

# BOAT REPORT

# BAYLINER

# 2855 CIERA



Harsh winters are not the best times to test any sports cruiser, but Bayliner's largest Ciera did not falter.

A TOTAL of 300,000 boats built over three decades marks Bayliner as one of the world's biggest manufacturers. And whilst there has been a certain amount of debate over quality, those figures, and the fact that they offer a five-year structural hull warranty, testify to a certain standard of build.

Over the past year or two we have also noticed a steady improvement over the whole of the US boatbuilding scene, with greater emphasis on finish and European fit-out and styling. By way of further comfort, Bayliner also benefit from a strong, established UK dealer, in the shape of the Aquatic Boat Centres at Windermere and on the South Coast.

The 2855 is the largest in Bayliner's restyled Ciera Sunbridge range of open-cockpit medium-vee family cruisers, although in fact this format does run to a 35-footer in the Avanti line-up.

## Exterior

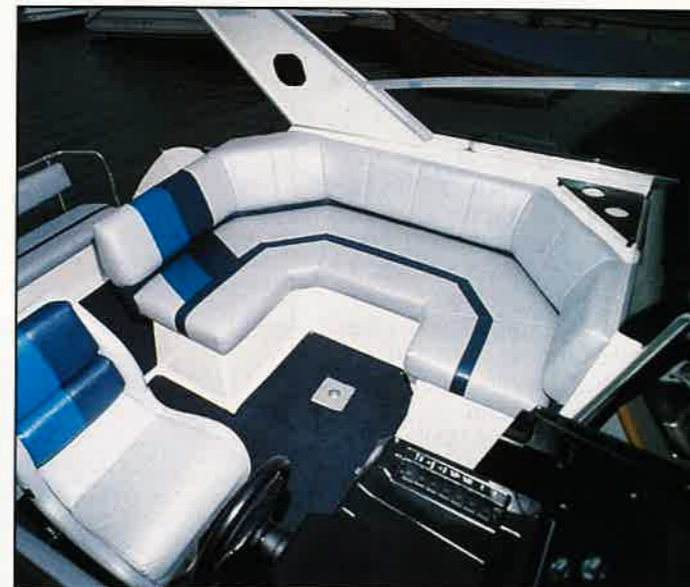
The 2855 shares the same cockpit layout as the other Cieras in the four-boat range, the after portion being equipped solely with a small,

upright transom bench with walkways on each side through to the integral bathing platform.

This latter area is fitted with a recessed swim-ladder and shower. If you indulge in watersports or enjoy a spot of fishing, this uncluttered lower cockpit portion is an obvious advantage, leaving a dry sitting area towards the raised helm section, with its comfortably upholstered U-dinette opposite. This arrangement, gives plenty of room for the whole crew to sit, with a first-class view of the passing world as well as keeping the helmsman company. It can also be rigged with a bimini awning which includes a full set of side curtains, enabling the dinette to be used in inclement weather.

The helm layout proved easily viewed and used. Instrumentation, which includes a log and depth sounder, is set just forward of a small pilot book or folded chart area, while the rocker-style switches are simply run down both sides. We were pleased to see a 'pull-out' kill switch wired into the ignition system, and the compass set a reasonable distance from the instruments.

To maximise headroom and usable beam



down below, the coachroof has been pushed out almost to the gunwale, leaving precious little in the way of side decks. Having said that, Bayliner have gone to the trouble of running the foredeck pulpit rail well aft along the raised coaming sides, but this makes it handier for boarding and for hanging onto when berthing rather than acting as any enticement to use the side decks. Although a split windscreen is provided, access to the foredeck is safer through the cabin hatch. Apart from the bow roller and pipe to the chain locker, deck hardware consists of a pair of 9in cleats aft, a single one on the foredeck and more amidships.

Stowage is limited to one reasonable-sized sealed cave-locker beneath a portion of the upper settee. Of rather greater concern were the walkways through to the bathing platform, which were only barred by rather insubstantial-looking chains, providing scant obstacle to any roaming junior crew members and limited protection from any mischievous wave or wake.

## Interior

At just over 28ft overall (excluding anchor and integral bathing platforms), the Ciera's open-plan accommodation is spacious even though half that length is taken up by cockpit; this is no doubt

helped by the fact that its coachroof is pushed well out to the topsides.

The main saloon provides seating for at least six, although the table itself is on the small side, with the horseshoe-shaped dinette converting to a large single berth or a rather cosier double. The area forward of this is matted to provide a larger double with heaps of stowage beneath. Further accessible clothes storage includes a half-height hanging locker, and a pair of draws set beneath the settee bases to supplement the usual array of seat lockers.

Set to port of the narrow companionway is a weekending galley with twin-burner electric/alcohol hob, sink and decent-sized dual-voltage fridge. Whilst our test team haven't got a manicured fingernail between them, we felt the under-counter cupboards could do with a knob or catch for ease of opening.

Opposite, the moulded toilet compartment is a tidy affair with a modicum of storage. The actual base moulding, which incorporates the shower pan, also manages to hide the less-than-pretty piping to the pump-out toilet. Effluent can either be discharged straight overboard or into a holding tank.

Curtained-off from the main cabin is a good-sized midships sleeping area, 6ft 6in x 4ft, with plenty of sitting headroom and an attempt at

**Symmetry in seating: the cockpit U-settee is found to port, complete with table socket. The table itself is pictured here servicing the main cabin dinette to starboard. A second double is found in a mid-cabin, entered via a curtained access behind the galley.**

◁ providing some stowage for its occupants, something forgotten on many boats.

The whole of the accommodation, including the midships cabin, is extremely light with a variety of large and small, opening and fixed, ports and hatches.

## Performance and handling

Just two Mercruiser petrol outdrive options are offered, both being single installations. Our test boat had the larger 330hp V8 Bravo unit, the alternative being a 260hp. Access to the compartment is via a large well-supported cockpit hatch, the plastic water tank sited towards the forward bulkhead providing a convenient, if not altogether purposeful, step down. The hatch runs a good way aft, allowing ready access to service points on both engine and drive.

With only a single engine in this full-width compartment — the fuel tank being bedded under the cockpit further forward — there is plenty of room for ancillaries including batteries and charger, calorifier complete with back-up immersion, and 240V/120V step-down transformer to power the US-rated AC electrics (the actual mainspring around the accommodation, however, being 240V).

Two automatic bilge pumps are fitted, one in the engine compartment and the other servicing the forward bilge area, but there is no sign of a manual back-up. Likewise with fire-extinguishers: while the compartment is equipped with a heat-sensitive device, there are no additional units around the cockpit or accommodation. A further notable item missing is a fuel shut-off.

Token sound insulation has been fitted, but this is just plain foam and of minimum thickness. Consequently, the Ciera's top speed of a lively 32 knots gives a dB(A) noise level reading in the low 90s, although dropping the revs from flat-out 4800rpm to a cruising 26 knots at 4000rpm improves matters, the inherently quiet V8 now registering a kinder 83dB(A) in the cockpit. Throttling back still further to 3500rpm maintains

levels around 77dB(A) in the accommodation — low enough for an exhausted crew to find solace below — while still enabling the skipper to head home at a steady 20 knots.

Using the Mercruiser's 330hp to its full potential, expect to guzzle around 22gph (100lph), draining the 87gal tank in four hours. When you drop the revs to 4000rpm, consumption should fall to an estimated 17gph (78lph), giving a creditable dry tank weekend cruising range of 150 miles.

The driving position is well protected by the windscreen and high side extensions and, whether you are sitting or standing, the wheel and throttle are comfortably positioned.

Trim tabs are fitted as standard. While these are not needed for getting onto the plane, there is a fair bulk of topside and coachroof which tends to lean into the prevailing wind, so the ride benefits from a small amount of counteracting tab in the usual way. By today's standards, 330hp in a 28-footer is certainly not overpowered, and we felt comfortable with this amount on tap. While the Ciera proved lively enough, it also remained predictable and well-mannered in the muddle of washes, wakes and unkind seas we found around the Solent.

## Conclusions

Our impressions as to how the Bayliner of the 1990s stands up to the seemingly ever-increasing competition, when it comes to juggling price against quality, are generally favourable. While the 2855 is very much American in layout and features — not necessarily everyone's cup of tea — there was little we could find to criticise in the handling, construction or fit-out.

The five-year hull warranty which comes with every boat is backed up by the priority given to customer care by their UK dealers Windermere Aquatic and, more recently, Solent Aquatic. Not only do they check every boat when it arrives in the UK, but they make sure new owners are confident, in both the boat and their own abilities, before letting them out of their sight. □



## Bayliner 2855 Ciera

**Loa** 30ft 9in (9.14m).  
**Hull length** 28ft 1in (8.56m).  
**Beam** 9ft 6in (2.90m).  
**Draft** 3ft 3in (1.00m) with drive down.  
**Displacement** 2.95 tons.  
**Fuel** 87gal (397lt).  
**Water** 29gal (132lt).  
**Price** £32,170 ex VAT with 330hp Mercruiser.  
**Builder** Bayliner Marine Corporation, PO Box 9029, Everett, Washington 98206, USA.  
**Supplier** Solent Aquatic, Universal Shipyard, Sarisbury Green, Southampton SO3 6ZN. Tel: 0489 578181.