

The brief...



Sunseeker bring their biggest guns to bear on the class-leading V39 in the shape of the brand new Portofino 40, but is it enough to knock the Princess from her throne? **Nick**

LOA: 41ft 0in (12.5m)

PRICE: from £390,000 inc VAT

TOP SPEED: 34 knots

BUILDERS: Sunseeker International Limited

ENQUIRIES Tel: 01202 381 111

www.sunseeker.com



Return of the king

The new Portofino 40 is Sunseeker's most serious assault on the 40ft market yet REPORT BY NICK BURNHAM

To succeed or simply survive, builders are constantly upping their game and seeking out new niches in a bid to prise open Joe Boatowner's chequebook.

One interesting side effect has been a renewed focus on smaller craft. The relentless ramping up of model sizes over the last decade effectively pulled up the drawbridge for potential new customers as

the smallest boat in the range flowed upwards in size and price. Princess were the first to address the balance launching its first model under 40 feet in 10 years, in an effort to woo new customers to the brand and increase productivity. Now Sunseeker has followed suit, launching a new Portofino 40, usurping the Portofino 48 as the entry-level model and dropping the entry price by a good £200,000.

The single most important aspect to a move into the lower echelons of any luxury market whether it be boats, watches or cars, is retaining brand credibility. Compromise quality and not only will people suddenly shun your new base model, but the potential for damage to the whole brand is huge. Discerning customers don't like badge engineering. The new V39 is a master class on how to get it right, looking and feeling every inch the pukka Princess,

whilst Aston Martin ably demonstrate how to get it completely wrong – their ugly, over-priced, tarted up Toyota IQ doing them no favours in either profitability or credibility. So the Portofino sails into dangerous waters with three big challenges – pull punters into the brand, increase turnover and profitability, but crucially, don't upset those further up the food chain that don't want the Sunseeker gloss tarnished by a boat perceived as not up to par.

Design & build

The first hurdle is cleared before even stepping aboard. The new Portofino looks a proper Sunseeker – long, sleek, and expensive. The hardtop arches gracefully back, its frames covered in a carbon fibre-look vinyl wrap that's matched by the engine vent covers. Arched mouldings in the topsides echo the sweep of the hardtop, and the side profile dips toward

the prow in a manner evocatively reminiscent of Sonny Levi designs. The only mildly jarring note is the hockey stick run of side windows inset into the top sides and larger forward cabin windows. If this is a problem, opt for the black hull at no extra cost and visually they disappear from sight. With no tender garage, an optional high/low bathing platform big enough to carry a Williams Turbojet 285 RIB is available.



PHOTOS: Graham Snook

The aft section of the cockpit is pretty conventional with a large C shaped run of seating around a folding table to starboard facing an L shaped wet-bar to port, big enough to incorporate a griddle, top loading fridge, and an ice maker. The seat's aft backrest pivots forward to lie flush with the base, creating a useful extra slice of sunpad.

Further forward it gets a little more adventurous, the double helm is a shallow step up to starboard while to port the usual raised section to allow headroom into the aft cabin comes with a double forward-facing seat. Like the Sealine SC42, passengers have to stretch their legs out forward rather than down, but it's surprisingly comfortable and a huge improvement over the usual chaise longue.

But Sunseeker's real coup de grace comes upon heading below decks. In the saloon, two huge skylights stretch full width beneath the windscreen supplemented by another hatch in the deckhead further forward. Together with those massive hull windows, the amount of light let into the lower accommodation is unmatched on any other boat of this size and type. Sunseeker has taken full advantage of this by utilising very pale Anegre carpentry, with large Wenge dark wood accents to avoid any

"The real coup de grace comes in entering the cabin"

feeling of blandness. The effect is fantastic, making the below deck accommodation feel virtually as open as a deck saloon, which is no small achievement.

In the bows, the forward master cabin has an island berth and ensuite access to the single day heads with separate shower. The dinette opposite the L shaped galley converts to a further double berth, and back aft the mid cabin benefits from those huge hull windows and features two single transverse berths that slide together to make a double.

In our test boat the entrance to the mid cabin has a sideboard storage arrangement, but later boats will feature a small settee, doubling as a third berth. Nothing ground-breaking then, but the detailing is exquisite. Tan leather frames the master cabin bed base, matched by leather covered vanity unit lids, whilst the head of the bed has a dark grey wraparound headboard with stainless steel inserts. The dark wood sole has pale fillets, matching the oval open tread stairs. It feels expensive, glamorous, a tiny bit blingy and a whole lot Sunseeker. We love it.



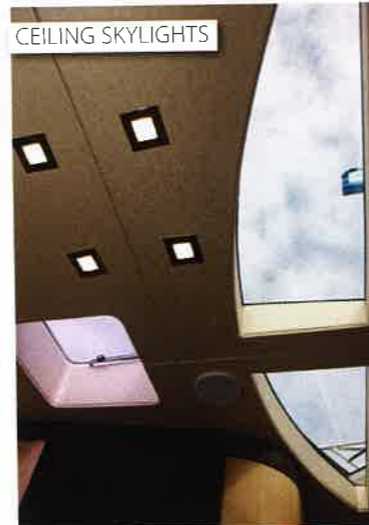
SALOON



GALLEY



HEADS



CEILING SKYLIGHTS



OPEN TREAD STAIRS



OPENING PORTHOLES



OWNER'S CABIN

Interiors

Welcoming cabins with range of styles

Yes we know the term is overused, but this boat actually delivers light, airy, and oh-so stylish cabins. The Portofino saloon is a wonderful place to be. Large hull windows extend to the cabins, ensuring

a good view out throughout. Sunseeker offers eight distinct packages of upholstery, blinds, bed covers and scatter cushions, and customers can choose the wonderfully contemporary Anegre and Wenge interior of our test boat, a Black American Walnut finish or a more conservative

Cherry High Gloss finish. Fit and finish is of a high standard, and detailing is class leading, even the optional air conditioning is neatly installed with 'invisible' high output vents styled into the interior. All of

headlining look a little incongruous. The folding saloon table with stainless steel detailing works well, after all, who wants to spend their evenings watching TV sat up to a big dining table?



which makes the white car stereo speakers poking out of the

GUEST CABIN



NEAT DETAILING



DOUBLE BERTH CONVERSION





Performance & handling

First impressions of the helm are that it is slightly cramped. A fixed bench seat, rather than the two lovely (albeit still fixed) bucket seats of the V39, doesn't help the situation and the windscreen feels narrow and a long way from where you are sat. The slope of the foredeck means that forward viz at low speed is still good, and peripheral vision down the sides and aft is excellent, helped by the high sweep of the sidescreen frames.

When you open the throttles, though, take a good look at the view ahead as you approach 14 knots, as it's the last you'll see of it until you're past 22 knots. Not that that period takes very long. Fitted with the same engines as the V39, but weighing a full two-and-a-half tonnes more than the vacuum-infused construction of the Princess, the torque of the standard fit

"The ride is softer than the hard edge of the Princess"

Volvo Penta D6-330 sterndrive diesels manages to push this Don Shead designed hull up and onto the plane in around three seconds.

Once properly planing the bow dips, restoring forward vision again and normal service is resumed. Here is where the Portofino's hull casts its spell. A truly superb design, it made light of the bumpy conditions whipped up by a south west Force 5 gusting 6 in the Channel off of Poole, allowing us to blast along without a care. The ride is softer than the hard-edged Princess, with minimal slam and great arcs of spray created by a deep vee hull going through the sea rather than bouncing across the top of it. The roof does an excellent job of keeping the cockpit dry, and despite not having pantograph wipers, the cleared area is

a good size. We liked the way the wipers synchronise with each other at intermittent and slow speed, although the stylish buttons aren't particularly intuitive, one prod for intermittent, another for off, but we never did quite fathom how to gain constant wipe.

Tight into the lee of the land we found enough flat water to throw the boat into a few hard turns. The electronic steering is light but a little vague (a characteristic of the slight delay in the Volvo 'fly-by-wire' electronic steering rather than any failing of the boat), still the Sunseeker banks positively, cleaving great troughs of water as it cuts around.

Cruising comfortably at 27 knots and 3000rpm, it's a knot or two down on the V39, a legacy of a slightly deeper vee and that extra weight it has to lug around. That efficiency difference also manifests itself in fuel burn, 1.3 mpg against the V39's 1.5mpg, although a slightly larger fuel tank makes for a spookily identical range figure. However if ultimate performance is important, an extra £28,000 will buy you a pair of D6-400s, pushing the Portofino past 40 knots, an option not open to Princess owners. A great cruiser then, and certainly well able to mix it out in the rough stuff, if not quite an all out sportsboat.



From the helm

High on aesthetics, low on screen height

Comprehensive helm has a small area for a paper chart, something of a dying feature. Complete Simrad nav system, including plotter and auto pilot, as standard is a benchmark moment and the speed and depth instruments are the clearest we've ever seen. Less impressive is the fixed bench helm seat. A lifting bolster does allow room to stand giving a good view forward with the roof retracted, and a fold out step built into the helm seat is useful if a little extra height is required. Full width cabin

skylights can reflect the sun onto the windscreen, an issue that could be easily resolved with a shaped mat. Visibility is good on and off the plane, but not in-between. VHF radio, bizarrely and uselessly installed by the helmsman's knee, appears to be something of an afterthought. The forward facing double seat next to the helm is particularly welcome, although a grab handle alongside this seat to complement the one in front of it would be a useful addition.



Exterior

Hardtop and foredeck shine

Six-inch wide side decks and a pulpit that doesn't quite stretch

all the way back to the cockpit are way below par and make access forward something of a tightrope shuffle for nervous crew. Once forward the foredeck is expansive and has the big-boat option of sunbathing cushions with folding backrests.

Flat-floored cockpit is a bonus, and the aft seat has space beneath plenty big enough for a life-raft. White vinyl sliding roof integrates well visually and provides a simply massive aperture, giving a true open boat feel when retracted.

A carbon fibre textured look vinyl wrap on the hardtop spars is attractive, but whilst similar treatment to the engine vents looks great it is perhaps less practical, as the mooring lines will run across this area and causing chafing.





The rivals

Competition in the 40ft sportscruiser market is fierce and MBM has tested all the main players. Here's how they stack up...

The Speedboat - Fairline Targa 38GT - £318,840 (with D4-260 engines)

Some six years old now, the Targa 38GT may lag behind in terms of interior volume but it's still a nicely proportioned boat. However the ace up its sleeve is performance. Available with perfectly adequate D4-260s, Fairline also offer D6-400s at the other end of the scale, giving a banzai 45 knot top speed, with an ultra capable hull that can cope with the power. A boat that more than lives up to its GT nomenclature.



The Spaceship - Sealine SC42 - £330,000

Launched in 2011 and shunning convention, the SC42 combines a near 15ft beam with additional height to give massive deck space and huge cabins. It's the only boat in this sector to offer two separate heads. The cockpit is a masterclass in adaptability, with two L shaped aft seating areas that slide together to create intimate dining, apart to give plenty of lounging, or fold to offer masses of sunbathing. For sheer living space luxury it's untouchable.



The All Season - Grandezza 39CA - £325,000

Another manufacturer to go its own way rather than follow the herd, Finnish builders Grandezza have chosen to fit sliding cockpit doors to the hardtop, creating a wonderful deck saloon rather than the usual cockpit. What this means is it's possible to completely enclose the helm in less clement weather, a typically Finnish solution to the reality of north European boating. Slide back the doors, roof and a further sliding side door at the helm to open this area back up to the elements. Turning this area into the saloon frees up the below deck accommodation for a wonderful full beam owner's cabin as well as a generous guest cabin. Full test coming soon.



The All Rounder - Princess V39 - £286,200

From its 'latest technology' resin-infused hull giving lightweight build and drive efficiency, its sleek styling, its wonderfully proportioned accommodation to its bargain price, the Princess V39 is the 40 foot sportscruiser benchmark. Launched at the London Boat Show in January 2012, the V39 is a terrific example of sheer breadth of talent. It may not have quite the performance of the Fairline, the space of the Sealine or the all-weather appeal of the Grandezza, but as a fusion of subtle style, high quality finish, practical usability and remarkable affordability it's proven so far unbeatable. The new Portofino 40 is the strongest threat to its crown yet.



Turn the page for the Portofino's specs & verdict

Specification & value

Let's get the headlines out of the way first, the Portofino 40 is £390,000 including VAT, about £100,000 dearer than the V39. However, that only tells half the story and a little delving into the options list soon explains a large chunk of that premium. Hull colour, 240 volt 6kw generator, leather saloon upholstery, ceramic galley hob, aft cabin double berth conversion, TV and DVD, cockpit sunbed, bow thruster, holding tank, colour chart plotter, even the scatter cushions and branded hand towels, are all standard on the Sunseeker, all extra on the Princess. And if you've ever seen the price of Princess scatter cushions you'll understand the significance. Spec a V39 to the same level and you'll halve that premium.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	41ft 0in (12.5m)
BEAM	12ft 8ins (3.87m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 6ins (1.08m)
DISPLACEMENT	11.6 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	165 gallons (750lt)
WATER CAPACITY	65 gallons (295lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	6in (15cm)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 4in x 4ft 8in (1.93m x 1.42m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 5in x 2ft 7in (1.98m x 0.79m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	2x Volvo D6-330 DPH EVC-EC DP
Configuration	6 cyl 5.5 litre, 330hp @ 3,500rpm
Conditions	S'west Force 5 gusting 6, sea state moderate.
Load	fuel 75%, water 50%, crew 7

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1000	7	1.8	8	3.9	515	68
1500	9	5.1	23	1.7	224	74
2000	11	10.1	46	1.1	145	78
2500	16	18.9	86	0.8	106	79
3000	27	20.9	95	1.3	172	79
3500	34	29.9	136	1.1	145	80

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	inc VAT
with twin Volvo D6-330 diesels	£390,000
EXTENDED GRP HYDRAULICALLY LIFTING PLATFORM	£21,336
AIR CONDITIONING EUROPEAN SPEC	£10,788
BOW CUSHIONS WITH FOLDING BACKRESTS	£3014
ICEMAKER IN COCKPIT	£2536
SALOON DINING TABLE TELESCOPIC LEG CONVERT TO DOUBLE	£1164
VOLVO PENTA AQUAMATIC JOYSTICK CONTROL	£14,040
VOLVO PENTA 7 INCH COLOUR DISPLAY	£2352

BOAT AS TESTED £458,850*

*Boat as tested price may include alternative options



Enginebay

Hydraulically powered engine hatch has a release pin accessed through a small hidden deck hatch to allow access in the event of battery or mechanical failure. The hatch doesn't open as wide as we'd like (something Sunseeker are working on), but once in there's room to get to everything, and plenty of space in front of the engines to allow fitment of bigger D6-400 engines.

THE VERDICT

So it's Princess vs Sunseeker. The Portofino 40 is a mildly flawed, but ultimately fabulous boat that scores a solid 10 on the wow factor, which Sunseeker are consistently good at. A feast for the senses, everything you see and touch is a delight. Against this the Princess V39 is a more cohesive package – it may not shine quite as brightly, but it has fewer compromises, simply working very, very well in every area. The Sunseeker is the far more avant-garde choice, and more importantly it shades the V39 in ultimate seakeeping and the light that all those windows throw into the interior is a joy. If you're prepared to pay for the bigger engines it'll outrun the Princess, too. Is all that worth an extra £50,000? For those that want the wow, who delight in the details, that desire a Sunseeker for its sheer James Bond-ness, the answer will be a resounding yes. For everyone else, it may not quite be enough to tip the Princess from her throne at the head of the 40 ft sportscruiser empire. But it's certainly given it a bloody good shake...

Meet the family



BIGGER...

Portofino 48 from £630,000

LOA: 51ft 8in (15.8m)

A super-smart hardtop with 33 knot IPS power and breath-easy two cabin layout with the master amidships.



...& BIGGER

Predator 53 from £768,000

LOA: 60ft 3in (18.3m)

The smallest Predator still packs in the power and style. Three cabins with sumptuous master amidships, plus impressive deck saloon.