

Boat Report

MONTEREY

262 CRUISER



How does this chunky four-berth vessel pass muster as a potential choice for sportsboat owners wanting to trade up? Choppy waters helped us judge its merits.



Producing affordable boats to fill the gap in their ranges between cuddy-cabin sportsboats and four-berth sports cruisers used to be something of a problem for boatbuilders. The obvious answer, a single-engined boat of around 26ft, would often struggle to get off the mark with any urgency, unless they chucked expensive horsepower at it.

Advances in technology came to the rescue. Fuel-injection assisted the horsepower requirements in a fairly affordable manner, while stepped hulls reduced water-resistance. Nowadays less than 250hp can get a 5500lb boat such as the Monterey 262 Cruiser up onto the plane in a respectable time.

Will that suffice for those used to sportsboat performance? We took a 262 for a spin with its most potent engine option, a single 260hp Mercruiser 5.7 EFI.

Design & layout

The stepped hull has a deadrise of 20°, and a generous freeboard, although this is disguised by the smooth styling and only minimal use of graphics below the rubbing strake.

A swept-back screen, raised gunwales and integrated bathing platform complement the boat's lines, ensuring the 'sports' accolade can be applied to this cruiser.

There is plenty of room to move around the cockpit, and no scrimping on the deck fittings. The interior

accommodation has the familiar sports cruiser layout of a convertible forward vee-dinette and a midships berth at either end of a cabin which also offers a galley and toilet compartment.

Performance & handling

This is a substantially built craft, which is good news when it comes to seakeeping. It was unfazed by the choppy test conditions.

You sit quite high at the helm, and the lean the boat adopts through slower turns can be quite alarming. More attack into tighter turns produces a flatter attitude, with the Mercruiser's Bravo 3 leg undoubtedly helping, but this is not the nimble handling of a sportsboat.

We also struggled to get the 262 running on an even keel, and suspected that the trim tabs were sticking. Where the boat excels, though, is in maintaining a fair speed through a chop while still giving the crew a comfortable ride.

However, for those trading up from a sportsboat or cuddy the crunch could be performance, and it is asking a lot of a single 260hp engine, even with fuel-injection, to get what is quite a heavy boat underway with any alacrity.

We recorded best times of 6.7sec from tickover to 15 knots, and 11.7sec to 25 knots. Most sportsboats will be disappearing towards the horizon in this time, and although the engine's bigger 7.4L sister is available in the USA there are currently no

Cabin

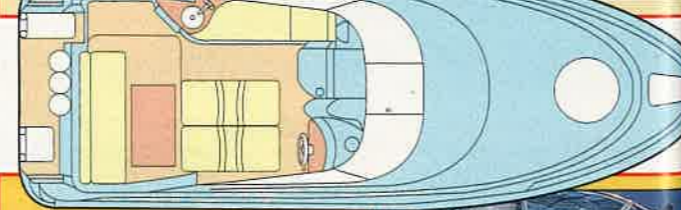
The cabin has a bright, spacious feel, with the deck hatch and three opening portholes providing plenty of natural light. There is good standing headroom around the galley and sitting headroom at the forward dinette. Well-placed spotlights, two above the galley and three above the dinette, take care of night light.

Two infill cushions help to make up the forward berth, which

is a good size, 6ft 3in (1.90m) in length and 5ft 11in (1.80m) wide at the shoulder.

As well as some stowage behind the back cushions there are also lockers under the berth, but these are unlined and not very big. Just aft of the berth to starboard is a hanging cupboard.

We did not care for the material used for the seating; the rucked plastic is meant to give a leather look, but does not really work. The rest of the upholstery is of good quality.



Cockpit

The whole cockpit is executed in white, which gives it a very clean, stylish feel.

There is a reclining seat forward to port (an increasingly popular design ploy because it leaves added headroom down below, in this instance for access to the midships berth), which will take two people sitting or one sunbathing.

The rest of the seating is to starboard, with a back-to-back double seat doubling as the helm position and the rear-facing half of a dinette, plus a three-person stern settee on the other side of the (optional) cockpit table.

When the table is in place, five can sit round to dine. Alternatively, the back-to-back seat can be flattened to create a generous sunpad of 5ft 11in (1.80m) by 3ft 0in (0.90m), albeit

with ridges from the back cushions. There is plenty of room to move around, but if you want more than the aft seat folds neatly into the transom.

The wet-bar to port has a stainless steel sink with a cold tap only. The fridge here is an optional extra, and if you want to save money a coolbox, mounted just aft, will keep food and drink fresh.

An open tray to starboard houses the battery master switch, and you can keep warps under the aft seat, but there is a lack of formal stowage.

Midships berth

Occupying the space under the cockpit floor, the midships berth extends across the beam of the boat. Measuring 5ft 11in (1.80m) long by 3ft 3in (1.00m) wide, it is more of a comfortable single and a tight double.

Whereas some craft have open-tread steps down into such a cabin, to let more light in, on this boat the closed tread and the moulding around the door afford some extra privacy. This is enhanced by the curtain which can be drawn across the entrance.

There is no stowage, but a good-sized hatch, opening into the cockpit, means there is plenty of natural light.



more potent installations on the options list in the UK.

Top speed is healthy enough at 34 knots, and a fast cruising speed close to that figure is achievable given the good seakeeping properties of the hull. A relaxed cruising speed is about 23 knots, at which when noise levels in the cockpit area are a most acceptable 78dB(A).

Conclusions

The 262 Cruiser is a down-to-earth craft. It keeps styling pretensions to a minimum, and concentrates on providing a usable design and layout.

In the cabin you have everything you need for comfortable cruising. Performance is adequate, without being stunning, and progress is comfortable at cruising speeds and above.

The boat is pitched right at the point where the compromise between budget, space and performance is brought into sharp focus. Is the extra accommodation of the sports cruiser worth sacrificing sportsboat performance for? It is a matter of individual choice.

Prices start at £32,012 with a

Helm

Collapsible seating arrangements often compromise driving positions, but not here. The double helm seat offers some fore-and-aft adjustment, if not side bolsting,

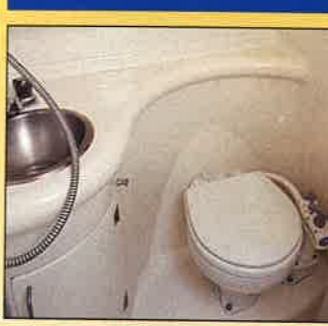


and this is enough to allow you to find a comfortable position whether standing or seated.

The tilt-adjustable steering wheel helps, and the throttle is well positioned for driving in either position. When seated you can brace your arm against the gunwale top, and although the screen is tailored to suit the boat's overall styling it is high enough to offer good protection.

The dashboard is a simple affair, which displays the instrumentation in a clearly intelligible manner. The trim tab controls are not too far away from the throttle, and rotary knobs (lit for night use) manage the electrical functions.

Toilet



The toilet compartment to starboard is fully moulded, and fitted with a stainless steel sink with mixer taps and a shower head as standard.

As part of the Weekend package of extras, a Jabsco marine toilet was fitted to our test boat.

A cupboard runs the full width of the compartment, and there is more stowage under the sink, but with no shelves. A mirror, a shower curtain and an opening porthole complete the fittings.

Mercruiser 5.0L engine, and rise to £36,951 with the 5.7EFI and Bravo 3 leg. This becomes just over £40,000 with the £3125 Weekend package of extras fitted to our test boat, comprising cockpit carpet, shorepower, pump-out head,

stove, hot water system with heat exchanger, fridge, lights, 220V system, transom shower, battery charger and wiper.

Some of these items should be standard in our opinion, as should the cockpit table, but it is still a competitive price. □

Decks

The bathing platform is set well above the water level, with a pull-out boarding ladder to starboard and a tow-ring fitted to the trailing edge. The transom gate can be locked from the outside, which is good news if you have youngsters on board.

Access to the bow and its locker is through the central section of the screen, and steps are moulded into the port side of the console.

Fender-holders are provided as

standard at the bow and on the transom, although if the latter one is in use the bathing platform is a little limited in width.



Engine room

The aft part of the cockpit sole lifts on gas struts to reveal the engine bay, with its speckled painted-out finish.

A fair amount of room around the engine is taken up by the ancillary fittings, water and holding

tanks, batteries and shorepower unit, and it might be a bit restrictive to work in, although the main service points are still accessible.

The installation looks competent enough but could be a bit tidier. You get the impression that this is one area where the builders have sought to make cost savings.



BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

DIMENSIONS

LOA

26ft 5in (8.07m)

BEAM

8ft 6in (2.59m)

DRAUGHT

1ft 6in (0.46m)

with leg up;

2ft 10in (0.86m)

with leg down

AIR DRAUGHT

7ft 1in (2.19m)

DISPLACEMENT

5500lb (3628kg)

FUEL CAPACITY

66gal (302lt)

WATER CAPACITY

17gal (79lt)

ENGINE

single Mercruiser 5.7 EFI

8cyl 5.7lt petrol

260hp at 4600rpm

PRICE

£40,076 ex VAT as tested

SUPPLIERS

Sportsboats Direct, Gibbs Boatyard, Russell Boatyard, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 9HY. Tel: 01932 242977.

BUILDERS

Monterey Boats, PO Box 70, Archer, Florida 32618, USA. Tel: (1) 352 495 3624.