

Nimbus

26 Nova

BOAT REPORT

This is the mid-range walkaround sports cruiser from a Swedish yard with a reputation for build quality. It's

distinctive, but is it state of the art?

Open-cockpit, walkaround craft are very much in vogue, with many major boatbuilders now adding them to their ranges.

The reason, perhaps, is that few sports cruiser owners take advantage of the full capabilities of their craft, but end up utilising them as very comfortable dayboats. When that truth hits home, they start looking instead for more usable deck space, with less emphasis on the little-used below-decks accommodation.

The purposeful styling of the fast-fishing craft, from which the walkaround derives, may be retained, but with noticeably fewer angling features on the specification lists, as these highly practical craft evolve for more general leisure use.

As part of that evolutionary

process, larger models are finding favour in the market. Typical of these are the Nova range, from Swedish builders Nimbus, which combine the luxury of an open cockpit with the convenience of a small cabin.

The range runs from 20ft (6.20m) to 33ft (10.0m), all retaining the walkaround design but with cabin size increasing proportionately. We tested the mid-range 26 Nova.

Design & layout

Whilst there are no doubts as to the 26's robust build quality and high specification, its distinctive styling retains a sporty aura.

The medium-to-deep-vee hull, with its optional two-tone colour scheme, is enhanced by the plentiful stainless steel railing, which is substantial even without the targa arch, another option fitted to our test boat. Teak decking



and trim come as standard, and are at the heart of the overall feel of the craft.

The walkaround decks and the large aft cockpit are the basis of the boat's form and function, but the cabin is big enough not only to serve as storage space but to provide shelter if the elements turn nasty.

The canopy, an extra costing just over £1000 inc VAT, can effectively convert the helm position into a snug wheelhouse, perhaps encouraging you to take to the water more often.

Engine options are exclusively from Volvo Penta, and in the UK they are exclusively diesels running through DuoProp drives: the smallest choice is a 230hp KAD43, but our test boat had a 260hp KAD44.

Performance & handling

With 260hp on tap, the 26 Nova was not as fast as we had expected, in terms of top speed. We recorded just under 32 knots at 4050rpm, which is well above the engine's 3900rpm rated maximum, so it is likely that it was underpropped. Nimbus talk of 38 knots in their sales literature, and we do not doubt that a top speed nearer this mark could be attained given a coarser-pitched propeller.

With the engine revving so easily, pick-up was fine. The prop problem meant this boat was lacking just a little urgency at higher speeds.

This is a very relaxed craft at speed, with a very capable ride, up to dealing with far more than the freshening Solent chop of our test day. Setting the engine revs at 3500rpm gave a fast cruising pace of 25.4 knots, with a noise level of 82dB(A) in the cockpit. If you have time on your hands, a steady rate of 20 knots will see 2500rpm on the rev counter, and just 79dB(A) of noise.

Response to the steering wheel and throttle is good, and tight turns are easily achieved, with the power delivery bringing the boat round in good order. Through a series of tighter, lock-to-lock turns, the Nimbus continued to offer good feedback through the helm, with little drop-off in speed. Straight line tracking was also assured,



Forward cockpit

Walkways on both sides of the helm console, with a choice of handholds all the way, give access to the smaller, shallower bow cockpit.

A recess in the cabin roof serves as a single forward seating position, with stainless steel handholds. At the bow, a large locker with a double opening hatch will take care of anchor, chain and warps, though a winch is an optional extra.

The pulpit offers another boarding option.



Helm

Plenty of adjustment, in both the seating configurations and the steering wheel, should

accommodate all needs at the helm.

The helmsman's part of the twin-seat arrangement adjusts fully on a substantial stainless frame and, with firm and

comfortable cushioning and side support, plus a full-width footrest, offers a very good driving position.

It slides far enough forward to allow a snug position, with the wood-rimmed tilting steering wheel and stainless steel throttle control easily to hand. Or, if you prefer, it slides well aft to allow plenty of standing room; alternatively, you can raise the base cushion to give you a lean-back position.

Engine trim controls are independent of the throttle, but the bonus is a smooth throttle action.

A teak-backed panel offers a traditional dashboard with a logical layout of the Volvo Penta engine instrumentation. There is fairly generous space for adding extra electronics, and larger modules (as fitted on our test boat) are easily accommodated in the recessed area atop the dashboard, behind the standard compass, on a perspex-lidded tray which otherwise acts as a chart table.

If you opt for the radio/CD player, it is located in a recess just below the wheel, although out of sight in the cabin would be a more secure position. A pouch below offers 'bits' stowage.



Aft cockpit

Partly by opening up the transom, the builders have managed to turn the engine cover into a usable feature of the cockpit, rather than something that is in the way.

Depending on the location of its movable and removable backrest, the raised box can serve as a double settee at the cockpit table, an aft-facing seat for watching the world go by, or a good-sized sunbed. And if there are young crewmembers on board, the seat-back fits into the transom opening to make the cockpit more secure.

With a top surface of teak decking under the base cushion



to ease access to and from the bathing platform, it is a very well thought-out design solution.

With the folding cockpit

table in place, a less formal double seat at the back of the helm station completes a great venue for dining. A huge, removable 12V refrigerator box,

secured under the helm seats, will ensure food and drinks stay cool.

In contrast, with the forward double seat hinged up out of the way, the table removed and the aft cushions stowed, the whole cockpit becomes an open space. Fishermen will favour this layout, of course, and, although there are no live bait wells, deckside teak supports offer stowage for rods (or waterskis) and there are stainless steel rod-holders in the gunwales.

Lockers in the sole to port and starboard have gas struts to hold their hatches open, raised lips to prevent water ingress, and removable trays.

Cabin

Even if you think of this as a dayboat, the two-berth cabin adds to its convenience; if you

have grander plans, it could be used for weekending. Continuing the wood theme from the cockpit, it works well within the limitations of the space afforded it.

Access is good, through a bi-fold door and hatch, and there is standing headroom immediately inside.

The galley area comprises a stainless steel sink with mixer tap, a single-burner stove and some stowage, both in the base unit and by way of a tray (with infill) in the worksurface.

Forward, the two berths are full-length, and there is stowage up in the bow and under the seats, in the latter case in removable bins.

The designers have made it a priority to allocate enough space for a decent-sized, lined toilet compartment. There is just about standing headroom in here, and the porcelain toilet is augmented by some stowage.



Bathing platform

With the teak-decked bathing platform extending clear of the flanks of the transom, stepping aboard from

alongside is easy. Stainless steel handholds are well placed to help you.

The boarding ladder hinges on top of the platform, so you have to be careful not to trip over it. Stainless steel

fender-holders are mounted on the transom.

A central walkway through the transom coaming gives unimpeded access forward into the cockpit, over the enginebox.



making the craft both easy and enjoyable to drive.

From the helm, the 26 Nova does not feel as big a boat as it actually is, and you have to remember this when it comes to close-quarters manoeuvring. The test boat came with the optional bow-thruster, which some buyers will consider an expensive way of saving themselves from a red face; on the other hand, when docking in a strong crosswind, the boat's fairly high freeboard might have less confident owners wishing they had dug deeper.

Any skipper used to handling bigger boats might prefer a more commanding helm station. But the driving position is well protected, and the wheel and throttle comfortably located.

Conclusions

The distinctive Nova 26 is not cheap for a dayboat of its size, and the likelihood is that its buyers will be trading down from larger craft, as time commitments restrict their boating pleasure. But it offers the build quality and practicality they

will be accustomed to from Nimbus, so in readdressing their boating needs they need not lower their expectations.

Those used to well packaged boats and the latest design trends will have to adjust their thinking, though, as items of equipment which are standard from other manufacturers in this price range are extras here. A cabin mounting for the music system, with remote

helm controls, is a must for security, for example, and it would have been good to see a flush-fitting boarding ladder and more imaginative cockpit stowage.

With the right prop, performance will be up to most needs, including various forms of watersports. For the same budget you could certainly buy more speed, but only at the expense of functionality and ease of use. □



Nimbus 26 Nova

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RCD

build category B

DIMENSIONS

LOA

25ft 11in (7.90m)

HULL LENGTH

25ft 8in (7.83m)

BEAM

8ft 10in (2.70m)

DRAUGHT

3ft 3in (1.00m) with drive down
2ft 4in (0.70m) with drive up

AIR DRAUGHT

7ft 3in (2.20m)

DISPLACEMENT

2.5 tonnes

FUEL CAPACITY

62gal (280lt)

WATER CAPACITY

22gal (100lt)

ENGINE

Volvo Penta KAD44
6cyl 3.6lt diesel
260hp at 3900rpm

PRICE

£61,989 ex VAT as tested

SUPPLIERS

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Lymington Yacht Haven, Kings
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