

NIMBUS

31 COUPÉ



This aft-cabin design from Sweden is newer and bluer in its Special Edition. We took it out in a moderate Western Solent chop.





Before we had managed to arrange a test on the Standard 31 Coupé, which was introduced in 1995, Swedish builders Nimbus launched a new Special Edition model, which made its debut at the London Boat Show in January.

The differences include a revised forecabin layout and a wheelhouse which now extends further aft over the cockpit. Also available are the options of a blue hull, and teak side decks, both of which featured on the test boat we took out into the Solent from the premises of UK agents Offshore Powerboats.



Design

Following current Nimbus thinking, the concept of the 31 combines a Scandinavian-style raised wheelhouse/saloon with the aft-cockpit layout favoured by other European countries. Down below you have accommodation for six, by way of a master double cabin in the bow, a smaller double amidships and a convertible saloon settee.

The 31 Coupé has the same hull as the 31 Ultima, with a medium-vee form which is capable of up to 27 knots with a 230hp Volvo Penta shaftdrive



Above: the Nimbus 31's saloon is open and airy, with almost a complete surround of windows as well as overhead hatches. Far left: behind the helm position is a compact galley, with the fridge located under the driver's seat. Left: a neat canopy encloses the aft cockpit when required. Top right: forward, the toilet compartment has plenty of worktop and storage. Right: the master cabin is in the bow, with a tapering double berth.

installation, and which should be able to handle the short chops often encountered around the UK coast. The combination of an easily driven hull and a single inboard diesel also gives a good cruising speed, in a package that is economical to buy and run.

Rather than a P-bracket, the propeller shaft is carried in a short keel, and a skeg runs from this under the propeller, also carrying the lower bearing for the rudder. This arrangement gives complete protection for the sterngear and rudder in the event of grounding or hitting flotsam at speed.

Exterior

The navy blue hull gives the Special Edition 31 a powerful, purposeful look which sets it apart from its neighbours. The extensive use of laid teak in the cockpit, bathing platform and side decks adds to the feeling of luxury.

Partly recessed into the transom, the large bathing platform is set on two levels, with a lower centre section flanked by two large seat/lockers with slatted teak lids, which will take diving gear, fishing equipment or a stern anchor. A hinged boarding ladder helps swimmers climb out of the water, and good grabrails on each wing provide handholds or mooring points for a tender. A hot-and-cold shower is an option.

A central door gives access to the cockpit. Here you find a cushioned seat to port, and a narrow step leading up to the side deck to starboard. A manual bilge-pump serving the aft watertight compartment is set into the transom coaming, and there are good-sized cave lockers on each side.

Two hatches on gas struts provide access to the lazaret, which has plenty of room for covers, cushions, fenders and an inflatable. We were pleased to see a protective wooden box surrounding the steering gear, with a lip thoughtfully provided around its lid so it can double as a storage shelf. There is a similar wooden top over the fuel tank, and a GRP box for the four 75Ah batteries, together with vent pipes for any gases produced.



Forward to port, you have excellent access to the Volvo Penta fuel separator, the engine inlet strainer and the calorifier. A hatch opens to allow you to get at the stern gland, inlet seacock and gearbox.

The side decks are narrowish, at 6in-8in (150mm-200mm) wide, with a small outboard lip. The aftermost sections are moulded GRP, but from amidships forward they can be teak-laid as an option. Substantial inboard handrails run along the cabin sides, although they stand out and are a little bulky. Solid outboard guardrails run from amidships to the bow, but with no lower rail or wire; again they stand out from the side of the boat, being mounted on the tumblehome of the topsides.

Good moulded non-slip covers the coachroof, and a good foredeck layout has an extended platform, with a slot through which the anchor



deploys neatly and safely. Bows-to mooring is helped by the split pulpit with its teak step. A small hatch gives access to the foredeck locker, but there is no partition to keep the anchor chain separate. An electric windlass is an extra.

Substantial 10in (250mm) stainless steel cleats forward, midships and aft take care of mooring. Chunky rubber D-fendering surrounds the gunwale and the bathing platform, protecting the hull when you come alongside pile moorings.

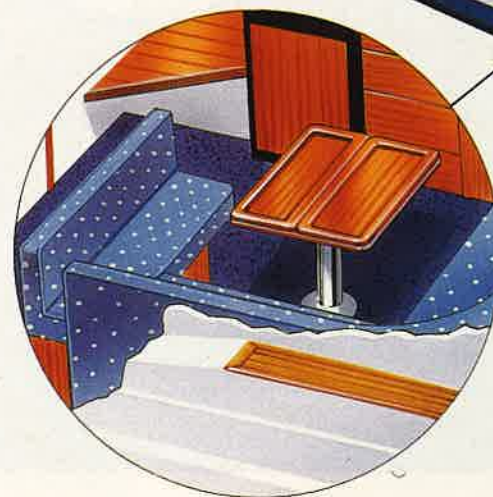
Interior

A single sliding door leads from the cockpit into the saloon. We were impressed by the handle, which is also a locking device to hold the door fully open, in either of two intermediate positions or closed.

The saloon is open and airy, with 6ft 3in (1.90m) headroom, almost a complete surround of windows and large sliding hatches overhead. Joinery here and throughout the boat is in American cherry, the favoured wood for the current generation of Nimbus boats, which gives a pleasingly warm finish. All furniture is made off the boat, then installed in modular fashion, and the standard is excellent as usual.

Welcome heat on the cold day of our test was provided by the optional diesel-fired central heating. When fitted, this comes with a Volvo hot-air system which takes heat from the engine cooling circuit in the fashion of a conventional car heater — a useful bonus which gives good back-up warmth when the engine is running, without the need to fire up the main unit. Also with this package you get windscreen demisters, another valuable asset.

To port in the saloon is a four-person settee, facing a hinged table which drops to form the infill for a double berth. A lid gives access to a moulded locker



Left: the single Volvo Penta diesel occupies an enginebox which is well soundproofed but restricts access to the sides.

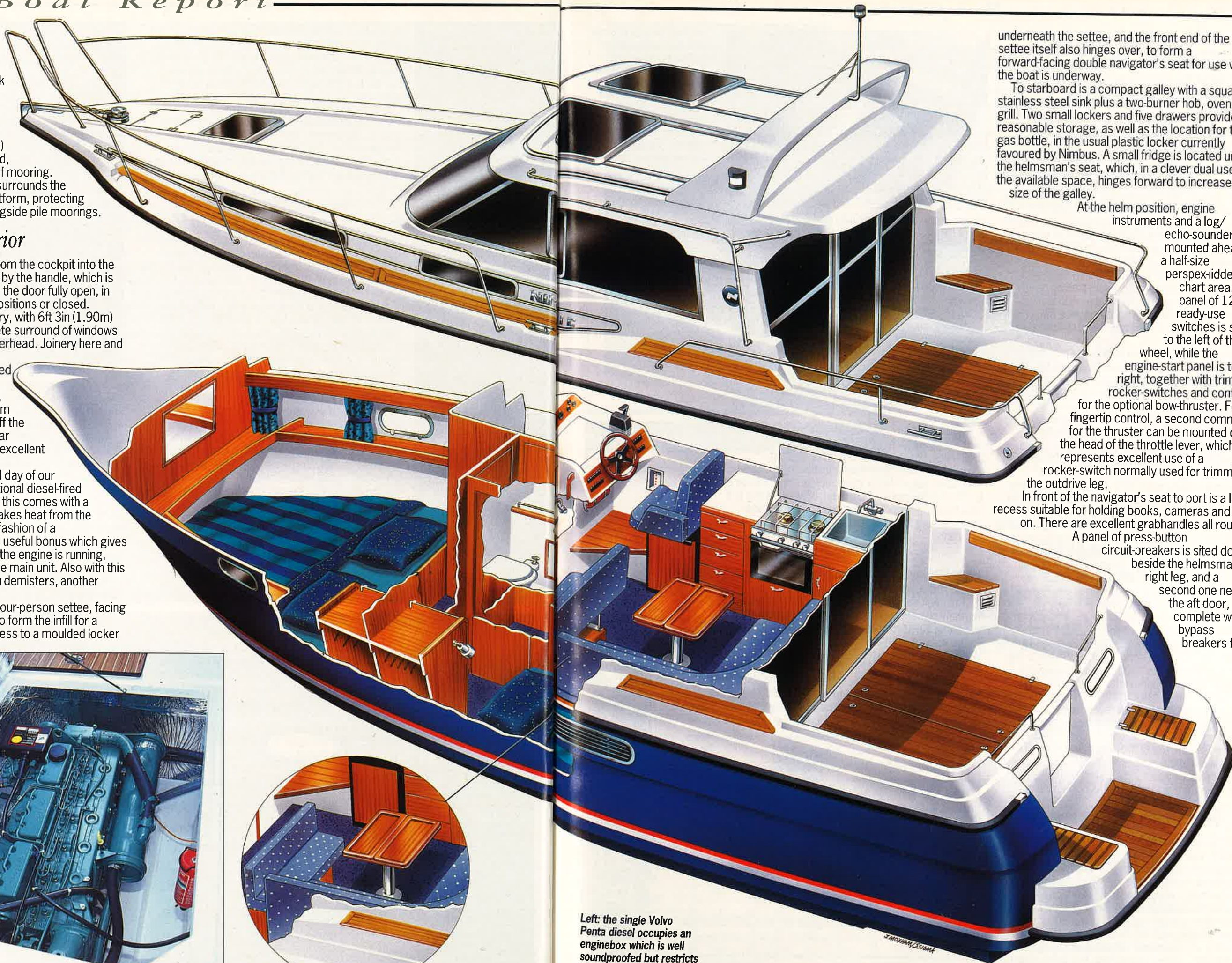
underneath the settee, and the front end of the settee itself also hinges over, to form a forward-facing double navigator's seat for use when the boat is underway.

To starboard is a compact galley with a square stainless steel sink plus a two-burner hob, oven and grill. Two small lockers and five drawers provide reasonable storage, as well as the location for the gas bottle, in the usual plastic locker currently favoured by Nimbus. A small fridge is located under the helmsman's seat, which, in a clever dual use of the available space, hinges forward to increase the size of the galley.

At the helm position, engine instruments and a log/echo-sounder are mounted ahead of a half-size perspex-licked chart area. A panel of 12 ready-use switches is sited to the left of the wheel, while the engine-start panel is to the right, together with trim-tab rocker-switches and controls for the optional bow-thruster. For fingertip control, a second command for the thruster can be mounted on the head of the throttle lever, which represents excellent use of a rocker-switch normally used for trimming the outdrive leg.

In front of the navigator's seat to port is a large recess suitable for holding books, cameras and so on. There are excellent grabhandles all round.

A panel of press-button circuit-breakers is sited down beside the helmsman's right leg, and a second one near the aft door, complete with bypass breakers for



the bilge pumps, central heating and navigation instrument memories. The battery master switch is also located here.

Also below the helm is a second manual bilge pump, serving either the forward compartment or the engineroom via a Y-valve. An automatic electric bilge pump is listed as an extra, although we would consider it a necessity on a boat such as this.

Three steps lead down from the saloon to the forward accommodation, which is arranged around a central lobby.

To starboard is a good-size toilet compartment with 5ft 10in (1.78m) headroom. The toilet itself is a PAR manual unit, and a large moulded GRP sink is set into an ample worktop surrounded by a wooden fiddle, with a well-placed grabrail/towelrail along its front; another handrail is sited on the aft bulkhead.

Plenty of storage space is offered by a large locker under the sink, plus a shelf with sliding doors. There is a fixed high-level portlight, plus an opening low-level port. A hatch in the aft bulkhead gives access to a manual pump which empties the optional holding tank overboard, and to the Y-valve for the bilge pump.

Opposite the WC to port is the door to a cosy midships cabin, made possible principally by the boat's single-engine configuration freeing extra space for accommodation. There is 5ft 9in (1.75m) headroom at the forward end, decreasing to 3ft 0in (0.91m) over the head of the bed and 1ft 3in (0.75m) over the rest; the bed itself is 3ft 6in (1.07m) wide. A half-height hanging locker and a shelf provide stowage space, while natural light comes from one fixed and one opening port.

The main cabin, in the bow, has a large tapering double berth. Stowage is by way of a drawer under the foot of the bed, two drawers and a locker to port, a small dressing table and a half-height hanging locker. These are augmented by full-length outboard shelves, plus a shelf over the bedhead. Light and ventilation come from two fixed and two opening ports, plus an overhead hatch.

Engine

Two engine options are available: Volvo Penta's 200hp TAM41 and 230hp KAMD42 diesels, giving top speeds of 25 knots and 27 knots respectively. Our test boat was fitted with the lower-rated unit.

The engine is mounted under the saloon, and reached via a large hatch in the sole. It sits in a box that is fully insulated with foil-faced foam soundproofing but is only slightly larger than the powerplant itself, which is fine for daily checks and for access to the top of the installation, but not for serious work at the sides.

Most routine service items, such as the fuel and water filters, are accessed through the lazaret.

Handling & performance

The 31's manoeuvrability around the marina is excellent, even without a bow-thruster. Positive steering and a large rudder give good control, and the optional thruster of course adds the final touch when berthing in tight spaces or shorthanded.

Out on the open water, the boat quickly rises to a comfortable cruising speed. Running out of the Western Solent past The Needles, we found no problems with the moderate swell and chop.

Particularly when running fast, the hull is sensitive to the use of the TX trim tabs. These work by being



Left: hatches on gas struts open from the cockpit to the lazaret, which has wooden tops covering the steering gear and fuel tank, offers lots of space for stowage, and allows access to the fuel separator, inlet strainer, calorifier, stern gland, seacock and gearbox.

driven down under power but raised under pressure, and it takes a short while to get used to the differing speed of action in each direction. All the same, the tabs are useful to help you achieve the best running angle and side-to-side trim. In a short chop, you have to get the bow down for a smooth ride, but for maximum speed in smoother conditions a little experimentation with the controls is needed.

We recorded a top speed of 24.2 knots at the engine's rated 3800rpm, with two crew, 35% fuel and empty water tanks. At this speed, our soundmeter registered noise levels of 88dB(A) in the cockpit and 84dB(A) in the saloon. Dropping back to 3500rpm gave comfortable cruising at just over 20 knots, and noise levels of 87dB(A) and 83dB(A) respectively.

Estimated fuel consumption at this cruising speed was 7.1gph (32lph), giving 2.9mpg for a range of 142 miles, which clearly demonstrates the significant economy of having just a single engine. The down side is that acceleration is not particularly brisk, at 0-20 knots in just under 16sec, but this is a loss most owners could live with given the good news coming from the fuel gauge.

Conclusions

Nimbus' latest 31-footer scores for its imaginative layout and economical versatility.

The deck saloon arrangement is likely to appeal to many owners, maximising daytime space yet at the same time providing three separate sleeping areas at night. Interior finish is clean, crisp and warm, and the Special Edition extras add a smarter look and a touch of luxury.

Additionally, the single-engine installation suits both fast coastal cruising and river use, with the well-protected sterngear a particular asset in the latter case.

Builders

Nimbus Boats, GKSS
Hamnen, Box 5152, S-426
05, Vastra Frolunda, Sweden.
Tel: (46) 31 29 93 10.

Suppliers

Offshore Powerboats,
Lymington Yacht Haven,
Lymington, Hampshire SO41
9QD. Tel: 01590 677955.

Nimbus 31 Coupé

Engines single Volvo TAM41P diesel, 200hp at 3800rpm, 6cyl, 3.6lt.

Conditions wind S Force 2-3, sea slight. **Load** fuel 35%, water 0%, crew 2.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	sound levels dB(A)		
							saloon	fwdcab	ckpt
2000	7.9	1.8	8	4.39	215	1.5	76	77	79
2500	10.0	3.4	15	2.94	144	3.5	78	78	80
3000	14.8	4.9	22	3.02	148	4.5	80	79	82
3200	17.9	5.7	26	3.15	153	4.0	81	80	84
3500	20.6	7.1	32	2.90	142	4.0	83	83	87
3800	24.2	10.0	45	2.42	118	4.0	84	84	88

Acceleration 0-20 knots, 14.5sec

(* allows 20% margin)

Loa
30ft 6in (9.30m)

Beam
10ft 6in (3.20m)

Draught
3ft 4in (1.00m)

Displacement
3.7 tonnes

Fuel capacity
61gal (280lt)

Water capacity
40gal (180lt)

Price
from £86,517
ex VAT as standard;
£96,556 as tested