

The brief...



Mid 30ft boats are often about either speed or cabins. We head to Dartmouth to discover one that prioritises having a good time. **Nick**

LOA: 36ft 4in (11.1m)
PRICE: from £237,391 incl VAT
TOP SPEED: 32 knots
BUILDERS: Sessa Marine
ENQUIRIES: Tel: Bates Wharf
01932 571141
www.bateswharf.co.uk

BOAT REPORT
SESSA KEY LARGO 34

Key Largo 34

Stylish and practical, this is the ultimate party boat, perfect for people who want to go places but not hang around there for too long REPORT BY NICK BURNHAM

Keith Williams, owner of our Key Largo 34 test boat, epitomises its target audience. He lives about 10 minutes from the marina and originally bought a new Princess V42 with the idea of going further afield, but the reality was that virtually all his use was local day-boating with friends and family. Paying to berth and run a 42-footer just to lug two big empty cabins around was pointless, so Keith downsized and bought a 20ft bow rider speedboat instead. With all the boat given over to deck space this seemed the ideal solution – but for

"This boat's ethos is best epitomised by the massive sunpad on the foredeck"

coastal work Keith felt that the boat was too small, too light, too exposed, and he missed the reassurance of a pair of diesel engines, so he decided he needed something in-between.

The problem is that twin engine planing sports boats between about 30 and 40ft tend to fall into two camps. They're either out and out racers, everything honed in pursuit of ultimate performance with tiny cabins below deck and pointy unusable foredecks, think Hunton and Superhawk. Or they swing the other way and prioritise accommodation, like his V42. Both of these genres have their place of course, but neither fitted Keith's brief.

Design & build

The answer to Keith's prayers came in the form of Sessa's new Key Largo 34, a boat designed not for ultimate speed or for ultimate cabin

space, but optimised instead simply to be the ultimate weekender. The ethos of this boat is best epitomised by the foredeck. Unlike most craft of this ilk, instead of a raised section to maximise interior headroom, the KL34 has a slightly recessed completely flat deck with cushions to create a massive sunpad for sprawling out on. There are even stereo speakers built in to the headrest angled against the console. Steps either side of a centre console make this area easily accessible to anyone, completely negating the feeling of scrambling forward that moving ahead of the screen can sometimes engender.

The helm console itself is typically Sessa, finished in classy metallic gold and silver with a stitched cream vinyl hood over the plotter. Seats are sporty stand/sit wraparound bolsters separated by a padded armrest with storage

beneath and a VHF radio, and a footplate aids ergonomics. Directly behind the seats is a wet bar complete with twin burner gas hob, sink and fridge, perfect for alfresco entertaining. Further aft the expansive cockpit features a long L-shaped seating area around a folding table and the aft backrest flips forward to extend the small aft sunpad.

Topping off (literally) the cockpit on Keith's boat is an optional GRP hardtop that provides permanent shade for the helm and, at the touch of a button, extends out over the cockpit seating. Back aft a generous swim platform conceals a locker in which Bates Wharf (the supplying dealer) has fitted two dinghy chocks that slot into the otherwise completely flush deck to hold Keith's dinghy.

It is the perfect dayboat, so finely attuned to cockpit living that it's easy to assume that whatever's down below must be a total compromise. Amazingly, nothing could be further from the truth. Drop through the Perspex sliding door in the helm console and Sessa have found standing headroom down here, although inevitably it drops pretty quickly going forward, a corollary of that flat foredeck.

A perfectly adequate galley to port faces a well proportioned heads to starboard and a V-shaped dinette converts to a double berth. There's even a small double berth running back aft under the cockpit. Would a family of four want to spend a week aboard? Probably not. Could Keith and his wife have a comfortable weekend away? Absolutely. Job done then.

As ever with Sessa, there's a healthy dose of Italian style and a strong sense of solidity. From the shimmering black hull band that truncates tastefully to a point at the stern to the copious use of stainless steel in everything from the anchor to the through hull fittings, it looks and feels like a quality product.

See the video at www.motorboatsmonthly.co.uk



PHOTOS: Nick Burnham



From the helm

Typical Sessa sparkle comes with added muscle

Stood behind the chunky helm console, there is a purposeful RIB-like quality to the KL34. This is backed up by equally chunky but somewhat more luxuriously upholstered wraparound bolster seats. The overall impression is that this is a boat you can go places on.

This being a Sessa, there is plenty of sparkle to go with the brawn. Silver and gold mouldings adorn the dash area with stitched hoods for the plotter and dials.



On deck

Weekender ethos delivers ultimate dayboat deck

A weekend consists of two full days and one night, accordingly this KL34 delivers twice as much deck space as it does interior. The foredeck is the main

gain, with a wide, safe and slightly recessed suntrap that knows exactly what its job is – from the speakers fitted to the sunpad headrests to the cupholders. Back aft there's a cockpit wetbar and shower to keep you fully refreshed and a deep surround of seating that will convert to a sunpad. The test boat features an optional GRP hardtop with a neat extending screen that offers the cockpit some shade.



Interiors

2 + 2 touring

With 34ft to play with, there is still plenty of room below decks. Full standing headroom in the entrance way and a long run of hull windows opens the main cabin up, with a large dinette dropping into a double berth.

Back aft there is a tight but well-appointed mid cabin berth. The toilet and shower compartment aren't the biggest we've ever seen, but they're certainly a sensible size given the proportions of the boat.



Performance & handling

Power comes courtesy of a pair of Volvo Penta D3-220 diesel engines that give a credible 32 knots and cruise comfortably at 25, perfect for swift runs to favourite anchorages. As is often the way with today's modified vee hull designs, fuel efficiency stays completely static from 10-30 knots at 1.8mpg. One way of looking at this is that fuel efficiency never really finds its feet. Another way of looking at it is that you can go as fast as you like, for as long as you like.

A pair of petrol V8s are on the options list if you do wish to burn more fuel, as are twin or even triple outboards! Handling is positive and precise, the boat reacting calmly to steering input and banking confidently through tight turns. Running into a sea, spray is punched away smartly, a useful function given how open this boat is.

All in all, it's a fun drive but with diesel HP very much geared towards conservatism. The KL34 never feels as intimidating as it looks.



Specification & value

A starting price knocking on the door of quarter of a million pounds VAT paid is, on face value, a lot of money for a boat with effectively just one open-plan cabin. But it's important to understand that the whole ethos of this boat is about what's on the outside, with the surprisingly generous interior just a bonus. Turn it on its head and ask what other boat gives this much external lounging space at this price point? Factor in Sessa's high level of quality, add a dash of Italian brio and then consider those twin diesel engines. Suddenly it makes a lot of sense.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	36ft 4in (11.1m)
HULL LENGTH	32ft 6in (9.90m)
BEAM	10ft 9in (3.30m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 9in (0.88m)
DISPLACEMENT	5.7 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	241gal (1097lt)
WATER CAPACITY	47gal (215lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	16in (40cm)
HEADROOM IN CABIN (ENTRANCE)	6ft 5in (1.98m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 0in x 5ft 2in (1.83 x 1.58m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 1in x 5ft 0in (1.86 x 1.52m)

PERFORMANCE

ENGINES	twin Volvo Penta D3-220 220hp diesel engines
Configuration	220hp @ 3800rpm
Conditions	Force 1/2 sea state slight
Load	fuel 50%, water 20%, crew 2

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1,000	6	4	0.9	6.7	1293	64
1,500	8	11	2.4	3.3	637	72
2,000	10	25	5.5	1.8	347	77
2,500	16	40	8.8	1.8	347	84
3,000	22	55	12.1	1.8	347	82
3,250	25	63	13.9	1.8	347	82
3,500	29	72	15.8	1.8	347	83
3,880	32	97	21.3	1.5	290	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 in the saloon.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	from £237,391
CRUISE PACK (SEE BELOW*)	£10,435
THRUSTER, PLOTTER, HW, BATTERY CHARGER	
T TOP WITH ELECTRIC AFT BIMINI	£15,131
HULL COLOUR	£2922
*includes bow thruster, Raymarine C125 chart plotter, Bow speakers, hot water, 240v battery charging	

BOAT AS TESTED £265,879

*Boat as tested price may include alternative options



Enginebay

A single hydraulic strut powers up a section of cockpit floor and rear seating to provide excellent engine access. The twin Volvo Penta D3-220 engines are buried well aft, but there's still space to get to all the important bits. A half bulkhead has been put in ahead of them to create a useful storage area big enough, as seen here, to store an outboard engine for the dinghy.

THE VERDICT

Ask the owner of this KL34 about his perfect day and you'll hear tales of lazy summers, quiet coves, with plenty of friends and family along for the ride. Ask him about his perfect boat and this Key Largo 34 is it. From our experience, as a fast and capable day cruiser come fun machine, it really does seem nail the brief.

Meet the family



Sessa Key Largo 36 from £296,869
LOA: 37ft 9in (11.5m)
Triple outboard engines – Yamaha F300s – and triple helm mark out this bigger brother.



Sessa Key Largo 30 from £158,089
LOA: 29ft 7in (9.01m)
Similar styling and concept, but outboard power only – twin Yamaha F300s – no aft sunbed and a much smaller mid cabin.

The rivals



Cranchi Endurance 33
from £197,690

LOA: 33ft 6in (10.25m)
Another desirable Italian boat. Gains height internally but loses that flat foredeck. Single and twin engines.



Bénéteau Flyer 850
from £89,556

LOA: 27ft 1in (8.25m)
Much smaller, lighter and outboard powered but a very similar concept in a more affordable package.