

Ocqueteau 760

This is more of a motor cruiser than its French builders' usual pêche-promenades. Is it a step in the right direction?

Based on the River Crouch in Essex, South Woodham Marine have identified a steady market for small, economic inboard-engined craft. As a result, they have been very successful in distributing the Ocqueteau range.

This French line-up of pêche promenade-style boats traditionally combine performance that is better than semi-displacement, with plenty of

protection by way of a wheelhouse, all with an unfussy, hop-in-and-go feel to them.

However, the 760 model is something a little different, presenting itself as more of a cruiser than previous models. As such, does it cut the Dijon?

Design & layout

The 760 uses the same hull as the 715 model, but modified to incorporate an integrated bathing

platform, while the actual underwater sections are unaffected.

These are basically set into a straightforward vee-arrangement over the fore body, while on their run aft they hit the substantial skeg section. This encapsulates the sterntube and provides the landing for the metal shoe, which in turn supports the large plate rudder. Behind the skeg, the hull is scalloped out to form a tunnel,

allowing the engine and drive train to be set lower in the boat.

The topsides are broken by the presence of a slight whaleback gunwale. However, there is no getting way from the bulk of the extended wheelhouse superstructure, where headroom is only just short of 7ft, which tends to dominate the look of the boat and make it appear rather top-heavy. This is somewhat unfortunate as the boat's



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predecessor, with its shorter wheelhouse, was not an unattractive boat.

Outward aesthetics aside, the layout and accommodation works well, with a sheltered cockpit

leading through to a multi-tasked saloon. This has a galley immediately to starboard, the helm just ahead of it and a sizeable, convertible dinette opposite.

A couple of steps lead down to a

roomy toilet compartment, along with a double-berth cabin right forward, the berth having a hinged infill that drops to give more space during the day.

The inboard engine line-up

allows prospective owners to have their pick of manufacturers and horsepower, running from a 130hp Nanni through to a 170hp Yanmar. Our test boat had the former option.



Saloon

A set of folding double doors opens the saloon into the cockpit, but does not make for a completely clear thoroughfare, as the rear of the latter's settee encroaches part way across. On the plus side, this allows people to sit facing aft into the cockpit,

to complement any other seating that might be used.

Upon stepping inside, the almost overly generous headroom becomes quite apparent, while light and space can be further augmented by adding the optional opening overhead hatch. The side windows open in any case.

The U-shaped dinette has

plenty of stowage within its seat base (a holding tank is also installed here), and the wood and holly table drops to make the usual infill for that extra berth.

To complement the helm seat across the way, a portion of the fore part of the settee can be flipped round to make an extra forward-facing seat.

Cockpit

This area is devoid of any moulded-in seating which might otherwise encroach on the free deck space. However, it is sizeable enough to

accommodate a few directors' chairs, and with the double doors opened up through to the wheelhouse, there is room enough to sit around and socialise.

A pair of lockers in the transom coaming provide

stowage for gas bottles, together with hands-on bits and pieces for easy access. The lazaret is directly under the cockpit, accessed by several gas-strut supported hatches, with plenty of space to stow the usual boating paraphernalia.

Most of the auxiliaries, such as the calorifier and batteries, are pushed right outboard or, in the case of the fuel tank, across the forward bulkhead. Unfortunately, this has made some of them tricky to get to, with the batteries hemmed in by the close proximity of the engineroom ducting, and the fuel shut-off sandwiched between the tank top and the deckhead. In fairness, the boat we saw was one of the first, and the distributors were expecting these shortcomings to be addressed.

Other items accessed from down here are the battery switches and steering gear, while a manual bilge pump is to be found in the cockpit proper.

Toilet

The generous proportions of the 760 extend to the toilet compartment, which is roomy and has loads of headroom. It is largely a moulded affair, as one would expect, with integrated basin and shower tray. All well and good, except that the latter could really do with beefing-up as it flexes underfoot.

We also felt that the under-sink locker could have been lined in some way, as stowed items may rattle around against the hull sides.

Ventilation is via an opening port and, usefully, the boat comes with a holding tank system as standard.



Performance & handling

Smallish, single-engined boats with loads of top-hamper are clearly going to take a bit of getting used to on the handling front. In

fairness, however, the 760 can be pushed round in her own length using a three-point turn, and can be tickled astern quite squarely when reversing into your allotted finger berth.

Furthermore, the boat is light enough that the odd judicious poke with a boat hook is going to be the easy answer out of any tricky situations. However, if you can spare that extra few thousand

pounds, a bow thruster can be fitted if really necessary.

Underway at slow speed, the hull takes up a steady course while clearly staying responsive to the large rudder; 1000rpm gives



Bathing platform

This is just the right size, being of sufficient depth to help with boarding or using for watersports, but without taking up too much of the boat's overall length when it comes to those marina charges.

It is also nicely nipped in at the sides so as not to be inadvertently bashed when manoeuvring and comes equipped with a swim ladder.

The shower is located in the cockpit, but is not far away, while coamings on either side of the transom's central walkway are fitted with handrails.



Decks

A couple of moulded steps lead up from the cockpit to the 7in (18cm) wide side decks. These are bordered along most of their length by a wooden toerail and outward-canted guardrails which, despite giving a decent amount of room to allow the crew past the superstructure, are quite springy and surprisingly rather poorly finished around the welds.

On the plus side, the cleats are of a good size at 12in (30cm), with pairs fore and aft but unfortunately nothing amidships. Just behind the slight hook in the stem that hides the bow roller is a chain locker, and on our test boat an optional electric windlass.



Galley

This runs down the starboard side of the wheelhouse and is compact yet useful, with just enough stowage and necessary appointments to keep you going for the weekend.

Indeed, there is a full cooker unit with hob, grill and oven, rather than simply a couple of burners, together with a small fridge and sink unit.

The work surface is increased once the flap over the hob has been folded out, while stowage amounts to a couple of cupboards and a utensil drawer.



Forecabin

A set of double doors gives access to the fore cabin, which has been nicely thought-out in terms of space. The port biased bunk has a hinged side extension so as to give more room during the day, and yet makes up to a 4ft (1.22m) double at night, with a length of 6ft 4in (1.93m).

A wide, full-length shelf runs down the starboard side, which the manufacturers claim can be used as a further berth (although this is wishful thinking in our view, being better used for storing kit bags).

The cavernous voids within the bunk bases are accessed via a couple of hinged hatches under the mattress cushions,

which is all rather cumbersome for when it comes to digging out day-to-day items. A range of cave lockers built into the sides of the bases would be much more user-friendly, perhaps with top-accessed lockers behind.

The sides of the cabin are lined with an attractive wood effect, but the headlinings let the side down, being close-carpeted in one of those woolly fabrics rather than set-off with vinyl panels.



Helm

The single seat can be pushed back for when the skipper prefers to stand in front of the vertical wood wheel. A footrest is to be incorporated to make the seated position more comfortable.

The moulded console has room for the usual array of engine gauges and items like a log and echo-sounder but, if you feel the need for any other electronics, these will have to go overhead, making them difficult to read when seated.

The main fuse panel is just adjacent, while the void beneath the console has been turned into a small hanging locker.



5 knots, in gear at 800rpm makes this a proper 5mph river speed.

Open the Nanni up to 2400rpm and the 760 settles into her cruising mode of around 12 knots. This is an awkward speed for many boats, making them squat. In this case, however, the hull stays at a reasonable level of trim, helped not least by the fact that fixed tabs are fitted on the transom.

At full throttle – that was 2750rpm in this instance – we achieved a wholly comfortable 16 knots, the hull pushing cleanly over the limited waves and boat washes we could find given the rather lacklustre weather.

As to the driving position itself, the lack of footrest is being seen to, but while they are at it, a few inches on the seat might not go amiss either, as although the visibility is pretty good, the port console requires peering over. A touch more thought as to the setting up of the wipers would also be useful.

Conclusions

To date, the Ocqueteau models we have seen are what you might call 'soft pêche-promenades', being relatively simple and unfussy in

Engineroom

A pair of hinged hatches reveal the engine space, where there is plenty of room to get right down both sides of the block. The raw water and primary fuel filters are both immediately accessible.

With a further aft section of sole removed, you can check the gearbox and shaft log.

A similar, readily removable portion towards the front of the bay would also pay dividends, as although there is space enough ahead of the pumps and belts, being able to tackle them from above, and not just from the side, would make things easier still.

The compartment sides and hatches are insulated, and the installation appear well-found and tidily executed.



Ocqueteau 760

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RCD

build category B

DIMENSIONS

LOA

24ft 11in (7.60m)

BEAM

9ft 2in (2.80m)

DRAUGHT

2ft 8in (0.80m)

AIR DRAUGHT

9ft 2in (2.80m)

DISPLACEMENT

2.4 tons

FUEL CAPACITY

44gal (200lt)

WATER CAPACITY

44gal (200lt)

ENGINES

single Nanni 4.340TDI

4cyl 3.31lt diesel

130hp at 2600rpm

PRICE

£48,069 inc VAT as standard

SUPPLIERS

South Woodham Marine Ltd, 35 Hullbridge Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex CM3 5NG. Tel: 01245 324241.

BUILDERS

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fit-out, but clearly marketed for leisure use rather than anything too serious on the fishing front.

This trait has gone a veritable stage further, with a model that is even more geared towards taking one's ease, as well as keeping things relatively simple.

On balance the builders have got it pretty well right, with useful weekending accommodation, perfect for imperfect climes, and an economic inboard installation.

Yes, we found a few niggly things but nothing that cannot be easily sorted out. □