

FACT FILE
Doral 260 Venezia
LOA: 26ft 5in (8.05m)
PRICE: from £76,145
TOP SPEED: 33 knots



Stable all the way up to 33 knots



MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Doral 260 Venezia

Doral's reputation for building quality sportscruisers is growing by the minute, but can it maintain its high standards on a 26-footer? **REPORT BY JUSTIN OLESINSKI**



The aft seat slides back to make a bigger seating and dining area



It seems that the deluxe baby sportscruiser is very much in vogue. The British-built Morgan 260 is making waves before it even hits the water with promises of high-end quality. Now Doral has stepped in with another typically upmarket model.

Following the success of the Monticello 250, Doral has maxed-out the hull, adding around 12in to the length and beam. This does take it past trailable limits but the on-board space is markedly improved while the extra beam allows the eye-catching option of twin engines, making the 260 the only entry-level sportscruiser to offer such a cruise-friendly set-up. Knowing our love of all things twin,

this engine package could set the 260 up as a winner in a congested market. Having said all that, we still opted for the single petrol model as it offers the best value for money for what is a premium priced product.

Design & build

The long, slender, deck windows and forward raked radar arch ensures the 260's profile continues Doral's striking family resemblance. In fact, looking bigger, sleeker and more impressive than any other boat in its class, this 26-footer just might have redefined an entire genre.

From bow to stern it oozes quality. The workmanship on the cockpit sofa cushions is superb, akin to those on a Aston DB7,

and this level of detailing is evident throughout. The interior revels in its new found volume and the quality of finish is high. Lockers and

Design & build

Solidly built with quality components in a neat design



cupboards are properly lined and come with substantial stainless steel hinges. Elsewhere, solid, stylish exterior mouldings set the scene for the immaculate construction that lies within the bilge.

Exterior

The Venezia's overall layout follows a tried and tested route above and below deck but it's the subtle details that really make this boat shine. Standard mood lights illuminate the cockpit, which consists of a U-shaped seating area wrapped around the starboard side. And while this looks great as it is, lift a lever and the rear base slides aft over the teak bathing platform delivering a huge seating and dining area. To port there's a small sink with space beneath to store a

standard-sized cool box. And hidden under the aft bench, across the transom, is a handy locker that's just big enough for a few small fenders and a couple of lines.

Forward, twin-helm seats are set over to starboard, allowing two to cruise in company, with another two-person bench seat to port. The console looks particularly clean and contemporary compared to Doral's usually flamboyant dashboards. Gauges here are mounted



Plenty of stylish seating makes this cockpit a cut-above the competition



The bar unit to port, with space for a cool box, completes this social zone



The luxurious and comfortable dinette easily converts to a roomy double berth

on smart wooden panels with space left for a 12in screen. The shelf, just in front of the steering column, is a bit too shallow to safely store items like your mobile but there's always the locker just by your heels for items you like to keep close by and can access quickly.

The radar arch is fitted with a hinge and pin mechanism allowing you to drop it when the boat is transported or negotiating low bridges. Access to the foredeck is through the screen via steps in the cockpit, and it's good to see non-slip here that actually works for a change.

Exterior

Sleek lines work well with versatile cockpit sofa layout



Accommodation

The quality continues down the gripped wooden steps into a main cabin that feels closer in size to that found on a 30-footer. Access to the mid cabin is to port, which hides a huge double berth and is sufficiently lit by a portlight and a skylight



The neat toilet and shower compartment



The galley may be standard in size but its spec is impressive

want to dine in the warm. There's a hanging locker just aft to starboard beside the well-appointed toilet compartment with a sea toilet, shower and washbasin. And it's worth noting that a mirror on the aft bulkhead hides a hatch to the underside of the console, making electronics access easy.

Accommodation

Huge interior accommodates four superb berths



Engine options & access

With a whopping 15 different engine options you're spoilt for choice when it comes to horsepower on the 260.

Twin set-ups start at 130hp units (both petrol and diesel) going up to the 190hp D3 diesels. Single installations start with the usual 280hp V8 petrol but it is good to see Doral go straight to the Volvo Penta D4-260 option, instead of messing around with a D3 that wouldn't have the guts to really push this boat. At the top end of the range a 375hp 8.1lt block should keep the petrolheads happy.

Access to the enginebay is a little complicated, you need to remove the U-shaped seat cushions and fold up the leg supports.

The engineroom hatch lifts freely and the bay is comfortable to move around in, although with the twin D3s fitted you can't help but think it's going to be a tight squeeze. Batteries to port are sat high and away from the bilges.

Engine options & access

Single and twin options offer real variety



Performance & handling

Quality trimmings and solid construction means the Venezia weighs in at a hefty three tonnes. Weight is a good thing, but the hull feels like it could use more power than the 320hp Volvo V8 petrol engine fitted here.

Push the throttle forward and the 260 rises smoothly onto the plane, settling into a very comfortable poise and staying there all the way up to a laid-back 33-knot top speed. The easy ride style is helped by an excellent windscreen.

You'll need to trim the leg up to reach over 30 knots, but the hull remains very calm and controlled, even verging on lethargic at times. If diesel fans are worried that 320 petrol horses are only just enough, fear not. The D4's incredible torque should more than make up for any drop in horsepower.

The boat's ample freeboard means it will lean into sidewinds but this is easily overcome using the gauged tabs.

Performance & handling

More laid-back than full on, but a class act



Single or twin engines can be fitted into the bay

Specification & value

Doral is clearly committed to delivering value for money without scrimping on quality, and its boats are of a noticeably higher calibre than many US equivalents. However, a £100,000 price tag for a 26ft boat, even one with twin engines, is still going to be a hard sell given that 30ft craft with the same engines are available. In light of the potential diesel price hikes, the considerably more affordable single petrol version tested here must be the best option by far.

A decent, standard specification helps the deal along but be warned that some of the optional extras you will want have a luxury price tag to match the Venezia's look. A teak bathing platform costs £2041, and the bow thruster another £4000. Bizarrely there is no stereo as standard – a deluxe CD system comes in at £1169, with even the basic package at £400.

You can gain some small recompense from the fact that the reasonably priced commissioning pack (£681) includes a free lift onto your own transport vehicle.

Specification & value

Value for money... but at a price



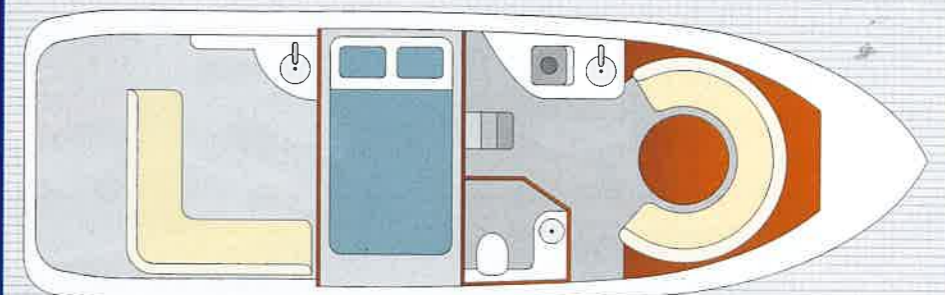
Verdict

With such good breeding, the Venezia was odds-on to deliver a great sports cruiser package. It storms across the line with a mix of fresh, exciting design and class-leading interior comfort. It even throws in a little twin engine curve ball to tempt would-be buyers. The boat's bigger frame needs some serious horsepower, though, but in these changing times we are not sure the answer is diesel. You should think V8 for the Venezia.

8/10



Doral 260 Venezia technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	29ft 0in (8.84m)
HULL LENGTH	26ft 0in (7.92m)
BEAM	9ft 4in (2.84m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 0in (0.91m)
DISPLACEMENT	3.18 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	62gal (284lt)
WATER CAPACITY	25gal (114lt)

key dimensions

HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 2in (1.86m)
FORWARD BERTH	5ft 10in x 6ft 3in (1.78 x 1.92m)
MIDSHIPS BERTH	4ft 8in x 7ft 2in (1.43 x 2.20m)

performance

Engines	Single Volvo 5.70 SXI 320hp petrol
Configuration	V8 5.7lt 320hp @ 4900rpm
Conditions	Wind NW Force3, Sea calm/moderate
Load	fuel 50%, water 0%, crew 2

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
3000	19.5	29.5	6.4	3	187	84
3200	23	37.9	8.3	2.7	172	86
3400	27.2	36	7.9	3.4	214	88
3600	31.8	39	8.5	3.7	231	90
3800	33.2	49	10.1	3.2	205	92

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 cockpit with the covers off.



prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with single Volvo 5.7L 320hp petrol	£78,145
with single Volvo D4-260 diesel	£92,544
VOLVO ELECTRONIC CONTROLS	£2380
BOW THRUSTER	£4000
DIGITAL AIR CONDITIONING	£2991
WARM AIR HEATING	£1937
COLOURED HULL	£590
BOAT AS TESTED	£81,250

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the rivals



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