

BOAT REPORT

Rinker

Fiesta Vee 270

*A dealer in the UK persuaded the American builders to offer this sportscruiser with a **diesel engine** option. Was that a good call?*



You might think the price of waterside fuel would put anyone off from buying a petrol-powered boat, but then of course equivalent diesel-engined boats can be around 25% more expensive in terms of purchase price. When you weigh up the difference between capital and running costs, is there a 'break even' point which you can put down to the size of the boat?

Cambrian Boat Centre, who are dealers for American-built Rinker boats, concluded that it was once you reached around 27ft in overall length that the figures dictate favouring reduced fuel costs over cheaper initial outlay. Consequently, they persuaded the builders to offer a diesel outdrive package with their Fiesta Vee 270 sports cruiser.

The installation in question is an interesting choice: one of the recently launched hybrids from

Bathing platform

The integral bathing platform, tucked neatly between the topside returns, is of a good size for boarding and swimming from, but without taking up too much of the 270's precious length.

A shower is provided, and a grabrail atop the transom lends a steadying hand. The bathing ladder is left uncovered, which looks a little unkempt in comparison with the way most boats manage to tidy it away.



Cockpit

Where you cannot board directly via the bathing platform, it should be possible to hop directly in and out of the cockpit from alongside. The inner coaming is fashioned with a moulded step on

each side to help you.

With the coamings being a good height and the aluminium-framed screen extending well back to offer good protection, the cockpit has a feeling of security.

Seating comprises a transom bench aft and a sociable and comfortable curved settee



Helm

As with most American boats, the helm seat is generous and bucket-shaped to give plenty of cossetting and lateral support. It is also adjustable fore and aft, and comfortably sited for the controls and instrumentation.

The console is a moulded affair, with an outboard return housing the throttle controls and the ready-use switchpanel.

The main dashboard accommodates the engine instrumentation in a well-shielded fascia, making them easy to see in sunlight, and there is an angled chart area right in front of the wheel.

Trim tabs and a VHF set are supplied as standard, as are a speed log and an echo-sounder. There is space for one or two additional items of electronics if required.

The screen is serviced by a single small wiper.



forward to port, opposite the helm position.

Stowage is provided by moulded lockers within the transom bench, and the backrest of the forward settee incorporates a good-sized, Perspex-lidded locker suitable for loose items that you need to keep to hand while underway. The coaming opposite houses a coolbox.

Curiously, the aluminium cockpit arch is an optional extra (coming complete with inset handholds), although a full canopy is part and parcel of the standard inventory.



Saloon

The cockpit deck moulding incorporates a lower step near the companionway to the accommodation, so only a couple of further treads are required to get down into the cabin once you are through the sliding door.

Immediately to port is the galley, and to starboard the toilet compartment, while the dinette forward is quite elevated so as to dig it out of

the vee of the hull and make it as beamy as possible.

Hence, it is more U-shaped than V-shaped, and when made up into a double berth it is a maximum of 5ft 0in (1.52m) wide by 6ft 2in (1.89m) long, with still plenty of width at its foot.

Outboard of the seat-backs are wide, deep shelves, and beneath the cushions are painted-out storage areas. For clothes that need to be kept less crumpled, a hanging locker is provided.



Toilet

Long-limbed crewmembers might find their legs a little cramped when using the toilet compartment, which is on the long but narrow side. However, there is space to carry out all necessary ablutions.

A shower is incorporated, and a similar, rather dull and old-fashioned stainless steel wash basin as found in the galley.

Stowage is provided by a cupboard within the moulding beneath the sink, and ventilation by an opening port.



Galley

The largely moulded galley is enlivened by contrasting fiddled worksurface, with a further fiddled shelf outboard.

The main appointments are a microwave oven, which

shares the chest-high console with a couple more fiddled shelves, and a single electric burner, set in the countertop next to a rather lacklustre stainless steel sink.

A fridge is housed below, together with a sizable storage cupboard.



Midships cabin

The midships cabin is no more than a duck-in, curtained-off area, but it is quite roomy for what it is.

The mattress area measures 4ft 5in (1.37m) by 6ft 1in (1.86m), with handy cave lockers and fiddled shelves at its foot and head. There is also plenty of sitting headroom.

A port opening into the

cockpit gives light and ventilation, and a hatch beneath the mattress provides access to the bilge pump.



Yanmar and Mercruiser, using the former's 230hp four-cylinder engine coupled to the latter's Bravo Two drive unit.

It was with this package that we tested the 270, out of the dealers' base in Swansea.

Design & layout

Quite apart from the fact that this engine package is geared towards the UK market, the styling of Rinker's boats now seems to have a more European flavour than before. Note the 270's simple, clean stem, unfestooned with the dolphin beak of an anchor platform, and its single-level cockpit.

However, the model's proportions and fit-out clearly herald from across the Atlantic. Evidence of this is the generous headroom both in the main cabin, with its convertible dinette, and in the curtained-off midships sleeping area, resulting in high topsides.

The hull moulding incorporates a neat, unobtrusive bathing

platform aft of a full-width cockpit, from where a walk-through screen gives access to the foredeck. The curved settee opposite the helm position allows a full crew of four to remain sociable and enjoy the view while underway.

All this is carried on medium-to-deep-vee underwater sections, which have a deadrise of 18° and two sets of sprayrails to augment the chine and the slight topside knuckle above.

Instead of the diesel package we tested, the 270 is also available with a single 5.7lt Mercruiser V8 petrol engine, of 250hp or 260hp depending upon whether you opt for fuel injection.

Performance & handling

This is the first time we have come across this hybrid of a Yanmar engine on a Mercruiser outdrive unit, and it gave a good account of itself.

The boat rides cleanly wherever you set the throttle. When fully

Decks

There are 8in (20cm) cleats at the quarters, amidships and forward. Handling warps from the aft set is easy enough from the cockpit, but there are no side decks as such, so foredeck work means passing through the screen.

The rather fiddly steps and the unnecessarily slim opening portion of screen are awkward

to negotiate, but the coachroof has an adequate moulded non-slip finish. Although there are no handrails mounted along it, the outboard guardrails are not far away.

Up at the bow, the ground tackle has a separate locker, itself set under a deck hatch so that there is room in between for stowing the odd warp. An electric windlass is available as an option.



opened up it is glad to clip along at 28 knots at 3300rpm, but it also planes without fuss down to a gentle 17.5 knots at 1900rpm. In between, if you settle for 2800rpm, you have an easy cruising speed of 24 knots.

Right through the speed range, the hull responds smartly to the helm and throttle without throwing everybody about. It is a well-mannered cruiser, not a sportsboat. If you do want to play, you have to work the helm quite hard to get any loss of grip from the propeller.

At river speed it keeps well in hand at just over tickover, and the drive slips in and out of gear smoothly, which made our passages through the double lock system at Swansea less of a chore.

One drawback we anticipated with a single four-cylinder diesel installation was an increase in noise and vibration in comparison with a petrol engine. To a certain extent our misgivings were well founded, especially at the lower end of the rev range, but once up and running it is a deeper tone that one notices, rather than any extra

actual noise. Better insulation in the engine compartment would almost certainly help.

The driving position works well and is most comfortable, whether you are sitting or standing.

Conclusions

With the diesel engine package as tested, the Fiesta Vee 270 comes out at around £10,000 more expensive than with any of the petrol options. How does this difference in capital cost stack up against the fact that quayside petrol is around three times the price of diesel, given that diesel engines physically consume around 15-20% less anyway?

Some rudimentary maths tells us that the 230hp Yanmar/Mercruiser diesel, consuming 6gph (27lph) at a 24-knot cruising speed, will cost you around £7.20 per hour to run if the fuel costs £1.20/gal. The same use of a Mercruiser petrol unit will see the running costs shooting up to nearer £26 per hour.

Other things being equal, it looks like you are going to have to put 500 hours on the boat to recover your extra initial outlay. However, bear in mind the premium the boat will achieve on resale, plus the additional peace of mind that comes with running a diesel, and maybe the importers are right in surmising that the option is worthwhile on a boat of this size.

Certainly by persuading Rinker to offer a diesel installation amongst the array of petrol-engined boats in this market, Cambrian Boat Centre have done no disservice to potential customers of this 27-footer, which retains a sprightly turn of speed and handles cleanly. The powertrain appears

separator is located on the forward bulkhead, adjacent to the fuel tank and shut-off. Set in the wings are the waste and water tanks, together with pumps and batteries, the switches for the latter being located in a small cave locker by the transom door.

This is a no-frills installation, with the bay simply painted out, but we liked the thoughtful touch of providing a spares stowage box outboard. Rather less helpfully, the bilge pump is tucked well and truly under the engine.

Engineroom

Most of the aft section of the cockpit sole, including the transom bench but excluding the walkway through to the bathing platform, lifts on an electrohydraulic ram to offer access to the engineroom.

It is an easy hop down into the compartment for basic checks, and there is plenty of space around the engine, and right down to the leg, for fuller maintenance.

The primary fuel/water



Rinker Fiesta Vee 270

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RCD

build category B

DIMENSIONS

LOA

27ft 8in (8.43m)

HULL LENGTH

26ft 2in (8.00m)

BEAM

9ft 1in (2.77m)

DRAUGHT

3ft 0in (0.91m)

AIR DRAUGHT

9ft 2in (2.79m)

DISPLACEMENT

2.9 tons

FUEL CAPACITY

84gal (380lt)

WATER CAPACITY

27gal (124lt)

ENGINE

single Yanmar 4LHA-STZE

4cyl 3.45lt diesel

230hp at 3300rpm

PRICE

£54,995 inc VAT as standard

SUPPLIERS

Cambrian Boat Centre Ltd,
14 Cambrian Place, Maritime
Quarter, Swansea SA1 1PQ.
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BUILDERS

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to be a good match of Yanmar's engine and Mercruiser's drive. It is a little noisy, but think of the cost savings and you'll hardly notice that.

In other respects the Fiesta Vee 270 completes what it sets out to do, offering a roomier version of a two-cabin format than some of its competitors. The extended seating opposite the helm makes good sense, too, allowing everyone to enjoy a piece of the action.