

FACT FILE
Morgan 260
LOA: 26ft 0in (7.92m)
PRICE: from £75,950
TOP SPEED: 35 knots

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Morgan 260

It's been decades since the emergence of a new British manufacturer but with its 260, Morgan is hoping to become a name to remember REPORT BY JUSTIN OLESINSKI

Four years ago Andrew Morgan was inspired to build a 26-foot sports cruiser that he hoped would not only surpass the competition in terms of design but also build quality. This sounds like a near-impossible task, even

more staggering when you consider that Morgan's payroll consists of less than five staff. Andrew has been surrounded by boats since his early childhood but it's his perfectionist attitude, gained from a career professionally restoring Jaguar E-types, that has enabled him

to make this idea a reality. Morgan boats are designed and manufactured just outside Plymouth, providing Morgan with access to some of the best testing grounds available, as well as a wealth of subcontractors for the few items that are outsourced. Morgan's aim

is to offer a high quality boat with a turnkey price so that customers aren't hit by any hidden surprises. And it's certainly different; there are few cruisers in this size range that have a full-sized galley both in the cockpit and the lower saloon. Morgan also markets its boats with an 'on the water' price, with just a few extras to add on.

Design & build

With John Bate, previously of Princess Motoryachts, employed to provide the naval architectural design, Andrew Morgan and his son Daniel set themselves the almighty task of doing pretty much everything else. Morgan's perfectionist trait is evident throughout the whole boat, as all aspects of the fitout are precisely executed, producing a nipped but solid design. The mould quality is excellent with windscreens, seals

and seats fitting both exactly and securely. Behind the scenes the build quality is equally high with a clean hull to deck join and a practical engineroom layout.

As the boat was still being tweaked in preparation for its debut at the Southampton Boat Show a few cupboard linings and the companionway footplate were missing from our test model, but we have been assured these items will be on the show model. The sporty white and red cockpit upholstery is in stark contrast to the traditional oak interior, making the

“Morgan's aim is to offer an on the water price with no hidden surprises”

260 feel like two different boats rolled into one. While most other manufacturers building 26-footers opt for a single galley below, with just cool box storage space in the cockpit, Morgan

has, in effect, two galleys. This may be good news to budding chefs or offshore catering companies, but for the rest of us it just means you lose a lot of seating both in the cockpit and below decks. This is the MK I version, though, so things will change and as Morgan is a small company it can react quickly to customer demand.

Design & build

Impressive, but too many galleys spoil the boat

Exterior

With the proportions associated with a 26-foot boat Morgan has done well in keeping the profile as low as possible. The sporty radar arch, complete with inset lights, and Donzi-inspired upholstery looks the part and acts as a subtle reminder of the power within.



The cockpit is tightly packed but the designers clearly had fun with the red helm seats and the stainless steel roll bars give it all a retro-racing feel

The raked, curved, forward windscreen continues the theme and acts as your pathway to the foredeck but you will need to attach the supplied stainless steel ladder in order to reach it. The rails on the foredeck are substantial and high and there is plenty of room in the anchor locker for chain and fenders. Future models will have the option of a proper electric windlass.

Aft, the near semi-circular bathing platform is a bolt-on type with a grabrail and storage for two

small fenders. There's also a four-stepped bathing ladder and hot/cold shower hose.

Entering the cockpit you are faced with that big old wet-bar complete with a sturdy handrail. Similar to that of a boat twice the size, a 65lt fridge, electric BBQ and a chopping board recess are all included. Beneath, a large locker can be used to store yet more warps and fenders.

A single, low-level L-shaped sofa, which converts to a sun lounger, dominates the transom and portside of the cockpit. Although not the

most sociable layout we have seen, it does mean you can seat five comfortably.

The red helm seat is far more exciting. Not only does it look the part with its Mini Coupe-style stainless roll bars, but it also has side and lower-back support that really works. The helm station is minimal and well laid out, but the mock burr dash and standard fit – albeit adjustable – steering wheel fail to excite the senses. A newly designed stainless steel steering wheel is currently being commissioned.

Visibility to the bow and stern is good when you're standing up but when seated the GRP reflects on the inside of the screen. This was



The long L-shaped sofa seats five comfortably while the omnipresent grabrails really impressed



Clean helm will improve when the new steering wheel arrives

mentioned and may be rectified for the boat show model. The standard Raymarine C70 is positioned to the left of the steering column and just to complete the picture you even get a memory card covering the whole of the UK, Ireland and northern France.

Exterior

Good-looking exterior but lacks sociable seating



Accommodation

Stepping down three steps into the 6ft 4in lower-saloon requires care as the coachroof comes a fair way aft, so watch your head as you go down.

Once below, there is no ignoring the galley and its four-burner hob, microwave, sink and two further ovens. And that is just the port side. To starboard you have another 65lt fridge with a 15in TV mounted above it where you can no doubt catch up on Gordon's 'Kitchen Nighmares'. Talking of a bad a night's sleep, the result of all this culinary hardware is a very short forward V-berth arrangement, measuring only 4ft 5in (1.37m) in length. That's not big enough for two adults, so couples will have to sleep in the midships berth. It's also quite tight to simply sit around the forward dinette as the sole angles up.

Despite pinched sleeping accommodation, the interior is beautifully finished in oak with Avonite work surfaces. The toilet compartment is adequate but a small floor area and pull-out shower hose could prove tricky for on-board showers. However, with a single portlight and light/extractor unit any steam will be dispersed.

Accommodation

The superb galley eats away at the forward berth



Engine options & access

Three petrol and three diesel options cover the usual power bases although the entry level 220hp V6 Volvo or MerCruiser petrols look woefully short on umph. Given Morgan's policy on no-nonsense specification it may have been better off sticking with just the 320hp V8 Petrol and 300hp Volvo Penta D4 diesel.

Removing the aft cockpit sofa cushion gives access to the engineroom and the hatch is supported by adequate gas struts. The battery master switches are located at the entrance with the three standard batteries located high above the bilges. The bilge pump is also easy to get to should it become clogged, while the single 215lt fuel tank and calorifier are within reach.

Engine options & access

Well laid-out and spacious, providing easy maintenance



A full galley running to port and starboard has compromised the size of the forward V-berth



The mid cabin will be the main sleeping quarters



Good for cooks, huge twin-cooker dominates



A stylish toilet but it's tight on the standing room



Good access to the engine under the aft deck

BOAT REPORT

MORGAN 260

Performance & handling

After looking at the impressive structural plans, two things occurred. Firstly, that this heavily built boat should easily handle virtually any sea state thrown at it. Secondly, that its performance was likely to suffer. Thankfully, any concerns regarding the latter were dispelled the moment we accelerated up across Plymouth Sound. The combination of brilliant hull design and a meaty 300hp diesel engine meant no messing around with leg trim was necessary, as the Morgan literally flew up onto the plane.

The wide hull shoulders carved their way through some horrid chop and made for smooth turns at all speeds. After launching ourselves from the substantial photo-boat's wake we expected all sorts of horrible noises but the 260 just landed softly on its 22° deadrise and powered on in search of more swell.

Performance & handling

It would be rude to keep the throttles back



On flat water, the Volvo D4-300 we tested reached a highly respectable speed of 35 knots. That's faster than the 320hp petrol Doral Venezia and way more economical.

Specification & value

The Morgan 260 is aimed at the top end of the market with the D4-300's price tag coming in at just a shade under £100k. But if you take the base price of the 220hp petrol at only £71k things start to look more favourable. Comparable in price and speed with the Doral Venezia, the Morgan wins in areas like handling and construction but the large galley down below affects the interior. However the standard spec is fantastic. A holding tank, GPS, teak-decked platform, canopies and flush pull-out stainless cleats all impress.

Specification and value

High standard spec so optional extras aren't necessary



Verdict

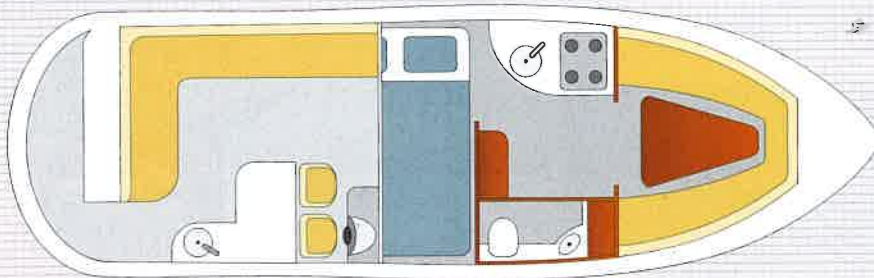
Morgan has created an incredibly capable cruiser at its first attempt. But value is the key in this market so while the all-in spec is to be commended, Morgan's premium price leaves little room for error. The decision to go overboard on culinary kit has hurt the accommodation. We reckon a bit less galley will serve up a lot more boat and probably many more buyers.

7/10

MBM rating



Morgan 260 technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	Category C
LENGTH OVERALL	26ft 0in (7.92m)
HULL LENGTH	24ft (7.31m)
BEAM	8ft 6in (2.62m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 8in (0.85m)
DISPLACEMENT	3.3 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	215lt (56.9gal)
WATER CAPACITY	50lt (11gal)
HOLDING TANK	50lt (11gal)

key dimensions

HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in (1.9m)
HEADROOM IN SHOWER ROOM	5ft 11in (1.8m)
HEADROOM ABOVE MID BERTH	1ft 7in (0.48m)
V-BERTH	4ft 5in (1.37m) X 6ft 2in (1.9m)



performance

Engines	Volvo Penta D4-300 300hp
Configuration	4cyl 3.7lt 300hp @ 3500rpm
conditions	wind Force 2, sea state slight
Load	fuel 50% water 50% crew 3

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
2500	19.8	24	6.5	3.1	177.4	81
2750	24.5	30	8.4	2.9	175.6	81
3000	27.5	37	7.9	3.5	159	82
3250	30	42	8.6	3.5	153.6	82
3500	34.5	57	10.1	3.4	130.1	83

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 at the helm.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with 200hp petrol	£75,950
with D4-300hp diesel	£97,750
Trailer	£3500
Bow thruster	£1100
Central heating	£900

BOAT AS TESTED £97,750

ENQUIRIES Morgan Powerboats
Tel: 01752 895768 www.morganpowerboats.com

the rivals



DORAL VENEZIA 260

From £92,544
30 knots with single 260hp D4 Volvo. A far more versatile cockpit and interior than the Morgan but it loses out on performance.
Tel: 01202 661630
www.simcomarine.com



BAYLINER 300

From £85,340
41 knots twin MerCruiser 260hp petrols. Being longer the Bayliner has far more accommodation and is no slouch.
Tel: 01539 442121
www.pooleaquatic.co.uk



MAXUM 2900 SE

From £95,970
With far larger open-plan accommodation below decks, the Maxum 2900 is a good dayboat-cum-cruiser. It lacks the Morgan's muscle though.
www.maxumboats.com