

# Rodman 30

With its luxurious accommodation and stylish finish, is this everyone's ideal first flybridge boat? **REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON**

In the marine leisure market, Spanish boatbuilders Rodman have come a long way in a short space of time. In the past four years, they have trebled their output, and increased their sales from £5.3m to £25.3m.

Their Cruiser range has unveiled a new side to them, adding flair and finish to their existing reputation for well built, no-nonsense sports-fishers. Make no mistake, they are causing some of Europe's premier manufacturers to look over their shoulders.

A great deal of this success has been achieved in the UK, where they are represented by SeaSport Marine, a division of Peters plc. And building on this growth is the launch of an all-new and very modern 30ft flybridge cruiser which is sure to attract the attention of British buyers.

This is a seminal size, marking the entry level for flybridge boats and the starting point for greater things: something you can fit a family into comfortably while taking on more adventurous cruising.

Could this be Rodman's biggest seller yet? We travelled to SeaSport's headquarters in Chichester Harbour to find out.

## DESIGN & LAYOUT

If it is true that only the genuinely modern ever becomes old-fashioned, then this boat might have a problem somewhere down the line.

It's not that the cutting edge styling is unique — ostensibly, this is a smaller version of the Rodman 38 — it's just that packing similar features into a smaller space seems to cause much more of a visual impact.

Oversized, heavily tinted crescent-shaped side windows, now favoured by many builders, dominate the exterior design, forming the centrepiece of a tall, arced superstructure. The darkness of the smoked glass contrasts so perfectly with the brilliance of the white mouldings as to present the onlooker with what seems like an artist's impression rather than the real thing.

The hull, sectioned off by some serious looking chine-flats, is of modified-vee shape with a small three-quarter-length keel. Unusually on a boat of this size, propeller tunnels have also been incorporated, which, makes the stern rather a busy place below the waterline.

Although the hull does not carry the broadest of beams, the topsides assist the boat's interior volume by holding their width



## highlights



### CRESCENT-SHAPED WINDOWS

With such strong styling, you won't confuse this boat with others.



### SOLID HATCHES

Wonderfully sturdy, built to the same specification as on the Rodman 56, these are if anything over-engineered.

### FINE CABINTRY

There is plenty of well finished woodwork, to a standard normally seen only on larger craft.







**decks**

With the option of smart teak decking, the cockpit welcomes you aboard via a wide transom gate from the bathing platform.

A moulding which wraps around the starboard quarter provides a three-seater bench and a step up to the side deck, matched by a similar step to port. A ladder leads up to the flybridge.

Ribbed hatches in the sole, giving

access to the enginebay and the lazaret, are commendable for their robustness, with deep drainage gullies and heavy-duty stainless steel handles. The storage area below is open-plan, and houses the battery paddock and fuel pre-filters.

The flybridge coamings are low, which helps the boat's profile but, as often on craft of this length, does leave you feeling rather vulnerable.

But helping to counter this is the rail around the top of the screen.

Aft is a 7ft x 6ft expanse of sunpad. A split cushion which folds over the hatch at the top of the access ladder means this can take full advantage of the width of the boat.

At the bow, twin hatches flanking the windlass lead into a single anchor locker.

until well forward. In the water, the result is a slightly square appearance, but this is not too marked; your eye is drawn to more engaging subjects, such as the bottlenose pulpit.

The Rodman's height and its good use of width is obvious as soon as you step aboard. The saloon is particularly impressive, a truly luxurious area that is class-leading in terms of both finish and space.

That promises much for rest of the interior, and sure enough the accommodation displays a commendable level of finish and thought. But we suspect that the midships cabin will be a sticking point for some potential buyers.

Having only a single bunk here (compared with the twin bunks of, say, the Bénéteau Antares 9.80, or for that matter the Rodman 900) might not be an issue for those who generally cruise as a couple, but will be a disappointment for family crews. And this is surely meant to be a family boat.

**ENGINE OPTIONS**

Volvo Penta and Yanmar supply the engine installations, which are all twin diesels.

Our test boat came with the largest option, a pair of 200hp Yanmar 4cyl LHA/DTPs. Alternatively, you can choose their 160hp LHA/HTPs, or Volvo's stalwart 150hp TAMD31Ps.

**PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

Conditions on our test day were as near to perfect as you could imagine: not a cloud in the sky nor a boat to be seen, the slight breeze doing little to stop the waters outside Chichester Harbour resembling a millpond.

With these silky seas laid out before us, the Rodman leapt up onto the plane, hitting 20 knots in a very responsive 8sec. Flat out, it just grazed 29 knots at 3500rpm, while 3000rpm brought up a 22-knot cruising speed that should eat up the miles without consuming too much fuel.

The hull felt composed, with not a slam to be heard when running across the

wake of our 40ft camera boat.

However, somewhere between the sedate cruising and full throttle we encountered a problem. Accelerating up past 20 knots, things — or more specifically the boat — took a turn. For no obvious reason we heeled sharply to port.

One of SeaSport's professional skippers was at the helm when this first materialised. His instinctive reaction was to let off the power, and this only served to make things momentarily worse.

After a few mutterings about trim and load he tried again, unfortunately with the same result. And when we took over at



**lower helm** A two-tier console has standard switches laid out in a neat row, meeting up with the throttle controls to port. It includes a large space for additional electronics. Although fixed, the single bench seat is comfortable enough, and a single-piece forward screen and large side screens ensure excellent visibility.



**upper helm** The two plastic seats are basic in design, but adjustable and quite comfortable. The console spreads itself along the front of the bridge, offering a tidy instrument display and plenty of space for additional equipment.



**accommodation**

First impressions of the interior are immediately favourable. The glossy cherry woods combine well with the soft cream panelling which surrounds the windows.

In the wheelhouse/saloon, the deckhead is finished with longitudinal cherry strips, while headroom is generally 6ft 2in, rising to 6ft 5in in an arch above the helm. Belying the actual size of the vessel, the area has a 'big boat' style, so you feel as though you are sitting in it, rather than on it.

Other boats in this class tend to offer a lighter, more basic, decor for fear of overcrowding. But a heavier fit-out does not worry this boat, its height and expansive window area helping to carry it off.

An array of inset and mood lighting, with self-lit switches, ensures that conviviality continues after dark.

The galley to port has an Isotherm fridge and a deep stainless steel basin as standard. Our test boat also came with a diesel-powered Wallas two-burner hob which rather cleverly uses glow plugs to create its heat, a system that can be extended to provide central heating.

A wide stairwell, in need of some handholds, leads down to a more confined lobby, from where three doors lead off to the master and guest cabins and the toilet compartment.

The master cabin has an offset double berth of 6ft 5in x 4ft 3in, and plenty of dressing area in front of the main hanging locker. Natural light flows in through a circular hatch, but the positioning of the reading lights needs to be addressed as they can make you feel like you are being interrogated by the Gestapo.

Although equally comfortable, the guest cabin's berth is somewhere between a decent single and a tight double in size. But both sleeping areas offer a good-sized hanging locker, drawers and under-berth storage.

The WC has a well positioned sea toilet and a useful handhold cut into the basin moulding.



**saloon** The deep, comfortable sofa seats five adults around a solid table, and can be converted into a double berth.



**galley** The cooking facilities hide away neatly under a solid cherry wood lid when not in use.



**master cabin** Featuring warm cabinetry and a large mirror in the bows, this cabin combines space and comfort very well.



**midships cabin** A useful amount of storage, standing space and natural light are let down by the size of the berth.



**toilet/shower** More cherry wood helps to give a luxury feel, while a mirror-fronted vanity cabinet offers stowage.



**side decks** Large-diameter outboard-leaning guardrails extend right aft, making the most of the 8in of deck width.



**cockpit** Almost completely sheltered by the flybridge overhang, this has a secure feel and offers good access to all deck areas.



**bathing platform** Slightly lower than the cockpit sole, the platform is narrow but uncluttered and usable.



**flybridge** Opening the sunlounge fully creates a very effective loafing area, but at the expense of easy access down below.





## engineroom



The main entrance to the engineroom is straightforward, via a hatch in the cockpit sole. But a further hatch in the saloon thoughtfully allows quick and easy access to the dipsticks and strainers.

It is a well-finished, structurally impressive enginebay that brings all sides of the machinery within reach.



**above** You can access the whole bay from the cockpit, or strainers and dipsticks via the saloon.

the wheel, it happened again.


We are not talking about anything dangerous here, but from the exposed platform that is a 30-footer's flybridge this kind of behaviour is not much fun, enough to turn a novice skipper into a nervous one.

After further experimentation, we found that this tenderness came on at speeds in excess of 23-25 knots, and that running with no trim tabs helped to nullify the effect. However, with just a dab of either tab the hull almost immediately leant away to port.

Conversely, under full-speed turns the hull feels strong and secure. Sending up a quirky rooster tail from the aft mouldings, it

displays only limited lean and a good deal of grip and steerage, allowing you to turn a circle in well under two boat-lengths.

Those who like to anchor away from the crowds will be pleased to hear that the keeled hull feels very well weighted when stationary, and also at low speeds, allowing very little roll even in a beam sea.

Progress seems serene if you opt for the interior helm, not least thanks to the soundproofing which covers the underside of the saloon sole as well as the enginebay itself. Noise levels were a very comfortable 78dB(A) at fast cruising speeds, only reaching 83dB(A) when flat-out. 

## the rivals



### **BÉNÉTEAU ANTARES 9.80** from £96,666 inc VAT

A handsome French-built boat with great handling but a less luxurious interior.  
Tel: 01792 645303.  
www.dickies.co.uk



### **JEANNEAU PRESTRIGE 32** from £121,141 inc VAT

Smooth design and a good flybridge catch the eye on another French contender.  
Tel: 01932 226266.  
www.waltonmarine.co.uk



### **ASTINOR 1000** from £107,512 inc VAT

A compatriot of the Rodman, this impressed us on a recent test with its solid joinery and excellent handling.  
Tel: 023 8045 8585.  
www.astinor.com

## specifications

<b>BUILD</b>	glass-reinforced plastic
<b>RCD</b>	design category B
<b>LENGTH OVERALL</b>	30ft 6in (9.30m)
<b>BEAM</b>	10ft 0in (3.05m)
<b>DRAUGHT</b>	2ft 2in (0.65m)
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b>	6.3 tonnes
<b>FUEL CAPACITY</b>	100gal (460lt)
<b>WATER CAPACITY</b>	22gal (100lt)
<b>ENGINES</b>	twin 200hp Yanmar 4LHA/DTP diesels
<b>BUILDERS</b>	Rodman Polyships, 36200 Vigo, Spain. Tel: +34 (0) 986 811 818. www.rodman.es
<b>SUPPLIERS</b>	Seasport Marine, Birdham Pool, Birdham, West Sussex PO20 7BG. Tel: 01243 512454. www.seasportmarine.com

<b>PRICE</b>	from £109,000 inc VAT; £120,080 as tested with extras including teak cockpit, Wallas cooker and foredeck cushions
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## conclusions

### LAYOUT

This boat's layout is pretty much beyond compare for a 30-footer. The saloon is class-leading, the rest excellent, but will the size of the midships berth put off some buyers?

### BUILD

Just because the builders' Cruiser range is heavy on home comforts, don't imagine that it is lacking in build quality. Excellent joinery and wonderfully solid stringers and bearers tell their own story.

### PERFORMANCE

Though it is stable at lower speeds, there is a big question mark over the craft's poise past 24 knots. The answer might be to opt for the less potent engines.

## MBM's verdict

Assuming a solution can be found for the over-sensitive handling, Rodman have a potential class winner on their hands. To our mind, this is the most modern, most spacious and most luxurious 30ft flybridge craft on the market, and it achieves this without a noticeably higher price tag than its competitors.