

# SEALINE T51



*This new flagship will make its UK debut at the London Boat Show, but we travelled out to Italy to give the first off the line an exclusive test, 24 hours after it hit the water.*





The saloon is particularly generous for a 50-footer, with facing seating areas aft and the dinette, galley and helm on the raised area forward.

When Sealine's 450 Statesman was revealed to an unsuspecting public at the 1991 London Boat Show, it marked a major step for the company (see MBM Jun 91 p42).

Not only did it represent a quantum leap of nearly 10ft in length from the previously largest model, but the 450 was motivated by shaftdrives, the first time the Kidderminster-based manufacturer had used conventional inboards in their 18-year history.

More noticeable for many perhaps was the much-less conventional layout, which brought something new to a fairly static market. It not only provided a stylish solution to how to incorporate an aft cabin, but also balanced aesthetics with many practical features.

Since then, Sealine have concentrated on filling in the gaps in the range beneath the 450 and on improving existing models in the series. However, it is time for a seven year itch to be scratched and so taking centre stage on the company's 1998 Earls Court stand will be the T51. Whilst the new flagship adds just 6ft in length to the range, the increase in available volume is almost as large as the expectations of the many who have seen models and drawings of it over the past year or so.

For this reason alone, we were quick to ask for the opportunity of sampling the first off the line which, given the boat's world debut at Genoa in October, meant travelling to see how it handled the autumnal waters of the Mediterranean.

### Design

There is no mistaking that the T51 is a Sealine. The rake and curves of the superstructure and topsides give it that distinctive rounded look which was originally debuted by ex-Rover Group stylist Roger Tucker on the 365 Sportbridge back in 1988. But its lines are more muted, partly in deference to its sheer size, partly because that is the way the company has been resculpting its models in recent years. For instance, the once prominent bow platform with its

integral anchor stowage is now found fully formed into the stem.

Even so, Sealine's chairman Tom Murrant, who heads up the design team, has pulled no punches with this aft cockpit model's overall styling, not least by stretching the maindeck superstructure well forward so as to create room for a hugely sociable split-level saloon, while still having space for three good-sized sleeping cabins down below.

As with the 450, John Bennett is responsible for the underwater lines, which again are pretty straightforward but for the T51 are devoid of tunnels. The variable deadrise is also deeper, measuring 24° amidships and-easing to 21° at the transom. However, to give sufficient shaft run for the required propeller clearance, transom-hung rudders are the order of the day and vent plates protrude from the transom, all this being tucked well under an extended bathing platform.

Two sets of sprayrails are fashioned into the running surfaces, both petering out well before amidships, while the hull is moulded with two knuckles, the upper one sandwiching the portholes and engine vents between it and gunwale, to create a continuous eye-catching line that breaks up the expanse of topsides.

We liked the small, raked radar arch which tops off the flybridge, making an elegant job of handling the scanner, navigation lights and aerials.



### Exterior

As with most new models nowadays, the T51's bathing platform has to perform a number of functions, including providing a method of boarding and a place for carrying a tender.

To this end there is an extremely neat stowage system for a mini-RIB, with a set of cradles hinging out from within the locker, which can be tucked out of toe-stubbing way once it has been launched. And the transom has walk-through gates on both sides, so that when the tender is in situ it does not matter to which side the boat is moored.

If you are going to use the T51 in the Mediterranean, the electric passerelle option is going to be a consideration. Stowing across the transom, this forms a smart wooden top for the cockpit coaming.

Another welcome sign of attention to detail is a drop-down step incorporated on the inboard side of the coaming, just where it is needed. Other features of note include a fender locker to port, a similarly-sized stowage void across the way to take a liferaft, and a further locker in the transom to take cleaning gear and the like.

The cockpit is extremely spacious, not least because it is devoid of any moulded seating as standard, so it is a matter of deploying free-standing furniture, which is often more practical in any case. If you opt for the crew cabin beneath the cockpit sole, a transom seat moulding is incorporated up top to give the required headroom down below.

The sole here, as on the bathing platform and, unusually, on the flybridge, is laid to teak as standard. A pair of hatches, both with remotely-activated locks triggered from the saloon, give access to a huge lazaret, as well as to a companionway which leads to the engine compartment.

The lazaret is fully moulded-out, keeping everything clear of the bilge, although there are numerous hatches to give access to the latter, as well as to the steering gear. Fitted as standard in this area is an 8kVA encapsulated generator, positioned centrally so as to be easy to service; other auxiliaries are tucked outboard, and there is still loads of space for all manner of boating gear.

Above the cockpit, the flybridge overhang has two hatches of its own: one opens up so the cockpit canopy can be rolled up and tucked inside; the other provides stowage for the flybridge table.

The stair treads up to the flybridge are covered in teak, as are the shorter runs up to the side decks.

The flybridge layout is well proportioned for all the usual activities associated with this style of boating, with a permanent sunbed area aft, a long U-shaped settee to port, and a well laid-out double helm opposite. Our only wish with this arrangement would be for a higher backrest for the settee.

Aft of this is a wet bar with a fridge, a sink, a cupboard and the inevitable electric barbecue griddle. The helm seating is fixed, but for most people the distance between the seat and the console should be fine, with sufficient room to stand when manoeuvring. There is a locker beneath, and further stowage under the main settee.

The location of controls and instrumentation is well thought-out, with the area around the wheel banked up with equipment, and a fuller run of console ahead of this taking care of the bulkier electronics. The T51's standard specification includes just about everything you might want, including an autopilot, a radar and a GPS chart-

plotter, an Autohelm ST80 log and depth-sounder, and a dual-station Shipmate VHF.

The side decks, a minimum of 9in (23cm) wide, have guardrails which extend right back to the break of the cockpit, and the superstructure incorporates a chest-high run of handrail.

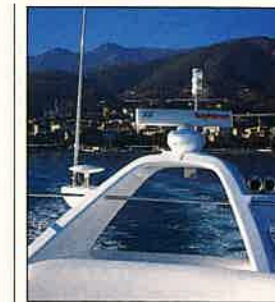
The chunky toerail moulding increases in height as it runs towards the bow, to the point where it forms a fully-fledged bulwark. This creates a very secure working area forward, something which is not always the case with other flybridge motor yachts of equivalent size, and Sealine have achieved this without the need for a step-down in the deck. We also liked the sensible way that the bow-roller, integrated into the stem moulding, has a completely separate fairlead above it for picking up moorings.

Less useful was the huge chain locker, but only because it is not segmented, a pity as this could provide a measure of further stowage above and beyond the two handily-placed rope lockers set within the coachroof.

The bow and stern cleats measure 12in (30cm), and there are two sets of midships cleats at 10in (25cm) each.

### Interior

If the exterior space has been put to good use, then this pales by comparison with what has been achieved with the interior, namely by reducing the



Above: the neat flybridge arch incorporates mini-wings, keeping GPS aerials and the like out of the way of the radar. Clockwise from below: the interior helm, further forward than normal and with armchair comfort, was our favourite of the two available steering positions. One guest cabin and the master both offer double berths with access either side, while the third cabin has twin bunks.



Below: the guest cabins' toilet compartment has a circular shower stall set within it. Right: a half-glazed partition separates the galley from the saloon seating and provides a housing for the microwave over the hob.

length of the coachroof and pushing the main body of superstructure well forward.

This has given extra length to the open-plan saloon, which allows for two seating areas. By raising the forward part, which incorporates the galley and helm, the builders have given full standing headroom to the two guests cabins that lie beneath the saloon.

The lower section of the saloon has a large main settee with an adjustable-height table, facing a sideboard unit with a fridge and entertainment centre. Opposite this main dinette is a further two-seater settee, which makes for a very sociable seating area. A locker above this houses a cocktail cabinet, and for bulk stowage the seat-bases are all lined out, with the cushions easy to remove.

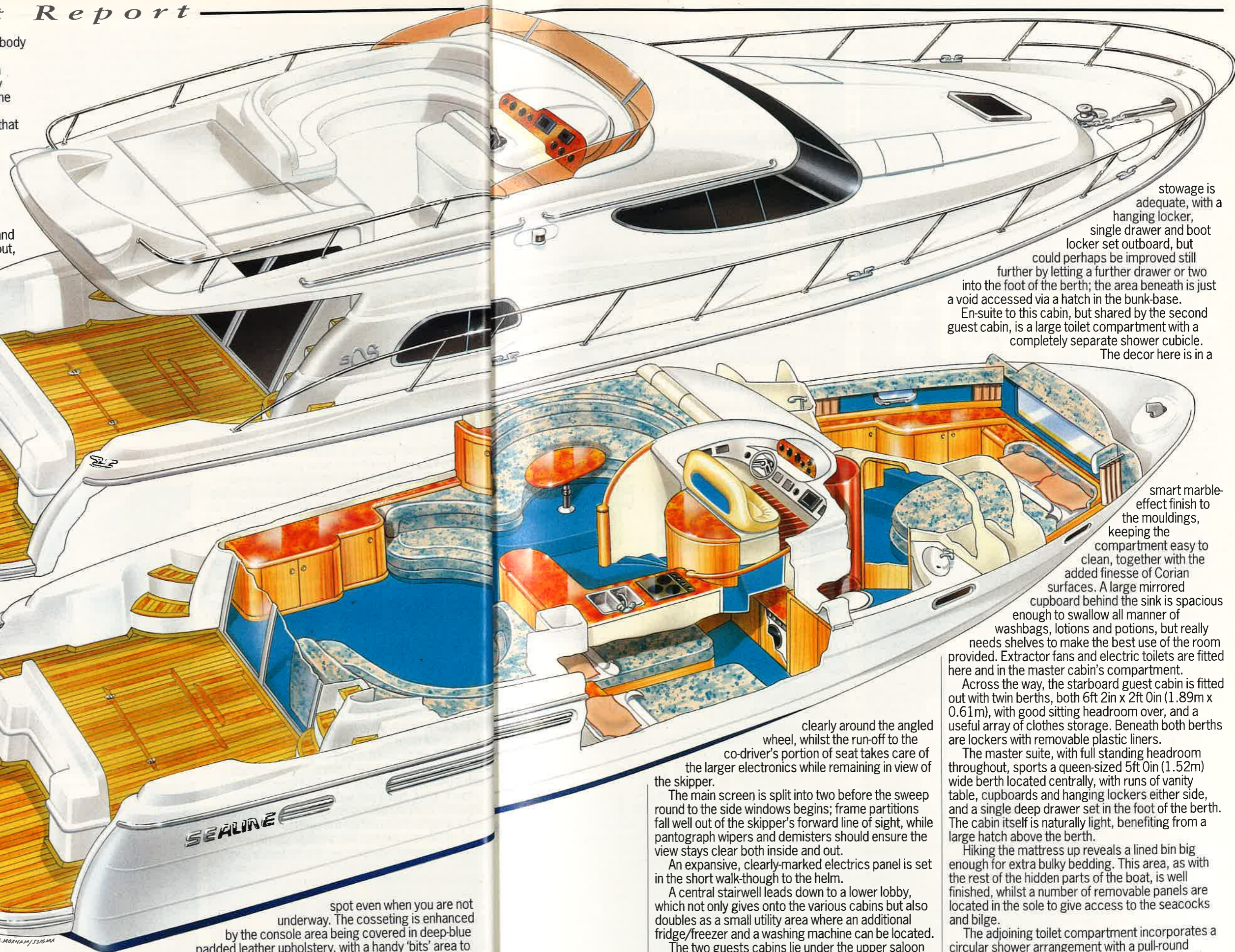
One step up forward, a further seating area is set over to port with a small table, and the galley immediately to starboard. The window line here, as with the lower section, is just right for a clear view of proceedings, and there are electric opening portions to provide ventilation.

The galley, worked into an L-shape, is partitioned from the lower saloon by a glass half-bulkhead and a run of eye-height joinery. We had a concern that this division, which houses the microwave/grill unit, leaves little clearance over the three-burner ceramic hob, and a further reservation about the slick Corian work surface which, without a lip, will let things slide off too easily.

There is an adequate amount of larger cupboard space, and a good-sized fridge, but smaller cubbyholes for things such as mugs, tea and coffee are lacking. This said, the additional semicircular area of work surface to the rear of the helm seat incorporates a cutlery drawer, and a stowage area ahead of the upper dinette has been worked into a segmented crockery locker, albeit not a very convenient one.

Practical touches are a Sealine hallmark and we suspect that some of these points will come in for attention on later examples.

The helm is set well forward, and almost centrally, which gives it a pilothouse feel. The double seat, more of an armchair in fact, is going to be a favourite



spot even when you are not underway. The cossetting is enhanced by the console area being covered in deep-blue padded leather upholstery, with a handy 'bits' area to the left where the skipper can safely put down glasses, pilot books and telephone without them skitting away from reach.

The console itself is also well laid-out, with all the main engine instrumentation and controls grouped

clearly around the angled wheel, whilst the run-off to the co-driver's portion of seat takes care of the larger electronics while remaining in view of the skipper.

The main screen is split into two before the sweep round to the side windows begins; frame partitions fall well out of the skipper's forward line of sight, while pantograph wipers and demisters should ensure the view stays clear both inside and out.

An expansive, clearly-marked electrics panel is set in the short walk-through to the helm.

A central stairwell leads down to a lower lobby, which not only gives onto the various cabins but also doubles as a small utility area where an additional fridge/freezer and a washing machine can be located.

The two guests cabins lie under the upper saloon area, but nevertheless have plenty of standing headroom and clear dressing space.

The port one is fitted out with a good sized double berth, at 6ft 2in x 4ft 6in (1.89m x 1.37m), cleverly angled to allow access to either side of it. Clothes

stowage is adequate, with a hanging locker, single drawer and boot locker set outboard, but could perhaps be improved still further by letting a further drawer or two into the foot of the berth; the area beneath is just a void accessed via a hatch in the bunk-base.

En-suite to this cabin, but shared by the second guest cabin, is a large toilet compartment with a completely separate shower cubicle.

The decor here is in a

smart marble-effect finish to the mouldings, keeping the compartment easy to clean, together with the added finesse of Corian surfaces. A large mirrored cupboard behind the sink is spacious enough to swallow all manner of washbags, lotions and potions, but really needs shelves to make the best use of the room provided. Extractor fans and electric toilets are fitted here and in the master cabin's compartment.

Across the way, the starboard guest cabin is fitted out with twin berths, both 6ft 2in x 2ft 0in (1.89m x 0.61m), with good sitting headroom over, and a useful array of clothes storage. Beneath both berths are lockers with removable plastic liners.

The master suite, with full standing headroom throughout, sports a queen-sized 5ft 0in (1.52m) wide berth located centrally, with runs of vanity table, cupboards and hanging lockers either side, and a single deep drawer set in the foot of the berth. The cabin itself is naturally light, benefiting from a large hatch above the berth.

Hiking the mattress up reveals a lined bin big enough for extra bulky bedding. This area, as with the rest of the hidden parts of the boat, is well finished, whilst a number of removable panels are located in the sole to give access to the seacocks and bilge.

The adjoining toilet compartment incorporates a circular shower arrangement with a pull-round screen, rather than a separate cubicle, and for the most part it is roomy enough. Again, the marble-effect of the mouldings works to good effect, and there is plenty of dry storage. One detail that caught our eye was the thoughtful indent fashioned into the

bulkhead of the shower area to take shampoo and the like.

The joinery on our test boat was in cherry, and to a good standard. Furthermore it featured a satin finish which gave it a wholly usable feel rather than creating an ultra-glossy look-but-not-touch effect.

## Engines

Engine options are all in the same horsepower bracket: twin Volvo Penta TAMD122P EDCs producing 610hp apiece, 600hp MAN D2866s, or 600hp Caterpillar 3176TAs. Our test boat was fitted with the first of these.

The cockpit access hatch gives on to a bulkhead cut-out to the rear of the engine compartment which allows ready inspection of the raw water strainers and the shaft logs. However, it is a bit of a squeeze to get between the Volvos (due to the bulk of the port-hand air filter and the starboard exhaust elbow) to make the full round of daily checks.

As a result it is perhaps easiest to simply hike-up the central saloon hatch. This being the case, we would wish for hinges and a gas strut to make this easier. However, treadplates between the engines mean that you can stand without hobbling around in the bilge.

The Volvos are tight to the forward bulkhead, which makes a fiddle of getting to the belts and the pump housings. Other service items are for the most part accessible although for anything lying outboard, tucked up against the tanks, it is necessary to pull up the remaining sections of the saloon sole to get at them. This is not a problem as the saloon seating is modular and simple to move so that all is quickly revealed.

The tanks themselves, the deckhead panels and the bulkheads are largely covered in foil-faced insulation.

We liked the way in which the Sealine engineers had dealt with the fuel cock and tank changeover system, by running the pipework up to a manifold beneath the cockpit hatch, whilst the actual primary filters are located within the lazaret. These again deserve a special mention, Sealine fitting double Racor filters to each engine to enable a quick switchover to a second filter should the other require cleaning out; a vacuum gauge is also fitted, indicating when a filter is becoming clogged.

The vessel's bilge is serviced by three submersible, and two manual, pumps.

## Handling & performance

To lend a hand with the slow speed work, the T51 comes with an 8hp bow thruster as standard, while Volvo Penta's EDC electronic controls proved to be well set-up with just a one second delay between nudging the throttle and engine response — an in/out nudge is all it takes with 1200hp on tap.

Once out in the open water we headed for a peculiarly choppy area just to the west of Genoa where the wind funnels through a valley between steep-to hills. The hull was happy to bowl through the slop at any point of encounter, giving a comfortable account of itself with just the odd bit of spray coming aboard as we turned through it, but otherwise remaining dry on straight courses.

The upper helm is comfortable enough, although we felt the wheel could do with being at more of an angle, whilst the power steering on our test boat was still undergoing some teething problems;

Sealine may well revert to an ordinary hydraulic system on future boats and we see no reason why this should not be sufficient.

It was the steering position below that we fancied the most of the two. This is largely due to the fact that it is unusual to find a truly comfortable interior helm. As it is pushed that bit further forward, towards the position you would expect to find on a pilothouse-style cruiser, there is excellent visibility over the bows and round to the quarters.

Our test boat, which was the first off the T51 line, had only logged a few hours and was, we suspect, underpropped. The engines were running ahead of themselves by at least 100rpm, so the maximum speed measured by our radar gun of just over 29 knots can no doubt be improved upon by a knot, possibly more.

Regardless of flat-out performance, most of the time cruisers like this are going to be set up for 20-22 knot cruising. We found that 1800rpm gave us 21.2 knots in a well-mannered fashion with sound levels around the accommodation never more than 80dB(A). Empirical fuel data suggests a cruising consumption of around 28gph (127lph).

## Conclusions

By stretching the superstructure forwards, Sealine have brought new ideas to the 50ft arena.

The T51 almost has a full two-deck feel with generous, well proportioned accommodation. This, coupled with features such as the protected foredeck, will no doubt appeal to the American market, where the company are gaining an increasing following. In fact we would go one stage further by saying that Sealine's new flagship is a 'mid-Atlantic' offering, successfully blending the US penchant for substantial cruising motor yachts with the sleeker styling and performance hull of European flybridge designs.

The fitout is smartly executed and the engineering purposefully solid as befits a boat of this size, whilst the layout in general terms is most successful, our only reservation being the galley. This is well-proportioned and placed, but the detail could do with more attention to make it completely functional.

As for performance, a knot or two more will almost certainly be forthcoming from a change of propeller size, but 29 knots from an 18-tonner barely 24 hours after it has hit the water for the first time is not bad going in any sense.

Best of all, this is a boat that feels it wants to be used by family and guests, with all the practical detail expected from this builder. □



**Top:** twin Racor pre-filters with a changeover valve also come equipped with a vacuum gauge; not only can you switch filters with the engines running if dirty fuels strikes, but you can see when a blockage is looming long before it causes a problem. **Above:** the lazaret entrance into the engine room has a handy-placed fuel management panel located alongside.

## Builders

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Tel: 01562 740900.

# SEALINE T51

**Engines** twin Volvo Penta TAMD122P EDC diesels, 610hp at 2250rpm, 6cyl, 12lt.

**Conditions** wind N Force 3, sea slight. **Load** fuel 30%, water 100%, crew 7.

										sound levels dB(A)				
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	ckpt	flybdg	saloon	fwdcb				
1000	9.6	—	—	—	—	1.5	78	62	71	66				
1200	11.0	—	—	—	—	3.0	79	63	73	67				
1400	13.1	11	50	1.19	428	4.0	80	64	75	68				
1600	17.0	22	100	0.77	277	4.5	82	66	77	70				
1800	21.2	29	132	0.73	262	5.0	83	69	79	73				
2000	24.4	38	173	0.64	230	5.0	84	71	80	76				
2300	29.3	49	222	0.60	216	4.5	86	72	80	78				

**Acceleration** 0-20 knots, 12.2sec (\* estimated with 20% margin)

**Price** from £366,000 ex VAT.

**Loa** 51ft 5in (15.68m)  
**Hull length** 47ft 10in (14.57m)  
**Beam** 15ft 0in (4.58m)  
**Draught** 4ft 5in (1.33m)  
**Air draught** 12ft 6in (3.81m)  
**Displacement** 17.8 tonnes  
**Fuel capacity** 450gal (2045lt)  
**Water capacity** 140gal (630lt)