well contained, especially given the TAMD22SX engines' inherent noisiness. Our soundmeter registered a most reasonable 82dB(A) in the cockpit at 3800rpm, and 84dB(A) at 4200rpm.

Conclusions

The Perla 25 offers comfortable weekending-plus accommodation for the young family, and a large sociable cockpit, all with a smart Italian edge in finish and style. But whether the engine installation on our test boat is going to be everybody's cup of cappuccino is open to question.

Of course, twin diesels offer the advantages of fuel savings and reassuring reliability, albeit at an initial capital cost. However, they leave something to be desired in terms of out-and-out performance, if you are looking for more sports and less cruising from this particular sports cruiser. □

Cranchi Perla 25

Loa 25ft 8in (7.86m).
Hull length 24ft 4in (7.44m).
Beam 9ft 7in (2.97m).
Draught 2ft 11in (0.88m).
Displacement 3.2 tons.
Fuel capacity 74gal (340lt).
Water capacity 26gal (120lt).
Engines twin 105hp Volvo Penta TAMD22/SX diesels.
Price from £53,702 ex VAT with twin Volvo Penta 4.3GL/DP petrols; £60,222 as tested.
Builders Cantiere 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.

Below: the neatly covered electric/alcohol hob in the galley has a single burner. Bottom: the toilet/shower compartment opposite is both roomy and practical, with moulded lips on the countertop and plenty of stowage.

