



FACT FILE
Viking Marin 285
Pilot
LOA: 30ft 2in
(9.20m)
PRICE: from
£135,600
TOP SPEED:
28 knots

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Viking Marin 285 Pilot

How did this 30-foot wheelhouse walkaround perform on test in Welsh winds of up to 50 knots? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

No second-guesses where boats coming under the Viking Marin banner hail from, especially when the logo is a cheeky looking Norse longboat. That's right, Turkey. Geographical conundrums aside, perhaps what this well-run yard is trying to say is that its boats are solid craft, built with northern European waters in mind. And this wheelhouse walkaround, Viking's latest design, was put to the ultimate handling test when we took it for a guided tour around Milford Haven in 50 knots of wind!

Design & Build

The 285 has a similar radiused underwater shape to the Kingfisher we tested in May's issue, but it's also unusual in that, despite a hull length of under 30ft (9.15m), it's powered by a shaftdrive configuration. And while that would ordinarily take up too much space, the 285 has been given the vee-drive treatment and its engines are tucked up in the stern. This means the engines are mounted the 'wrong' way round with the shafts running beneath them. This clearly saves on space amidships, freeing up room for

accommodation. And, as well as a separate forecabin, there is a neat, roomy double tucked between the wheelhouse and the engine compartment. The other major benefit with vee-drives is that you end up with plenty of boat in the water, as the props are truly buried. The exterior of the wheelhouse can be circumnavigated in safety thanks to the bulkwark bordered decks, and the Pilot has ended up with two cockpit areas. One aft as you would expect, while the deep forward deck makes a second, with facing seats and an optional table.

The main helm is fully protected inside the wheelhouse, the outer one – looking somewhat perch-like but well sheltered behind a wall of coaming and sturdy stainless railing – is optional. But, in our view, the outer helm needs to be included as you'll miss it otherwise.

Design & build

Stacks of room, but not exactly sleek looking



Accommodation

The wheelhouse doubles as a saloon and galley, with the backrest of the helm seat flipping over to face the main L-shaped settee biased to port. A smart fiddled table then drops down from

overhead to form a dinette. Running down the starboard side is the galley unit with the sink and hob hidden beneath a hefty wood-hinged top. Below is a fridge and a couple of cupboards, and bulky items can be stowed in a useful locker in the cabin sole. However, drawer storage for cutlery and utensils – and hands-on items at counter level like mugs, tea and coffee – are decidedly lacking. With this in mind, the shelf and locker storage incorporated in the helm seat will probably have to be commandeered to make life easier on the catering front. Almanacs and pilot guides will have to be kept elsewhere. The helm itself enjoys great visibility and the slope of the forward screen helps combat much of the usual glare. The console area – like everywhere else – is finished in well executed, solid joinery, and even the windows are finished in wood trim. That said, the windows are all fixed so without opening a door, ventilation isn't great.

“The 285's exterior layout couldn't get much better”

This needs addressing as wheelhouse craft tend to fug up easily. The positioning of the helm controls adjacent to the door makes short-handed boating pretty easy as the skipper can be half-in and half-out, ready to get a line ashore. Engine gauges and switches are neatly clustered together but there is limited room for flush-mounting electronics. A stairwell leads down to the toilet compartment and the lobby provides space for a good sized hanging locker and readily accessible electrics panel. The big surprise, though, is what is behind you. Duck through a door in the aft bulkhead and you are in a glory-hole of major proportions, and that's even with umpteen tanks (fuel, water and holding) in there, plus pumps and the battery charger too. The forecabin is pretty typical, with a decent sized vee-berth but





Plenty of solid woodwork in the wheelhouse

stowage is limited to shelving and lockers under the bunk base. However, it is invitingly upholstered and there is plenty of sitting room over the berths and standing headroom to dress.

The adjacent toilet/shower compartment is compact, but usable, and the mouldings are given a lift with some wood shelving and a Corian surround to the basin.

Back aft, a shuffle down past the galley and you are in the midships cabin. This is another pleasant berth with plenty of warm mahogany woodwork and, this time, a useful amount of readily accessible clothes storage thanks to a full-height, four-door wardrobe.

The double berth is offset down the port hand side and while not particularly wide there is clear

Accommodation

Clever use of space but limited galley storage



Exterior

A chunky, central transom door leads through from the full-width bathing platform and acts as your main point of boarding. Neat design touches immediately catch the eye, such as the simple but effective hinge-up hoop on the transom that

sitting headroom and a handy fiddled area to put books and glasses. The void beneath the berth is lined with a handy false bottom to access the bilge, if and when required.

tidies away the fenders when they are not in use. It is also good to see the bulwarks topped with handrails.

The aft cockpit is supplied with drop down benches and good use has been made of any voids that can be used as stowage, with cave lockers set in the coamings and deck lockers either side of the engine hatch.

Judging books by their covers is never a good idea and the 285 is a case in point

The side decks are a good width and you feel totally secure when moving along them. However if you are in nit-picking mode, the wheelhouse's superstructure is vertical, rather than cambered in slightly, so shoulder width is a bit restricted. That aside, the exterior layout couldn't get much better because the space around the foredeck doubles up as extra cockpit area when alongside. With seats moulded into the forward section of coachroof and rear facing lockers across the bow providing further seating, all that is required is a table and 'hey presto' you've got a dinette. Not only that, if the boat is moored stern-to, it enjoys a small amount of privacy.

The seat lockers provide useful storage and it was good to find the anchor chain stowed in its own compartment. An electric windlass is provided as part of the standard spec, a laudable offering on a boat of this size, while the rest of the mooring hardware proved adequate too.

A short run of ladder nips you up to what the brochure calls the 'sports-bridge', and this term sums up the upper helm station pretty well. It's no flybridge but it is not cramped either, with room for a pair of comfortable, adjustable bucket seats and plenty of space in and around the deep console. The UK distributor for Viking Marin has

Exterior

Great to be able to use all 28ft of the boat



specified the boat with extra guardrails to the rear of the seating and this makes for a safe, fun vantage point from which to helm or simply watch the world go by when alongside.

Engine Options & Access

Yanmar is the preferred manufacturer. There is a whole raft of shaftdrive installations offered, from a 125hp single unit through to 260hp twins, but all options come tucked up in the stern thanks to the vee-drive configuration.

We tested the boat with a pair of 240hp 4cyl engines but since then these have been dropped in favour of Yanmar's newer and more advanced BMW 6cyl units. Although these newer engines come with slightly more horsepower than the 260s mentioned above, they have also pushed the price up.

A gas-strut supported hatch in the cockpit gives straightforward access to the engine compartment. Here you will find a treadplate between the engines, as well as space either side, so carrying out checks and servicing is pretty easy. The main raw water strainers and filters can

be readily got at too.

Accessibility to the belts and the 'front' of the engines is made easier as they are positioned about-face, and so don't fall foul of the forward bulkhead.

Engine options & access

Plenty of options and the engines are easy to access



Performance & Handling

With sufficient wind to cancel ferries and halt shipping in Milford Haven we looked at the rather podgy, slab-sided Pilot with some trepidation. Surely, with that sort of beam and windage it was going to be a bit of a handful to say the least.

Judging books by their covers is never a good idea and the 285 proved this point with considerable nonchalance given the short, steep seas and the gale force winds funneling down the Haven. And even if the waves weren't huge they were just the sort - vertical sided and very jagged - to make things grossly unpleasant, and the wind was more than enough to dump plenty of spray back aboard.

As it turned out, not only did the hull push over this mess in good order, running nicely on the plane at 20 or so knots, it did it without any coaxing or fuss, responding quickly to wheel and throttles when required to. What's more we soon gave up fiddling with the tabs and fretting about what dippy angle of heel the boat might run best at, as we found the hull prefers to stay upright, which was echoed through the turns as well.

We also liked the fact that you could ease back on the throttles without the hull suddenly slipping back into stodgy old displacement mode, and the Pilot was game to hold steady in the mid-teens. This was a real plus, as it allows the skipper to dictate the speed to the boat, not the other way around.

Of course, there is no point having a wheelhouse if you're not



There's plenty to hang on to up on the sports-bridge



You're spoilt for seating up forward



A removable bin allows access to the chain



The table tidies away into the deckhead

going to benefit from the shelter it affords. So it begs the question why are we seen driving at the exterior helm? Well, apart from it simply being the nature of the job, we think photos of boats driving themselves with no one at the outer helm look rather odd. And, in this instance, apart from one minor dousing from some spray we picked up through a turn, we hardly found any water getting up to the outer helm position at all. In fact, it turned out to be an exhilarating ride up top. And with plenty of steel work to hang onto and a decent depth of coaming, it's less perch-like than it looks. That said, the wheelhouse

Viking Marin 285's hull design



Viking Marin's Turkish origins are confirmed by an abundance of substantial woodwork in the 285. Much of the design work falls to John Moxham, and after examining the hull shape in detail many of John's hallmarks are there, including curved sprayrails and chines to turn unwanted spray into lift, and an overall convex, radiused shape to the underwater sections. So while the fore body of the hull benefits from plenty of deadrise to help reduce slamming, the inner portion of the rear sections become almost flat providing an efficient planing surface.



The aft cabin berth is offset but it has plenty of sitting headroom



The helm seat backrest flips over to face the compact but pleasant dinette

BOAT REPORT

VIKING MARIN 285 PILOT

beckoned once the rain squalls came and given the conditions, we wondered why we hadn't retreated down below sooner. The visibility at the central helm is just as good as the outer one and you still feel in touch with proceedings even though you are nicely snugged down. The wipers do a competent job of keeping the angled screens clear and the driving position – leaning, more than upright in the seat – is comfortable. Plus, anyone sat on the L-shaped settee enjoys the same view as the skipper.

Upon finding calmer waters, we managed to complete our test runs. Flatout we clocked nearly 27 knots, which we are told is a little shy of its

usual 28-knot capability. Our performance panel (to the right) lists the results we collected on the day, but with the new top-end BMW package a couple more knots isn't out of the question.

Performance & handling

Steady ride in untidy seas and easy to helm



Specification & Value

First off, the yard certainly puts plenty of material into its boats. The joinery is solid and well turned out, and the same goes for fittings, fixtures and mouldings. Secondly, the Pilot comes tidily spec'd as standard. So, although the base price is not as keen as it was before the introduction of higher tech engines, you don't have to ransack the options list to get a well-equipped boat.

Lastly, weighing up the pros and cons of the 285's rivals is somewhat trickier than it looks, because obvious contenders are either light on cabin accommodation or run on sterndrives, or both. Therefore, it would seem, the Pilot has cleverly managed to carve out a niche within a niche, and good luck to it.

Specification & value

Solid spec but new BMW engines make it pricier



Verdict

This central wheelhouse concept is finding a good following here in the UK, offering a good degree of protection from the elements and safe walkaround decks. Viking Marin's interpretation works well on the whole. It's inviting, practical and hard wearing, but the galley stowage could do with a tweak. However, most importantly, it runs smoother than it looks.

8/10

MBM rating



Viking Marin 285 Pilot technical data

specifications

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| BUILD | GRP |
| RCD | B |
| LENGTH OVERALL | 30ft 2in (9.20m) |
| HULL LENGTH | 28ft 0in (8.53m) |
| BEAM | 10ft 10in (3.31m) |
| DRAUGHT | 3ft 0in (0.90m) |
| AIR DRAUGHT (mast down) | 9ft.6in (2.90m) |
| DISPLACEMENT | 5.4 tonnes |
| FUEL CAPACITY | 132gal (600lt) |
| WATER CAPACITY | 55gal (250lt) |



There's plenty of room in the engine bay

key dimensions

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| WIDTH OF SIDEDECKS | 15in (38cm) |
| HEADROOM IN SALOON | 6ft 4in (1.93m) |
| FORECABIN VEE-BERTH | 6ft 3in x 2ft 4in (1.91 x 0.71m) |
| MIDSHIPS CABIN | 6ft 6in x 3ft 9in (1.98 x 1.14m) |
| ENGINES | twin Yanmar 4LHA STP 240hp diesel |

performance

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Configuration | 4cyl 4.4lt 240hp @ 3300rpm |
| Conditions | wind W'ly, Force 8, sea untidy |
| Load | fuel 60% water 100% crew 2 |

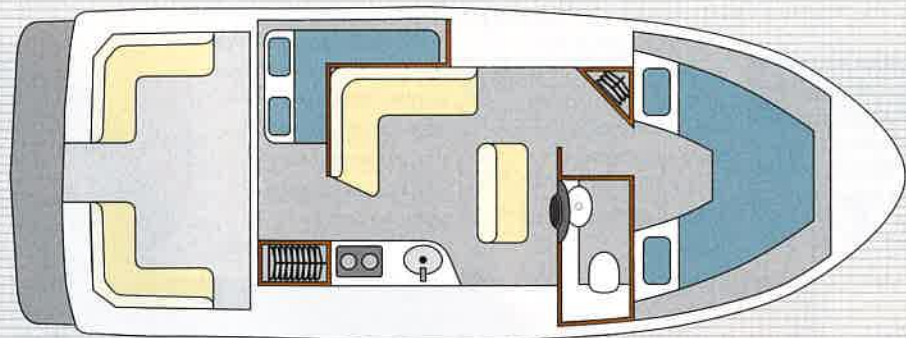
| Rpm | knots | gph | lph | mpg | range | noise |
|------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|-------|
| 2500 | 14.6 | 10.1 | 46 | 1.45 | 154 | 75 |
| 2800 | 19.1 | 14.0 | 64 | 1.36 | 144 | 78 |
| 3000 | 21.5 | 16.7 | 76 | 1.29 | 137 | 80 |
| 3200 | 24.1 | 20.8 | 90 | 1.16 | 123 | 82 |
| 3450 | 26.8 | 24.7 | 108 | 1.09 | 116 | 84 |

Range figures quoted in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. Figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temp, crew, hull fouling, fuel quality etc. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in the wheelhouse.

prices

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| STANDARD BOAT | inc VAT |
| with twin Yanmar 6BY 260hp diesels | £135,600 |
| BOW-THRUSTER | £2930 |
| HEATING | £3230 |
| ELECTRIC WINDLASS | Standard |
| TRIM TABS | Standard |
| SHOREPOWER | Standard |
| COMMISSIONING & ANTIFOUL | Standard |
| BOAT AS TESTED | £136,800 |

ENQUIRIES Royal Blue Marine. Tel: 01437 711180
www.vikingmarin.com



the rivals



NORDSTAR 28
with single 310hp Volvo D6
From £110,000

Only available with a single sterndrive. A cuddly mattress beneath the wheelhouse adds to the forward cabin.
Tel: 01324 665071
www.fym.co.uk



TARGA 30
with twin 225hp Volvo D4s
From £149,400

Slightly larger and pricier but one of the best handling boats in its class. Stern drive power rather than shafts.
Tel: 01202 700702
www.wessexmarine.co.uk



RHEA 850
with twin 160hp Volvo D3s
From £127,000

A class act with a great wheelhouse and loads of deck space. Just the one cabin but a convertible dinette.
Tel: 01702 584821
www.northseamaritime.com