

Trader 535 Signature

This might not be the fastest or the most glamorous 50ft flybridge boat on the market, but for serious long-distance cruising they don't come much more comfortable. REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

Although Tarquin Yacht Co now offer Trader motoryachts up to 120ft, their core business is still comfortable cruising boats from 40ft to 60ft.

All feature an aft-cabin layout and a flybridge, and a finely honed solid-wood interior which not only looks the part but can absorb the wear and tear that goes with plenty of use.

The boats are built in Taiwan, but the UK end of the operation provides the direction, by

way of all the design and engineering work, as well as ensuring that owners get what they want in terms of customised fit-outs. This arrangement has stood the test of time, and the company is now well into its fourth decade in business.

There are three different ranges within the Trader family — Signature, Sundeck and Sunliner —

each characterised by a slightly different exterior theme. Features of the Signature series include an elongated transom allowing for a fully integrated bathing platform, and a hardtop sheltering a large aft-deck entertaining area.

What the 535 Signature promises is

comfortable liveaboard cruising, but on a size of boat that can be handled à-deux. We gave the model a thorough test, in a messy sea in the eastern English Channel, to judge for ourselves how well this compromise works.

DESIGN & BUILD

All Trader hulls are semi-displacement, with a hefty depth of keel, convex underwater sections and a chine to make the turn into the topsides. The bows boast plenty of good-looking flare, and the Signature's softened transom shape cossets not only the integral bathing platform but also inset stairs leading gently up to the aft deck.

Here, the hardtop arrangement makes for a very pleasant external but covered seating area, supplementing the wheelhouse/saloon which is just forward down a short stairwell,

and capable of being enclosed a little more when the sides are dressed with the appropriate screens.

On the 535, the accommodation usually has a three-cabin format, with a full-beam master suite aft, a good-sized double in the bows and another comfortable twin-berth compartment forward, these two sharing a roomy WC with a separate shower cubicle.

An alternative arrangement sees this forward space occupied by three cabins offering a total of six bunks, and two somewhat smaller toilet compartments.

The galley, situated down a couple of

✓✓✓✓
Stacks of room. Not too boxy in appearance. Sound fit-out.

steps from the saloon and on the same level as the aft cabin, is truly domestic-sized.

ACCOMMODATION

One of the drawbacks of an aft-cabin layout is that the companionway from the raised aft deck into the accommodation is not on one level but requires steps down. Thankfully, on a Trader there is no shortage of space, so you get what is best described as a short staircase, making your entry into the wheelhouse/saloon not just easy but rather grand.

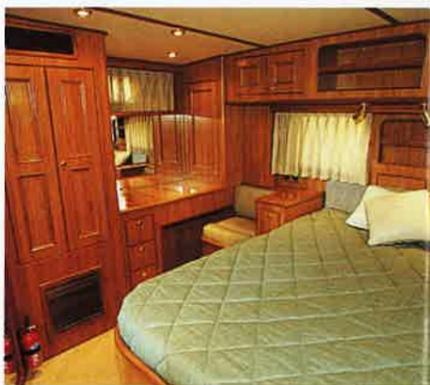
This feeling is augmented by the solid opulence of the saloon, with its generously upholstered settees and armchairs plus an abundance of cabinetry. All Traders enjoy a high standard of joinery, but our test boat featured some particularly fine touches and precise matching of woods, having been fitted out to the yard's upgraded Superyacht finish.

In this case, the main settee to port was in





above A generous double cabin in the bows and a twin amidships share a WC with a shower stall.



above The aft master cabin has splendid stowage.

an L-shape, together with two freestanding armchairs, but other configurations are available. The standard arrangement of a more enclosed horseshoe dinette allows room for some extra forward-facing seating opposite the helm.

Either way, the dinette table is neatly designed so that it can serve either as a good sized coffee table or, once raised with a slot-in infill, a six-seater dining table. Adjacent joinery includes a sideboard housing a television, a cocktail cabinet and plenty of other drawers and cupboards.

Even where the forward seating is limited to the two-man bench facing the helm to starboard, as here, the port side offers plenty of room to lean and view the proceedings, make yourself useful at the chart table or dig out the appropriate pilot book from the bookshelf.

To help steady yourself as you move around, twin handrails are let into the panelled deckhead. A similarly practical

feature is that almost every flat area is finished with a good fiddle.

The galley is tucked largely out of view, down a few steps on the way to the aft cabin. But cooking smells should not pervade the cabin as the four-burner hob has a proper extractor hood.

In fact, just about all the appliances are of domestic size, including the standard fridge/freezer and cooker, and there is space aplenty for any extra 'white goods'. Our test boat made good use of this, being equipped with a neat drawer-type dishwasher and an extra chest freezer.

Even with these fitted, there is plenty of countertop and oodles of drawer and cupboard space.

The full-width master cabin boasts a king-size, fully sprung bed, his-and-hers cedar-lined wardrobes, a dressing table complete with its own seat, plus a mix of other cupboards, shelves and drawers.

The en-suite facilities include an electric

toilet as standard, and a separate shower with a high enough edge that it could just about be used as a bath if you have sufficient hot water available. The styling here is conservative, in laminate and wood rather than GRP, and there is ample stowage.

The en-suite double cabin towards the bows and the twin-berth midships one cannot boast quite the same spaciousness, but their occupants are unlikely to feel short-changed or run out of stowage. The berths are generous and have loads of headroom, and there is always somewhere to put down your book, glasses or cuppa. There is also ample natural light and ventilation.

The shared toilet compartment is a good size, with plenty of headroom, and has a separate uncramped shower cubicle. The

only niggle we could identify is that neither of the WCs is fitted with an extractor.

✓✓✓✓
Conservative with a small 'c'. Well finished and comfortable.

EXTERIOR

For boarding, openings are fashioned in the side deck guardrails, and most owners will carry a stubby set of steps to lend a hand in scaling the topsides. But most of the time, it will simply be a matter of stepping onto the bathing platform and then walking up the teak-treaded stairs to the aft deck.

The same generously thick, well executed teak decking extends, as standard, throughout the aft deck, side decks and flybridge.

Aft deck seating and furnishing is down to the buyer to specify, with the builders offering several options based on comfortably proportioned GRP seat modules and different tables, plus a built-in wet-bar. Our test boat had the latter (the galley is two sets of steps away, remember), plus the larger of the L-shaped settees and an appropriately sized teak table, which still left plenty of room for some free-standing furniture.

The hardtop leaves headroom to spare, and comes complete with side curtains for battening down. It is also fitted with a couple of overhead handrails, which is important for



below The inside helm offers excellent visibility.



below The stairs into the saloon are quite grand.



below Galley appliances are domestic-sized.



such a large, relatively unencumbered expanse of deck.

A short, easily climbed stairwell takes you up to the generous flybridge, which is laid out in a companionable fashion. A horseshoe of seating almost embraces the double helm seat to starboard, enabling most of the crew to sit in on the action with the skipper.

If you are moored and some lounging is in order, the helm's seat-back can be rejigged to merge with the adjacent short settee and form a sunbed. Stowage abounds, with cavernous lockers built into the seat-bases and a huge cupboard located within the void of the forward coaming.

A vital consideration on a boat intended for serious cruising is the ease and safety with which you can move around the decks, and in this respect the 535 does not disappoint.

Bordered by a good height of toerail and teak finished guardrail, the side decks are a full 17in (43cm) wide, and there is a full run of steadying handrail attached to the coachroof. As a bonus, there is access to the starboard side deck via a sliding door from the wheelhouse/saloon.

Up at the sharp end, there is flat deck space aplenty to work the lines, and the anchoring hardware even includes a chain snubber to take the strain off the windlass. We were also pleased to find a lift-out moulding in the foredeck locker, which will keep stowed ropes clear of the chain.

Sizable cross-style bollards adorn the foredeck and aft deck, while conventional 10in (25cm) midships cleats are provided for springs.

✓✓✓✓
Loads of space. Practical fittings. Teak decking as standard.

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

The engine options work their way up in horsepower from a pair of 225hp Perkins-Sabre diesels, which allow the hull to push into semi-displacement mode at around 12 knots, through to twin 700hp Caterpillars, which should give 24 knots flat-out.

The boat made available for our test had a pair of Yanmar's eager 6CX 7.4lt units rated to 500hp, which seems a very useful mid-range choice.

For day-to-day checks and most other work, it is simply a matter of lifting the set of aft steps which leads past the galley (these are supported by gas struts) and making your way through the door. Access can also be gained via the forward stairwell and several removable panels; along with the bulkheads and tanks, these are fully clad in aluminium-faced ply over loaded noise insulation.

Non-slip treadplates run around the engines, and there is stooped standing headroom, so just about everything is readily accessible, including the raw-water filters, the fuel/water separators and the large generator forward.

All wiring and piping is robustly secured and clipped, and there has been no penny-pinching, with fittings and equipment always a generous size for the job in hand.

✓✓✓✓
Good access to a sound installation. No obvious short-cuts taken.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Although not actually rough, the sea state outside Chichester Harbour was a mess of short waves which looked like they wanted to get feistier given a few knots more wind.

As it was, a Force 4-5 was quick to pick up

below Luxurious upholstery and fine cabinetry give the wheelhouse/saloon a very opulent feel. Different seating arrangements are available.





above The transom shape cossets the bathing platform. An aft-deck wet-bar is a welcome option. There is room to walk around the twin diesel engines.

any loose spray and push it back aboard, and the wheelhouse/saloon's wipers were gainfully employed even if the flybridge barely got a drop.

The lower helm station is excellent, with good visibility right round, even astern — it is quite possible to see through the companionway door and over the solid dodgers protecting the aft deck. The opening side door also allows you to gauge the conditions, and enjoy some fresh air, without forsaking your creature comforts.

Of course, you will probably want to take

advantage of the spacious, sociable flybridge helm position at every opportunity. When you do, whether you are seated or standing for close quarter work, the throttles and the large wheel are well positioned within easy reach.

With a useful 1000hp on tap, the hull shape meant we could proceed at any speed we fancied up to around 22 knots, with no fuss as you ease up through the teens. Basically, you set the speed to suit yourself and the conditions, and the hull will comply.

If you are happy to amble gently along in displacement mode, at 8-9 knots, the long keel keeps the boat on the steadiest of tracks, and the already unintrusive sound levels drop low enough to give any off-watch crew a realistic chance of sleeping.

We were pleasantly surprised to find the handling a good deal more responsive to rudder and throttles than we had envisaged, reacting in an immediate but measured way to both.

✓✓✓✓
Wide choice of cruising speeds. Looks wet, but is rarely wild.

SPECIFICATION & VALUE

The Superyacht fit-out's price tag of £573,000 is a lot of money, but then this is a lot of boat. Furthermore, it is solidly built and extremely well finished, both where it's obvious and where it isn't. This quality ought to come at a premium, but building the boat in the Far East manages to offset this.

Given its high specification, it is not overpriced compared with other craft offering the same amount of space.

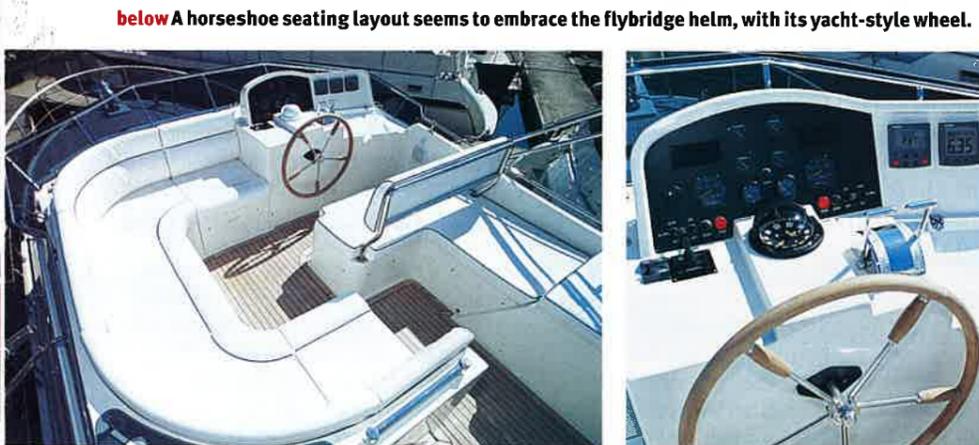
And here is the nub. If you were opting for a more conventional flybridge boat, you would have to buy a slightly bigger vessel to get the same feeling of spaciousness that you get here — and at this size, prices escalate significantly with every additional foot.

The 535's semi-displacement form means that running costs are very dependent on use. There is a good deal to be said for keeping a slow pace and enjoying your time afloat, as our calculations show a fuel consumption of just 0.65gph at 15-17 knots.

As for the long term, there is an extremely healthy secondhand market for Traders, with vessels well into their second decade changing hands at useful values. A key factor

is surely that their solid-wood fit-out neither dates nor wears out.

✓✓✓✓
Not overpriced given build quality. Good residual values.



below A horseshoe seating layout seems to embrace the flybridge helm, with its yacht-style wheel.



below Anchoring gear includes a chain snubber.



below The expanse of aft deck is fully sheltered, with seating modules according to buyers' choice.



below Side decks are wide and teak-finished.

Verdict

The Trader image is not going to suit everyone. Let's face it, it is a little stuffy when compared to the dashing, highly styled Fairlines and Azimuts of this world.

However, if you want a boat for spacious and comfortable liveaboard cruising, without having to fuss over it, this marque is difficult to beat.

The 535 Signature offers serious bluewater passagemaking on the one hand, and extremely commodious interior and deck space on the other.

Now, if I could just take a year or two off work...

MBM RATING 8/10
✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓

Trader 535 Signature technical data



Specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category A
LENGTH OVERALL	53ft 6in (13.30m)
HULL LENGTH	47ft 5in (14.48m)
BEAM	15ft 0in (4.60m)
DRAUGHT	5ft 1in (1.50m)
DISPLACEMENT	22.0 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	500gal (2270lt)
WATER CAPACITY	200gal (910lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	1ft 5in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in
HEADROOM IN AFT CABIN	6ft 5in
HEADROOM IN MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 6in
FORWARD CABIN BERTH	6ft 9in x 4ft 6in
AFT CABIN BERTH	6ft 4in x 5ft 4in
MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTHS	6ft 2in/5ft 10in x 2ft 7in

performance

engines twin Yanmar 600CX-GTE diesels.
configuration 6cyl, 7.43lt, 500hp at 2900rpm.
conditions wind northeasterly Force 4, sea moderate, load fuel 30%, water 50%, crew 4.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	noise
1400	7.8	5.2	24	1.50	600	2.5	73
2000	10.8	14.0	64	0.77	308	3.5	78
2200	11.9	18.0	82	0.66	264	4.5	78
2400	15.1	23.0	104	0.65	260	5.0	79
2600	17.5	29.9	136	0.58	232	5.0	79
2800	19.6	38.7	176	0.51	204	5.0	79
2950	21.6	44.0	200	0.49	196	5.0	80

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin.
Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the saloon.

prices

SUPERYACHT VERSION	inc VAT
with twin Yanmar 600CX-GTE diesels	£573,230
ELECTRIC WINDLASS & GROUND TACKLE	standard
TEAK DECKING	standard
HOLDING TANK	standard
ELECTRONICS PACKAGE (log/sounder, radar/plotter, VHF & autopilot)	standard
HYDRAULIC BOW-THRUSTER	£15,288
HYDRAULIC PASSERELLE	£10,998
AFT DECK SEATING/TABLE	£5,280
AIR CONDITIONING/HEATING	£23,682
13.5kVA GENERATOR	£15,839
AFT-DECK WET-BAR	£2,532
ANTIFOULING	£1,833
BOAT AS TESTED	£663,387



ENQUIRIES Tarquin Yacht Company, Tarquin Yacht Harbour, Thorney Road, Emsworth, Hampshire PO10 8BP.
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