



which, in conjunction with a pulpit rail that sweeps right aft, making access forward so easy. There's plenty of non slip on the side decks and most of the foredeck, the electric anchor winch is neatly concealed, and the fuel filler sits in its own lidded and self-draining recess, meaning any overspill is contained rather than allowing slippery diesel to coat the side deck.

The practical layout and attention to detail so evident in the cockpit continues down below where the 31 manages to work two very useable sleeping areas, including a separate mid cabin, either end of a large saloon and galley. Bavaria's relentless assault on the sportscruiser market also sees new cabinetry options to go with an obvious step up in overall build quality.

Those high topsides offer masses of headroom, a big skylight provides natural daylight, and neat detailing runs to good solid rails alongside the companionway steps, deeply fiddled shelving beneath eye level saloon lockers, and masses of storage space at the galley. The dinette cuts into the forward double berth to increase seating space but cunningly a section of the backrest flips up to extend the berth at night. The head is big enough to be perfectly functional, although the inevitable lack of space for a separate shower means everything getting wet if you use it as such. The mid cabin wouldn't disgrace a 35ft boat with decent headroom, a settee, plenty of storage and two single berths that infill to create a double.

Performance & handling

So, a lovely big fat cruiser then, plenty of deck space, capacious cabins, and headroom, and all loaded up with extra build quality. With the balance weighted so firmly in favour of accommodation, it's never going to perform at sea is it? How wrong could we be?



PHOTOS: WILLIAM PAYNE

Family size

With wallets squeezed, who wants to buy a 30-footer that's short on space or performance? Good thing the Bavaria Sport 31 has arrived REPORT BY NICK BURNHAM

The brief...

The Bavaria Sport 31 impressed us at the London Boat Show with its spacious interior and massive headroom, but surely that much volume in a 30-footer spells compromise out at sea? With only one way to find out, we head to Southampton to see for ourselves. **Nick**

LOA: 31ft 6in (9.61m)
PRICE: from £134,300 inc VAT
TOP SPEED: 32 knots
BUILDERS:
 Bavaria Yachtbau GmbH
ENQUIRIES
 Tel: 01489 550583
 www.clippemarine.co.uk

In this sensible age of austerity, downsizing is the buzzword of the moment. Smaller cars, smaller houses, smaller incomes, and dare we say it, smaller boats. The thing is we don't want too much compromise to go with our new abstemious on-water ways.

What we want is bigger and better interiors and facilities in smaller boats, and not to the detriment of styling and seakeeping either.

It's against this backdrop that the new Sport 31 enters the fray, looking to pack as much accommodation into a 31ft sportscruiser as feasibly possible. So it's to Bavaria's credit that it has achieved such a high volume hull without losing sight of an essential sportscruiser tenet: sporty appearance. Bavaria's now familiar styling of high topsides and a super-sleek lift of coachroof deliver the all-important interior headroom. The lean, low-profile looks aided and abetted by the long, low, black-framed windscreen and slim forward-facing arch.

Design & build

Unusually for a 30ft boat, Bavaria has fitted a fixed sunpad at the aft end of the cockpit, instead of seating. By keeping it short and overhanging the slim bathing platform, the sunpad keeps intrusion into the cockpit to a minimum, and provides a storage bin underneath that's big enough for a rolled-up inflatable dinghy.

The aft cockpit seat backrest drops forward to extend the sunbed to full length whilst still leaving plenty of seating further forward around the removable cockpit table. Sensibly they've not taken this seating area right to the front of the cockpit, instead finishing far enough back to allow the forward part of the seating to flip over, becoming either an aft facing integral part of the dinette or a proper forward-facing seat alongside the helm area, complete with useful grab rails.

The helmsman is similarly well catered for with an adjustable single bucket helm seat facing an attractively moulded, well laid out dash and tilt adjustable wheel. There's space for a chartplotter display although none for actual charts, as seems to be becoming all too common these days. Aft of the helm, a wet bar takes care of alfresco catering, and back behind that is a particularly nice feature, two large chunky steps leading up to a very generous eight-inch wide side deck



"Bavaria has raised its game of late, taking its interiors upmarket"



Bavaria's rebirth now includes some five new hull designs, we have tested all of them and every one performs incredibly well. The single Volvo D6-370 fitted to this 31ft version keeps both the price and fuel burn down, yet provides ample get up and go.

A top speed of 33 knots will satisfy all but the most ardent speed freaks, with comfortable cruising in the mid to high 20s returning over 2mpg. For those who want more power, there are twin Volvo Penta D3-220s and D4-260s

options available, or even twin V8 petrols if they favour financial immolation.

Regardless of engine choice, what will delight is the handling. Put the helm down hard and the boat banks and tracks with real enthusiasm, throwing itself into the turn in a manner that totally belies its voluminous form. A good driving position and great visibility spur us on as those grab rails in front of the navigator seat come into their own.

Against all our prejudices, after seeing just

how much room they've got into it, the Sport 31 really is a fun drive. Better yet, throw it at some rough stuff and it slices through with total confidence, throwing spray wide and low, keeping the cockpit dry and the crew calm. And it's this factor that really impresses, giving as it does, the ability of the boat to cover ground at speed in conditions you might normally expect to hobble it, giving the helmsman options normally only open to skippers of bigger boats.

VAST MAIN CABIN



CLASS-BEST MID CABIN



Interiors

Walnut finish really whips up the style levels

Bavaria has raised its game of late, taking its interiors decidedly upmarket. The test boat's upgraded walnut cabinetry and leatherette raises the interior ambience considerably. The forward hatch features a neat blind, shading the berth below, but you need to pull the privacy curtains across or that main saloon skylight will wake you at dawn.

Plenty of lockers and shelving mean space for everything. Galley features plenty of stowage, a gas hob, microwave, good sized fridge and a clever refuse bin built into one of the locker doors. Headroom is excellent throughout, and is even pretty good in the mid cabin.



GALLEY STOWAGE



PLENTIFUL LOCKERS

From the helm

Second helm seat arrives, at last

Bavaria has always been a one-helm seat type of builder, so this new flip-over navigator's seat is a major improvement. It looks an expensive option until you see the stainless steel engineering beneath it. The helm itself sports a tilt wheel and angled foot plate with a sliding bucket seat. A lift up bolster enables driving whilst stood and the rubberised top to the windscreen frame makes for a solid handhold.

NOW YOU SEE HER



NOW YOU DON'T



SIMPLE HELM

STOWAGE BOOT



Exterior

Best of both worlds

Wide side decks, hand rails on the radar arch, plenty of non slip, and guardrails that reach not just back to the cockpit, but actually curve around the side deck steps, make the Bavaria safe and confidence-inspiring for even the most nervous crew.

A standard bathing platform is slim enough not to ramp up the berthing fees, but an optional extended platform is available for those that want it. The cockpit wet bar has a sink, but fridge and griddle are, as ever, optional.



BACK REST

DECK ACCESS



ENGINE ACCESS

COCKPIT AFT



COCKPIT FORWARD



Specification & value

The key to the Sport 31 is the fact that it works so well with the single D6-370 diesel. Unless you're desperate to feel a pair of levers under your right palm, it makes little sense to opt for a twin-engine installation costing some £22,701 more. Not only that, having to only buy one big green oily beast has a dramatic effect on the price, the Sport 31 with that D6-370 coming in at a very competitive £140,000 for the basic boat. For a diesel-powered boat with four permanent berths, great headroom and decent seakeeping, that's not a lot of money, especially when a slight step up to a mid 30-footer with the inevitable twin engine installation will take you past £200,000 without even trying.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	31ft 6in (9.61m)
BEAM	10ft 10in (3.31m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 11in (1.21m)
DISPLACEMENT	5.4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	114 gal (520lt)
WATER CAPACITY	33 gal (150lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	8in (20cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 5in (1.96m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 6ft 6in (1.98m x 1.98m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 4ft 8in (1.98m x 1.42m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	Volvo D6-370
Configuration	6 cyl 5.5 litre, 370hp @ 3,500rpm
Conditions	north easterly force 5, sea slight
Load	fuel 90%, water 50%, crew 6

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1000	6.1	1.3	6	4.7	429	70
1500	8	2.2	10	3.6	201	70
2000	10	4.0	18	2.5	228	79
2500	17	6.6	30	2.6	237	79
3000	26	10.3	47	2.5	228	80
3,500	31	16.5	75	1.9	173	80
3,600	32	16.9	77	1.9	173	80

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	£139,899 inc VAT
with Volvo D6-370 EVC	
BOW THRUSTER	£3,234
COCKPIT FRIDGE	£1,272
HULL COLOUR, SILK GREY	£5,100
HARDWOOD COCKPIT FLOOR	£3,240
COCKPIT CAMPER COVER	£4,284
GAS HOB	£912
PORT WINDSCREEN WIPER	£936
DELIVERY UK+ COMMISSIONING	£10,176

BOAT AS TESTED £174,780

Enginebay



Another aft-opening engine hatch, these seem to be all the rage this year – why, we have no idea, as they are a pain to use. The hydraulic lift raises the sun platform and the large locker beneath it leaving a reasonable opening, although we're not sure how you'd lift this if the batteries were flat. It's a scramble to get in so the optional engine room ladder is worth having. With an engine room big enough for twins, there's masses of space on this single installation.

THE VERDICT

The Sport 31 is a boat very much in tune with our times. By packing such great accommodation into such a compact package, it offers most of the benefits of a mid 30ft cruiser with very little compromise, allowing owners to downsize without pain. However that, in itself, is not even the half of it. Where Bavaria have really pulled a big rabbit out of a tiny top hat is in the way that it looks and goes. By incorporating sleek styling and serious offshore capability they've created a sheer TARDIS, offering much of the feel and capacity of a bigger boat not only at a lower purchase price, but with much lower running costs too. Now that's an austerity measure we can all get behind.



Meet the family



Bavaria Sport 34 from £154,800
LOA: 33ft 8in (10.05m)
Bigger 34 adds a separate forward cabin, bigger saloon and more spacious cockpit. Hardtop option available for another £20,400.



Bavaria Sport 28 from £100,800
LOA: 27ft 11in (8.50m)
Scaled down carbon copy on the outside with a similar deck layout. Down below, no forward berth and again, everything scaled back.

The rivals



SeaRay 305 Sundancer from £144,186
An elegant looking and high quality sports cruiser, but lacks the useful separate forward berth of the Bavaria Sport 28.



Jeanneau Leader 9 from £167,964
Hardtop that delivers almost coupe levels of luxury. Below decks, a clever mid cabin and toilet arrangement makes the most of the space. Price is for twin diesel boat.