

BOAT REPORT

Draco

Oceancraft 760/761

*This Norwegian **cuddy-cabin sportscruiser** offers a choice of **outboard or outdrive power**, in the same performance hull.*





Norwegian builders Draco always had a good reputation for well-conceived, high-quality sportscruisers, with plenty of performance allied to conservative fit-out. Unfortunately they went through some tough financial times in the mid-1990s, but they have since been bought out by the same shipping line corporation that also owns Windy. Production has now started of a new line-up of Dracos, ranging from 17ft to 28ft, called Oceancraft.

The onus is more on watersports than ever, with all the boats embracing the walkaround design concept so as to offer as much usable deck space as possible. However, the largest two hulls also benefit from some measure of accommodation, and it is these we decided to investigate more closely.

We were particularly keen to test the 25-footer, not least because it is available either with an outdrive installation, as the 761, or with one of Yamaha's high-performance outboards, as the 760. But we also

sneaked a look at the flagship 845 (see below).

Design & layout

The outboard and outdrive models are basically the same boat, but with a different seating arrangement at the transom. Whereas the 760 sports a simple bench ahead of the motor, the 761's settee effectively stretches into a sunpad over the engine installation.

In the 760, the outboard itself is kept well within the body of the hull,

rather than perched out on the transom. The downside of this is that you lose at least a couple of feet of usable cockpit space, although a plus point is that the area around the outboard well manifests itself as a sizable bathing platform.

The hull is a deep-vee form, with two sets of wide sprayrails. There is also a knuckle immediately above the chine to help push down any creeping spray.

A slight reverse curve in the sheer gives the appearance of a

turn of speed even when the boat is stationary. Careful proportioning of the central helm console has maintained its super-sleek look, rather than interrupting it with any incongruous moulding or a bulky screen.

Engine options

The outboard-powered Oceancraft 760 is offered with a choice of Yamaha two-stroke motors: either a 200hp HPDI (High Pressure Direct Injection), as on our test boat, or the most potent model, a 250hp V6.

The flagship of the new Draco range is based on Hans Johnsen's Windy 28 hull, which was launched last year to much acclaim. The extra 3ft that the 845 has in overall length over the 760 and 761 make it a very different kettle of fish, even if it embraces the same sleek styling.

For one thing, it has a very comfortable and well fitted-out vee-berth cabin, complete with useful galley area and a separate toilet compartment.

Secondly, although it lacks the open-bow seating area, its aft cockpit is more roomy and versatile. The enginebox doubles as a bench seat and a

Both units are very much next-generation outboards, incorporating electronic fuel injection for turn-key starting, smooth running and much better fuel consumption (especially with the HPDI) than previous two-strokes of this size.

An outdrive-powered 761 carries much the same purchase price, as long as you opt for a 250hp Volvo Penta petrol engine. However, for most buyers the prime reason for considering the outdrive option will be to have diesel power, and that means something from a 160hp Volvo Penta KAD32 to a 260hp KAD44, coming with a fairly hefty price premium.

Performance & handling

We took the opportunity to drive examples of both the 760, with a 200hp outboard, and the slightly heavier 761, with a 250hp outdrive.

Both versions gave a good account of themselves, being easy to drive with plenty of grip on the water through turns. Performance was responsive, to say the least,



Bathing platform

Wrapping itself around the engine well on the 760 model, the bathing platform is a good size, with plenty of space for donning skis or clambering aboard after a swim. Deck height is not too high above the waterline, making it easier to

slip in and out of the water. A number of hatches let into the deck offer a modicum of stowage and access to the bilge. They also hide the boarding ladder, which is helpfully positioned directly opposite the walkway to the cockpit. A tow-ring is positioned atop the transom bench.

Helm

Engine instruments and ready-use switches are let into smart, etched stainless steel fascias on the helm console, and there is room to add a few electronic instruments. Annoyingly, however, the GRP moulding does not incorporate any 'bits' trays or cubbyholes to accommodate loose items of personal gear.

Our test boat had a pair of decent-sized bucket seats, which were comfortable and could be adjusted back and forth and in height. Still, we would have preferred the drop-squab type shown in the brochure, simply because it feels more natural to perch



rather than sit on this style of boat.

The screen appears quite small, helping to give the boat its sleek appearance, but nevertheless it does a

reasonable job of protecting those behind it. We like the way a handrail had been sculpted into it, so that wherever you are around the console you can always steady yourself.

Draco

Oceancraft 845



sunpad, and an optional extra centre seat will allow you to create a pleasant dinette.

Also of note is the manner in which the skipper and co-driver sit right inboard, well protected by what is in effect a double wall of gunwale and coaming. For more shelter still, the whole helm position can be covered by

a wheelhouse-type enclosure, made up of a canopy infill between screen and cockpit hoop plus a zip-in piece across the back, which gives full standing headroom. This is literally a boat for all weathers.

The hull slips through the water with consummate ease and good grace, such that

40 knots feels like 30, and similarly at 30 knots you are jogging along so effortlessly that it takes a second look at the GPS to realise what speed you are doing.

All this on a single engine: one boat we trialled had a 330hp Volvo Penta 7.4lt petrol option, the other a 260hp KAD44 diesel. Twin-engine installations are also available.

If the 760/761 is essentially a dayboat, the 845 is something for the weekend, with plenty of sure-footed pace and a smart finish.



Draco Oceancraft 845

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|------------------|---|
| BUILD | glass-reinforced plastic | ENGINE | single Volvo Penta KAD44/DP 6cyl, 3.6lt diesel 260hp at 3900rpm |
| RCD | build category B | PRICE | from £85,747 inc VAT |
| DIMENSIONS | LOA 27ft 9in (8.45m) BEAM 8ft 10in (2.70m) DRAUGHT 2ft 4in (0.72m) DISPLACEMENT 2.3 tons FUEL CAPACITY 80gal (370lt) WATER CAPACITY 20gal (90lt) | SUPPLIERS | Express Cruisers, The Shipyard, Bath Road, Lyminster, Hampshire SO41 3YL. Tel: 01590 673312. |
| | | BUILDERS | Draco Boats International A/S, Skarpnes, Box 40, N-4854 Nedenes, Norway. Tel: +47 37 05 85 55. |



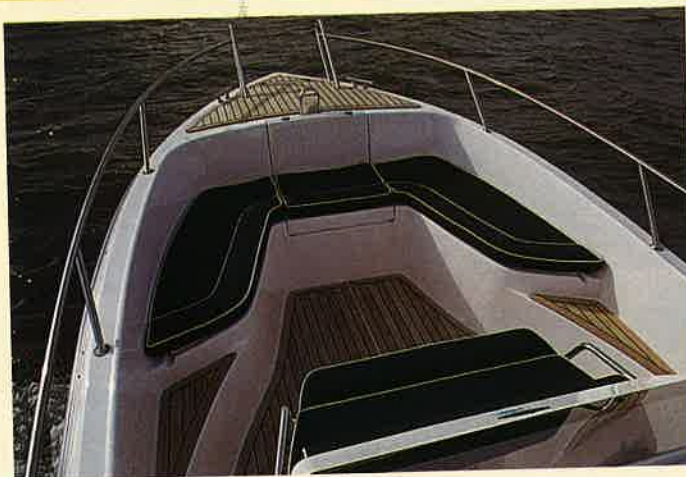
Cockpit

When you look at the boat in profile, it does not appear to have much gunwale height to make the occupants of the forward cockpit area feel secure. Once you are aboard, however, there is more depth here than meets the eye, not least because the coamings are topped off with a useful height of raked guardrail.

That said, it would have been good to find the latter fabrication continuing slightly further aft, so that those sitting on the transom bench could feel better about the lowish freeboard.

On the plus side, the walkways past the helm station on both sides are quite wide enough, and with plenty of grabrails to hand it feels safe to move around while underway. And the gunwale moulding is finished with a teak inset amidships, just where people will step aboard.

U-shaped seating dominates



the forward cockpit, with an extra settee across the front of the helm console making this a convivial area in which to socialise. The only thing missing is a table on which to lay out a picnic, and which could double as an infill to create a sunpad, but we understand that this will shortly find its way into the standard specification. Areas beneath the seat mouldings are painted out as lockers, so there is plenty of stowage.

On the outboard-engined 760, the aft seat is quite upright, albeit well upholstered; on the 761 the backrest can be moved back to form a rather short sunbed. Either way, there is stowage underneath in lined lockers, which also house a manual bilge pump and, on the 760, the oil reservoir.

The raised gunwale across the bow is finished off with a small anchor chain locker, while mooring hardware amounts to half a dozen 9in (18cm) cleats.

with top speeds over 40 knots.

In the 760, we clipped 42 knots flat-out at 5400rpm. At this pace, fuel consumption will be in the region of 15gph (68lph), so you will not want to keep the throttle open for long. However, dropping back to 4500rpm gives a clean, unfussy 33 knots, whereupon the fuel figure is a wholly more manageable 10gph (45lph). Ease back again to 3200rpm, and the hull jogs along at 21 knots.

Again in the 760, we took just 6sec from a standing start to reach 25 knots. From pottering, the hull lifts onto the plane almost without altering trim.

As to handling, the outdrive boat feels slightly heavier and tighter on

the water than the outboard one, but in either case the hull slices cleanly across whatever seas there are. Apart from a few rattles when clipping into the waves head-on, it does not complain or become twitchy when pushed.

Hard turns give a keen inward heel, as one would expect, but nothing which does not feel right or is going to catch anyone out. You would have to work exceptionally hard at getting either the drive or the hull to break out.

We were surprised by the hull's apparent lack of response to engine trim. Even winding the leg of our outboard boat quite far out produced hardly any extra bow-up trim, which can be nice to have in

some situations, especially in an open-bow boat.

The steering system on the outboard boat we tested was hydraulic, and well set-up, making life particularly easy for the skipper. Our only other criticism is that the helm position would really benefit from dropping squab-type seats, even if the wheel and throttle are set at a comfortable height for the bucket seats.

Conclusions

Walkaround layouts offer plenty of useful deck space, and Draco have tackled the concept in a hugely sleek manner with their 760 and 761 models. And their performance matches their appearance.

The accommodation is less of a cabin, or even a cuddy, and more of a changing area, or simply a dry place to store a picnic and spare clothes.

There is no seating as such, just a couple of shallow benches to perch on while changing. That said, the sole does stretch forward quite a way, and it would be possible to sleep here if you need to camp

out for the odd night.

Neither the 760 nor the 761 come with any cooking apparatus or freshwater system, although there is space to tuck away a toilet.

The teak and holly sole adds a touch of warmth, but it is odd that the moulding is finished-off simply with a gel-wash over the fibreglass, rather than being spruced up with a liner.

Draco Oceancraft 760 & 761

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RCD

build category C

DIMENSIONS

LOA

24ft 10in (7.60m)

BEAM

7ft 10in (2.40m)

DRAUGHT

1ft 8in (0.51m)

DISPLACEMENT

2090lb (950kg)

FUEL CAPACITY

44gal (200lt)

ENGINE

single Yamaha HPDI200 outboard 6cyl, 200hp at 5000rpm

or

single Volvo Penta 5.0Gi/DuoProp 5.0lt V8, 250hp at 4500rpm

PRICE

from £43,090 inc VAT for

Oceancraft 760;

from £42,818 inc VAT for

Oceancraft 761

SUPPLIERS

Salterns Brokerage,
Unit 3, Salterns Marina, Lilliput,
Poole, Dorset BH14 8JR.
Tel: 01202 707222.

BUILDERS

Draco Boats International A/S,
Skarpnes, Box 40, N-4854
Nedenes, Norway.
Tel: +47 37 05 85 55.



Our criticisms are niggles: for example that a cockpit table should come as standard, that the transom bench backrest is too upright and that the helm console is lacking in cubbyholes. The cuddy, easy to get to and from, is a useful size even if not a genuine overnight cabin.

Overall, this is a slippery, exciting dayboat for watersportsters, but one which struggles if you try to make more of it. □

Cabin

