

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Kingfisher 35 Sport Explorer

This brutal, fast, commercial hull delivers an awesome sportsfisher

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON



FACT FILE
Kingfisher 35
LOA: 35ft 5in
PRICE: From
£196,166
TOP SPEED:
31 knots





From the teak planking to the downlights, Bridgend Boat Company is to be applauded for its modern, discreetly stylish, interpretation of the classic wheelhouse

Forget about sportsboat, cruiser, flybridge, fisher or trawler, the bottom line is that there are only two types of boat in this world: those that rely on you listening to the shipping forecast before casting off, and those that do not. The Kingfisher 35 has never listened to a weather report in its life.

Like a Lochin, or the similar work-boat-derived Seaward, this boat comes from a school that decrees you deal with the sea first and worry about the pleasantries later, although the Kingfisher has a couple of aces up its sleeve. Firstly, it does 30 knots care of twin sterndrives and the latest in diesel technology. Secondly, it boasts a new interior fitout that rises well above

the usual fisher standard. But in spite of all this, it's this boat's outrageous sea-keeping that will impress you most.

Waves, you have been warned.

Design & build

Boats like the Kingfisher can have an image problem. Everyone knows they can walk the walk, take a sea and generally go the distance. The problem lies with issues like slow handling or interiors that shout wash-down, rather than snuggle up. So let's set the record straight. The Kingfisher looks smart, goes like the wind and will make a very comfortable cruiser, especially when the optional second cabin is included.

Behind all this flare, the build is impressive. Three separate watertight compartments, made up of hull to deck bulkheads, contain a deep, voluminous bilge that is simply but immaculately flow-coated. A single, hand-laid laminate, using woven roving and chopped strand matting, is used everywhere.

The Sport Explorer's standard layout gives plenty of its LOA over to the cockpit. This leaves enough room for a comfortable saloon and a forward cabin that revels in the space created by those broad bows. But there are some big cruising bonuses to be had should you opt for the extended wheelhouse – which you should because it's a no cost option – and the second

Design & build

Ice-breaking build coupled to a very special hull design



cabin option makes far better use of the huge void under the wheelhouse sole. On top of this, there is a flybridge design on the drawing board. What more could you ask for?

Engine options and access

Kingfisher's decision to offer sterndrives (twin V-drive shafts are also available) means they are able to fit Yanmar's new BMW-derived 6cyl common rail 6BY260Z diesel engines. You can opt for the 310hp Volvo Penta D6s, but Kingfisher's own test data suggests that the far lighter Yanmars deliver a more balanced ride and better economy for very little drop in performance.

With so much space in the cockpit and plenty more down in the bilge, getting at the engines isn't a huge problem but the two long hatches could do with a bit of assistance in the form of gas struts. Otherwise, the belt and braces attitude continues with each hatch sealed by six separate locks for when the going gets tough and very

Engine options & access

New BMW derived Yanmar diesels fit the bill



wet. Forward of the engine bay's bulkhead, a lazarette houses a moulded fuel tank and pre-filters. The tank looks suitably indestructible, but its 187gal capacity is on the low side.

Performance and handling

I don't particularly like rough weather to be honest, which is why I appreciate a boat that can handle it. And seldom will you come across a boat that is as at home in the chop as this Sport Explorer.

As we bashed with carefree abandon past St Anthony's Lighthouse and out into Falmouth Bay, my only concern was that this boat's unashamed machismo was starting to make me feel rather effeminate in my shiny new Helly Hansen waterproofs.

From the impressively insulated wheelhouse, the ride is rock solid: no rattles, no deviation, just a strong, certain drive forward. The pick up from the Yanmars isn't as instantaneous as Volvo's D series, but once the revs get up the power is superb.

“Once the revs get up, the power is superb”

but I think it is the right thing to do.

Away from the bumpy stuff, the boat performs well. Once up and running, the 32 knot top speed comes on very easily, while the more useable 20-25 knot cruising range feels effortless. And while the fuel capacity may be a little low, the 250 mile range at 22 knots will be enough for most



Good quality cabinetry throughout



The broad bows mean more space for the forecabin

The big news is this boat's excellent upwind performance, which is so often a planing hull's Achilles heel. We were cruising at 25 knots, into a good Force 5 or 6, with those spray rails lifting the hull and cushioning the ride beautifully.

There is a fair bit of spray with the bluff bows throwing up more than the dual speed, self-parking wipers can deal with, but you feel untouchable sat at the helm console on a proper suspension seat. I would liken the experience to driving a monster truck over rows of defenceless Morris Minors while blindfolded. You feel utter

power and control, but it'd be quite nice to see what is going on just the same. To rid yourself of the blindfold, you can simply reduce the revs and drop to a still respectable 17-20 knots. This will also lessen the fun you're having

skippers. Response to leg trim is fairly neutral with the hull basically doing what it wants, until you really push the legs out.

There are some limitations though. Even with the Yanmars purring and the Bravo III sterndrives

biting, the boat does not like to turn-in that sharply. With so much grip and beam at the bow, the Kingfisher tends to dig in a bit, but under normal helming the boat handles easily.

Performance & handling

The best 35 feet of hull we have ever tested



Accommodation

The interior is not so much about what we saw but what we could have seen. It is not that the fitout is poor – Kingfisher outsources it to Bridgend Boat Company and they have done a very competent job with an impressive vein of understated style. The solid-teak cabinetry is echoed by smart panels along the deck head, while royal blue upholstery and leather helm coverings add class. However, we were left wondering just how good this boat would

Kingfisher 35's hull design



Foam stringer system before being glassed



Unique spray rails create lift and cushion the ride

Designed by John Moxham for the commercial fishing sector, the hull carries its beam a fair way forward to create a more stable and buoyant bow. This allows nets to be hauled up safely.

The aesthetic outcome is quite dumpy but this hardcore commercial thinking does pay cruising dividends on deck safety as well as interior volume.

Originally, the hull came with a keel and a single shaft but today's version is a very different beast, running on twin sterndrives or vee drive shafts. The really exciting bits though, are the three tiers of beautifully arced, wing-like spray rails, and a concave arc amidships, where the deep vee falls to a medium deadrise.

Both of these elements should soften the ride because water is allowed a more gradual route around the hull. This creates lift and, crucially, more lift means more speed.



New Yanmar diesels look suitably clinical in the immaculate bay. Tall hatches need some gas struts



Watertight hatches lead to beautifully finished bilge



Huge under-saloon void would make a great cabin

be if Kingfisher's proposed layout changes below decks had been made reality.

The cavernous lazarette under the wheelhouse sole will swallow up an awful lot of kit but, from a cruising perspective, its depth and overall square footage will make an excellent second cabin. Indeed, the smooth finish down here is so good

that you may be tempted to just throw a blow-up mattress down there and be done with it. It would be a little stark, but very cosy.

The guest cabin would be accessed via the main, below decks, forward cabin, at the expense of some teak cabinetry and locker space. The forward cabin is hardly lacking in

space and could easily accommodate some more lockers elsewhere.

Other options require less imagination. The extended wheelhouse will give you more saloon seating and space for a navigator's seat to join the helm. The small, standard galley, a moot point on most sportsfishers, would also benefit from more space and specification. As tested, the wheelhouse was conventional in its layout. The U-shape dinette is comfortable yet formal, with space for five or six people around a high-low table that will make up an occasional double berth.

Going back to the possibility of a mid cabin, the dinette seat bases are made from teak and ply, with a few stowage voids offered. If the bases were moulded-out, they could offer even more headroom for a cabin beneath.

Accommodation

High-end fit out but still a story of what it could become



Below decks, the toilet/shower compartment is another beneficiary of the Kingfisher's broad bow sections, although the outward opening door suggests shower water may be a problem.

Exterior

Even with an extended wheelhouse, the deep, safe cockpit is not going to suffer for space. Nor does it on specification. A decent overhang juts out from the wheelhouse roof, allowing the cabin door some protection and the wheelhouse some much needed ventilation. Below the overhang, two sets of benches offer up seating for three.

Lockers beneath add more stowage, which would be more useful if it was made self-draining.

A freshwater and seawater deck wash system is laid on, the flow designed to drain out via the transom gate, or scuppers can be optioned in. As well as the boat's two lazarettes, there are long rope pockets set into the coaming.

A small reminder that this is a proper fisher: there are no steps up to the side decks as they would hinder where you could safely stand, but the builder will happily mould some in for you.

Exterior

Rock solid stability and space make deck life easy



Once you have climbed up to the sidedecks, handrails are plentiful, but rarely needed. And that tremendous forward buoyancy means that the bow is more stable than the cockpit.

Specification and value

A starting price of around £205,000 inc VAT for a 35ft, one cabin fisher, means that it is not exactly in bargain Bénéteau territory. And that figure is just the start of it, with a long list of options pushing the on-the-water price towards a cool £230,000. The boat's awesome build and ride qualities do separate it from the crowd, but a bit of specification streamlining would make this a far easier boat to buy.

The options list is really a long breakdown of every accessory you possibly could ask for. A bit of sorting and grouping of core cruising items – like a galley, toilet or berth for the forward cabin – into a leisure boat base-price would do the trick.

Specification & value

Quality is worth the extra but options need tidying up



If this is the case, and Kingfisher can then offer the optional interior layouts without any horrendous rise in cost, it will finish the job and make this one hell of a cruiser.

Verdict

The options list is a bit long and the accommodation is a little thin. But the qualities are so strong that they blast any minor shortcomings to smithereens. An awesome upwind ride, with 30 knots on tap, and an outstanding build, is not a bad base to start from. If Kingfisher can come up with a proper second cabin this will be the sportsfisher to beat them all.

8/10



Kingfisher 35 technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	Category B
LENGTH OVERALL	35ft 5in (10.8m)
HULL LENGTH	31ft (9.45m)
BEAM	12ft 1in (3.7m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 8in (0.98m)
DISPLACEMENT	7 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	187 gal (850lt)
WATER CAPACITY	56 gal (215lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDEDecks	14in
HEADROOM IN WHEELHOUSE	6ft 3in
BERTH	6ft 5in

performance

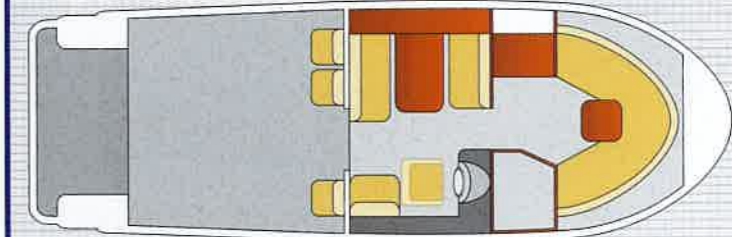
Engines	Twin Yamaha 6BY260z diesels				
Configuration	6 cyl/ 2.9lt 260hp at 4000rpm				
Conditions	wind westerly Force 5-6, sea state moderate				
Load	fuel 50% water 0% crew 2				
Rpm	knots	gph	mpg	range	noise
2500	14.2	9	1.5	224	74
2800	19.2	12	1.6	239	75
3000	22	13	1.7	255	75
3300	25.8	17	1.5	224	78
3500	28.2	20	1.4	210	78
3900	31	23	1.3	195	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 etc. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in the wheelhouse.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with 260hp diesels	£205,625
GALLEY PACK (HOB, SINK, FRIDGE)	£2715
BOW-THRUSTER	£3303
HEAD PACK (SINK, SHOWER, TOILET)	£1088
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£1470
WIPERS	£1680

BOAT AS TESTED £232,650



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The Kingfisher's brutal mix of speed and seakeeping instills real confidence, even in tough conditions