

**BOAT REPORT**

# SEA RAY 250EC

Established in 1986, Sea Ray's factory in Ireland provides a foothold in Europe for this American manufacturer's sportscruiser range. We test the latest.





SEA RAY, one of America's most prominent boatbuilders, opened their manufacturing facility at Cork in the Republic of Ireland in 1986, to feed their European distributor network with boats up to around 29ft (8.9m).

Construction, currently running at a healthy if somewhat recession-hit 12 boats a week, was set up along American lines, with everybody from the shopfloor upwards involved not only in maintaining quality but in improving on it, while keeping an eye on the clock.

The latest model to go into production on this side of the Atlantic is the 250EC, one of the smallest of Sea Ray's sportscruiser range, and we travelled across to the Emerald Isle to see it.

### Design and construction

An in-house design team and the renowned but reclusive R&D facility in Florida are responsible for all aspects of the huge Sea Ray range, which runs from dedicated ski-boats through to an imaginative 65ft (20m) flagship. Whilst certain details, including homogenisation to various

European specifications, are dealt with in Ireland, everything from the main hull and sub-assembly moulds to program disks for the computerised routers used to prepare stiffeners and joinery come direct from the United States.

The hull of the 250 has a medium-vee of 20°, incorporating three sets of sprayrails and a finely raked stem culminating in a pronounced anchor platform. The transom features the usual integral bathing area with a walk-through door to the cockpit.

To maintain height below and gain volume, the deck line is set above the gunwale rubbing strip, which in turn is topped with a significant, but not ungainly, bulk of coachroof. Cut away before it reaches too far forward, this allows a decent amount of practical flat foredeck to be included. The wraparound screen and low guardrails round off a pleasantly proportioned craft.

Having tested the boat, on a sunny but crisp winter day, it was good to retreat to the warmer confines of the shopfloor.

GRP construction is a combination of chopper gun, for the initial laminate, followed by hand



Above: the 250 stretches its legs at Cobh in Cork Harbour. Above left: the cabin has no dinette, but an integral fill creates a roomy double berth. Left: the cockpit seating is padded and provided with cave lockers, while the moulded toilet compartment is compact but ventilated by an extractor fan. A shower unit is an optional extra.

lay-up. Above-average quality control was in evidence right through from base materials to tank-testing and sea-trialing finished craft.

### Exterior

To maximise cockpit space, the coamings are pushed well out to the sides, leaving a mere 4in (10cm) of usable side deck. The portion abaft the screen is inset with hard-wearing teak treads for use when boarding.

To ease the situation when moving forward, the screen is split to give access to the foredeck over the coachroof, both of which are covered with adequate non-slip. However, to avoid having to use the bench seat adjacent to the screen as a

step, a foothold within the console moulding would have been a definite plus. So too would a grabrail to the coachroof itself, to save you having to rely on the low extended pulpit rail outboard.

Anchor stowage is provided by the good-sized foredeck locker, but the bow-roller system is supplied only as an extra. There are 8in (20cm) cleats forward, midships and aft, and a stainless steel bathing ladder is fitted to the transom.

The cockpit coaming is well furnished with padded panels, as well as with a spread of cave lockers. These constitute the major storage provision, space under seat-bases being either devoid of lockers or given over to auxiliaries, such as the calorifier under the dinette settee.

The latter is set to port. With the back of the

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forward-facing seat dropped, and the table lowered, it makes into a 6ft 6in x 3ft 2in (2.0m x 0.95m) sunbed or double berth. The latter is possible if the optional canopy package is ordered.

Aft, the engine box is the same height as the removable seat-bases on each side, making a full-width transom settee which is of sufficient depth to be used as a further sunbed, a full 6ft 6in (2.0m) long. Hatches set in the transom coaming give access to the battery switches and the optional charger.

The helm seat is a single, but is adjustable fore and aft and suitable for sitting, standing or just perching, so a further crewmember can find room to keep the skipper company. The angled helm console provides a clear vista for the usual run of engine gauges and fused ready-use switches, and a compass is set within the moulding top. Everything here is easy to view and ready to hand, the throttle itself being at a convenient height whether you are sitting or standing.

A glovebox is provided beneath the padded wheel, and there is limited free dash space for further instrumentation.

## Interior

A slide-out mini bulkhead next to the companionway door opens the cabin nicely into the cockpit, and with the full canopy in situ makes for a useful run of boat even when the weather closes in.

Natural light and ventilation are provided by a pair of small deck hatches aft, plus a larger foredeck one.

Immediately to port is a galley which is well appointed for weekending, with a single 240V/paraffin hob, a moulded-in sink with hot and cold water, and an adequately sized fridge. A cupboard adjacent to this takes care of larger items, and a number of smaller lockers outboard should cope with further victuals and crockery.

Since there is a dinette in the cockpit already, the main cabin has no table. This makes the fore settee area easier to lounge in; infills are used to convert this into a double berth. Sitting headroom here is perfectly adequate, and the berth is a good 7ft (2.1m) long and 5ft (1.5m) wide.

Access to the voids beneath the seat-bases is via a couple of hinged vertical hatches, with the larger storage area to the fore part gained through the seat cushion base; all are painted out and clear of the bilge.

A half-height hanging locker is set into the bulkhead, which forms part of the moulded, rather compact, toilet compartment. A shower can be fitted here to supplement the basin. Ventilation is provided by an extractor, while there is limited dry storage space.

## Engines

The standard engine option is Mercruiser's 5.7lt V8 petrol unit, rated at 260hp, on an Alpha I drive. Our test boat had the slightly tweaked version of this on a Bravo leg. Further options include the 330hp 7.4lt petrol unit, as well as Mercruiser and Volvo diesels.

For a quick once-over, you need only to whip the seat-base of the enginebox off. Exposing the full bulk of the engine takes just a few seconds

longer, the immediate GRP box surround (covered in eggbox-type insulation) and decking being easily removed. Access to the drive was a little tight, but the engine could readily be got at for inspection or major servicing.

A Rule automatic bilge pump nestled in the central sump between the GRP liner sides, which accommodate the batteries and trim tab pump, and a decent-sized Halon extinguisher (with a status indicator at the helm) was in evidence, although again as an extra. We were disappointed, albeit on a petrol boat, not to find a separator/fuel filter to supplement the integral unit. More importantly still, neither was there a fuel shut-off; which would be a simple modification as the tank itself is in a separate compartment under a hatch in the cockpit, the ideal location for a stopcock.

## Performance and handling

Cork Harbour is the ideal location for boat testing: a sheltered basin for test runs (with picturesque backdrops for photography) and then out into the western approaches for some sea work.

All boats are run in the factory's test tank, and one or two per week get an extended sea trial, performance checks being a priority. It was satisfying to find that our own radar gun figures tallied with both Sea Ray's published data and their own test rig on the boat we tested.

Flat out, we achieved a shade under 35 knots at 4600rpm. Dropping to 4200rpm gave 31 knots, and we also measured 27.8 knots at 3600rpm and an easy cruising 23.5 knots at 3200rpm. On acceleration runs the 250 proved lively, with a 0-20 knots time of 6sec.

The sound meter in the cockpit registered a comfortable 80dB(A) at the slower cruising speed, rising to a sharp 90dB(A) flat out.

Independently published data on a boat fitted with the standard 5.7lt/Alpha drive combination gives 31.5 knots maximum, at a consumption of around 16gph (73lph), and 25.4 knots with around 10gph (45lph) at 3500rpm.

As we pushed seawards, the fringes of the Atlantic gave a long groundswell with a freshening westerly providing the popple. Skipping into it at around 25 knots, the 250 had a comfortable, easy motion (more so, in fact, than the larger accompanying photoboot), tending to stay in touch with the water rather than showing off with a lot of banging and splashing and working of the throttle.

Running back in, we completed a well mannered, enjoyable circuit by opening her up and trimming the leg out a shade more. Trim tabs are fitted as standard, and these were useful for levelling the boat against any wind-induced heel.

The driving position was first-class, the high, well padded seat being comfortable to perch against and the screen giving good protection while maintaining full visibility.

## Conclusions

The 250 is a highly usable sports cruiser, offering well mannered performance on a hull whose every inch is used to advantage but without trying to cram too much in.

The finish is good overall, with just one or two areas of secondary engineering, such as the lack of a fuel cock, needing attention. □

## Sea Ray 250EC

**Loa** 26ft 2in (7.9m).

**Hull length** 24ft 7in (7.5m).

**Beam** 8ft 6in (2.6m).

**Draught** 3ft 0in (0.91m) with drive down.

**Displacement** 2.3 tons dry.

**Fuel** 58gal (264lt).

**Water** 17gal (75lt).

**Price** £25,250 ex VAT as standard with 5.7lt Mercruiser on Alpha drive, plus £,594 for the preferred option group (as on our test boat) which includes shore power, shower and fridge; from £25,597 with the Bravo II drive.

**Parent company** Sea Ray Boats Inc, 2600 Sea Ray Boulevard, Knoxville, Tennessee 37914, USA.

**Suppliers** Lewis Marine, 59-61 High Street, Wanstead, London E11 2AE.  
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