

PRINCESS 62 WINDY 26 PRESTIGE 630 USED SEAWARD

MOTORBOAT

MAREX 310 SUN CRUISER

GIANT KILLER

The 31ft star that's as fast as a sportsboat, as versatile as a coupé, as solid as a trawler and better value than any of them!

**FAIRLIE
TARGA**

*Full pics and details
this stunning new*

**UNDERWATER
HULL LIGHTS**

How to fit them properly



INTO THE ICE ZONE

Dodging icebergs, whales and polar bears in a North-Line 42



**CHRISTMAS GIFTS
TO FLOAT YOUR BOAT**



ONLINE
my.com
9 770027 178259

MAREX 310

With quick-witted steering and a speedy turn of pace (plus accommodation of Tardis-like proportions), this Sun Cruiser does a pretty good impression of a sportsboat

Words **Jack Haines** Pictures **Richard Langdon**



Shafts or sterndrives, which are better? This question has prompted debate since Mercury engineer Charlie Strang mated a car engine to the lower unit of an outboard motor back in 1948. There are various arguments for and against both propulsion options but one thing the shaftdrive brigade can't deny is the easy access to a sterndrive if something becomes tangled around the propeller out at sea, something that we (accidentally) put to the test during our sea trial of the Marex 310 Sun Cruiser.

During the performance test, we passed close to what looked like a deflated football floating on the surface of the water. So small was it, and so difficult to pick up amongst the stubby wavelets in Studland Bay, we couldn't perceive that it could possibly be any sort of fishing buoy. Clearly we were naïve to what the local fishing fleet deems an appropriate method of

marking pots because as we rounded it, the revs dropped and the boat lurched briefly before struggling on, heavily laboured by its new appendage. We throttled back and cut the engine before lifting the single sterndrive up to get a closer look. A tangled mass of rope had become entwined tightly around the Duoprop and made a real nuisance of itself.

If this were a shaftdrive boat it would have been game over. There was no mask on board and even if there had been, we didn't much fancy plunging in on a brisk October morning. No, our Botnia Targa chase boat would have been playing tug. But with a combination of a couple of bursts in reverse to untangle the worst of it and some manipulation of the counter-rotating props by hand, we managed to free ourselves and continue with the test.

Undoubtedly Marex decided to use a sterndrive for design and dynamic reasons, but a yard with a such a focus on practical, useable

boatbuilding will be thrilled at this handy by-product of the sterndrive leg. Based on a similar blueprint to the larger 375, the 310 is cockpit focussed and positively ripples with intelligent design solutions. A perfect example is the curtain canopy system that encloses the cockpit in a matter of seconds. The canopies stow in upright lockers beneath the hardtop and slide around on runners to meet in the middle. Close the fore and aft-sliding roofs and you have a fully protected main deck without the hassle of zips, poppers or any real effort.

There's more; the storage beneath the cockpit seating doesn't require you to remove cushions and locker lids because all the lids pop open on twin gas struts to reveal beautifully lined storage voids with their own drain points. The teak decking is thick and substantial, running forward around the side decks to add that extra touch of class and the dinette table, which drops down to create





The angled berth in the forward cabin makes the most of the available floor space by the door



Headroom is tight over the berth but the guest cabin is well designed



Niroxx grey upholstery and top-quality timber in the spacious cockpit



A huge sliding door transforms the galley/lobby area

a sunpad with in-fill cushions, is hewn from teak too and includes solid wood holders at its centre to keep bottles in place.

BELOW DECKS

As good as life is on deck, it's below where the biggest surprises are. When you look at the dimensions of the boat, you assume that there's just about enough space for one decent cabin and a token effort beneath the cockpit that no-one is ever likely to use. Not the case aboard the 310. Key to what makes the accommodation so special is the ingenious door system that grants access to the lower deck. The main sliding hatch is absolutely enormous and extends right up to the base of the windscreen. A sailing boat-style sliding panel then lifts from the deck to meet the hatch and seal off the lower deck completely. But when the hatch is open, because it extends so far forward, the aperture above is huge and leaves no obstructions overhead to stop natural light from pouring through the windscreen and open sunroof down into the galley/lobby area. The feeling of space is astonishing and because the galley is only a couple of steps down from the main deck, it's still perfectly easy for the people in the galley to involve themselves in the conversation on deck. Sensibly, the designers haven't tried to cram a small fridge beneath the counter but instead installed a large top-loading cooler in the footwell of the navigator seat. It's still within easy

reach of the galley but also slightly closer to the cockpit if you need to grab supplies from the dinette. This also leaves space within the galley unit itself for an impressive amount of storage with both eye-level lockers and soft-closing drawers below to swallow all manner of kitchen equipment.

Three chunky doors with frosted glass panes lead to the master cabin forward, amidships guest cabin and bathroom in between. The master cabin is located in the bow and again, Marex's clever packaging makes the most of available space. The bed is mounted at an angle, which forces the person sleeping on the inside to clamber over the person on the outside to get out, but also means there's enough space to stand and change next to the bed without stooping. It's amazing how much headroom there is in the cabins and bathroom, the smartest trick being that the 310 doesn't look tall from the outside. Though there is a good amount of natural light thanks to those stylish hull windows and a hatch in the deck above, the master lacks hanging storage and has to make do with a series of eye-level cubbies.

The compromise in the guest cabin is the other way around in that it does get some hanging storage, but headroom over the bed is far more restricted than in the master due to it being tucked beneath the cockpit. That being said, it's still just about possible to sit up in bed and there are thoughtful touches



The driving environment of the Sun Cruiser is excellent – symptomatic of a boat that is built to be used like a car and driven all year round

like a small perch to sit and put socks or shoes on and reading lights on bendy stalks.

The surprises continue in a bathroom that has plentiful headroom and natural light thanks to a wedge-shaped window and slim opening port. There is a proper wall-mounted showerhead too and a curtain to prevent the whole bathroom from getting a soaking. The materials in here are top notch, including attractive Corian surfaces and more warm teak.

OUT ON THE WAVES

At the helm, the sterndrive that saved us earlier makes for an engaging and lively driving experience. The 310 Sun Cruiser is far from an out-and-out sportsboat but a brisk 35-knot turn of pace and quick-witted steering mean it does a pretty good impression of one. We had the top-spec Volvo Penta D6 370hp fitted to our test boat and with the weight of that in the engineroom, the 310 needs a decent portion of tab (or in this case, interceptors) at slower speeds to keep the bow down. We're talking displacement speeds here – once on the plane, the boat settles down into a nice, natural attitude, though some tab to get the forefoot cutting through the chop as cleanly as possible

is welcome. You can save yourself around £12,000 if you opt for the D4 300hp engine instead and performance will still be perfectly good, but for those who want the extra zip of the D6, it's a fine match for the 310.

The driving environment of the Sun Cruiser is excellent – symptomatic of a boat that is built to be used like a car and driven all year round. The helm has space for two, albeit on a cosy bench, and a dash layout that is ergonomically brilliant. The driving position when seated is superb and all switches and functions fall within very easy reach. It's not a helm that drips with style but it's functional and incredibly effective. The one fly in the ointment makes itself apparent when you stand and find the lip of the sunroof digging into the back of your head. This is an issue on hull number one, which is officially a prototype, though it doesn't feel like one – and will be amended on future boats. Similarly, the yard plans to add some reinforcement to the structural surround of the aft sunroof and some curved handholds to help traverse the bathing platform and side decks.

These tweaks aside, there really is very little to criticise the 310 for. There are cheaper



A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

NAVIGATOR'S SEAT

The optional (£984) Niroxx grey cockpit upholstery looks and feels like top-notch quality and adds some real class to the cockpit. Both helm seats are trimmed in it and combined with their supportive shape and comfortable bases make for some of the best seats you will sit in.



WONDERFUL WOODWORK

Be it the chunkiness of the doors, the dark hue of the teak decking or the solid wood bottle slots on the cockpit table, the quality of the timber on the 310 is outstanding. To see this on a boat twice the size (and price) is one thing but here it really sets the boat apart from mass-produced rivals.



CLEVER COVERS

A brilliant bit of design that has been brought over from the 375 whereby the aft-cockpit covers stow in the hardtop mouldings and slide around like curtains to meet in the middle and seal off the cockpit. Neat, fuss free and quick, this is an excellent alternative to the finger-busting hell of poppers and zips.



ENGINEROOM

Access is via a hatch in the cockpit sole. With the table and cushions in place, there is enough room to lift the hatch up for a quick peek but for deeper investigation, the dinette cushions need to be removed to allow space for the table when the hatch is fully open. As you can see, insulation is generous.





The cockpit design is as sensible and practical as it is comfortable. The bench lids lift to reveal beautifully lined, easily accessed storage bins



The seated driving position on the twin bench is very comfortable, with only a small amount of trim needed to maintain a level attitude at slower speeds

One major change for the production run will be stopping the lip on the sunroof from impacting standing headroom

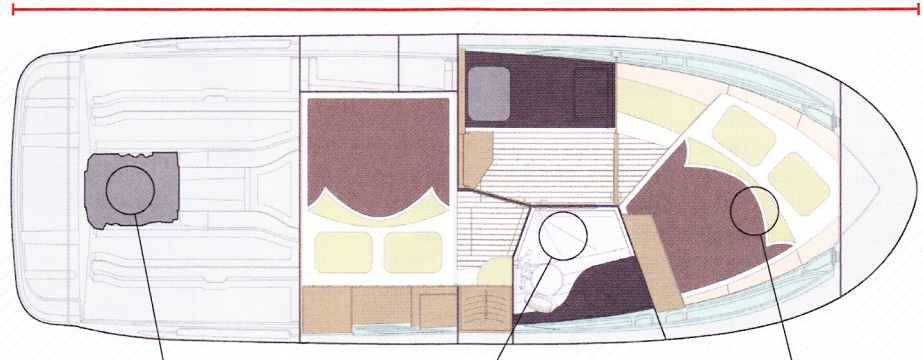


This part of the superstructure felt flimsy on the prototype and will be beefed up for the production version

THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 31ft 0in (9.46m)

BEAM 10ft 6in (3.22m)



For inland work, Marex will fit a Volvo Penta D3 at the request of a customer

The bathroom is a real treat with far more headroom than you would expect and a proper shower

Though there is no hanging storage, the amount of headroom and light is great

- FUEL CAPACITY**
97 imp gal (440 litres)
- WATER CAPACITY**
62 imp gal (280 litres)
- DRAUGHT**
3ft 2in (0.97m)
- RCD CATEGORY**
B for 8 people
- DESIGNERS**
Marex
- DISPLACEMENT**
4.5 tonnes

The ease with which the Marex 310 transforms from open sun-soaked dayboat to winter dasher is one of its key charms

30-footers coming out of France and Germany but none of them can touch the Norwegian boat when it comes to quality. If you take more direct rivals like the Nimbus 305 Drophead and Aquador 30 ST, though they both have their own merits, neither compares to the 310 when it comes to accommodation and space.

You might have thought that the weak pound would make these a tough sell in the UK but dealer Wessex Marine sold three 310s during the Southampton Boat Show, proving that the pricing of this particular model is just as appealing as the boat itself.

Unlike some 30ft craft, it doesn't feel like everything has been scaled down to fit the required size and price. The quality still shines through and, along with the brilliant packaging

and smart design, makes it feel far bigger than it actually is. Honestly, if this is classed as a prototype, I would love to see what a production version looks like.

The solid build and practical detailing also ensure this is a boat that can be used all year round. The ease with which it transforms from open sun-soaked dayboat to well-protected winter dasher is one of its key charms. If you fancy a blast to the pub in January then keep the covers up, turn the key and go, but all of those covers peel back to unearth a brilliant warm-weather dayboat. That is, of course, if you're happy to have stern drives, but that argument is for another day. **IMBY**
Contact Wessex Marine. Tel: +44 (0)1202 700702. Web: www.marex.no

THE HELM VIEW



Flat, teak-laid decks look fantastic and feel very safe when crewing on the bow

SEE THE VIDEO



mby.com/marex310

Extremely thin mullions help to keep the view forward as clear as possible

It's good to see these analogue dials for quick reference when you're on the move

The helm is beautifully clear and a joy to use. Not overly flash but it just works

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES

Volvo Penta D6 370. Single 370hp @ 3,500rpm.
6-cylinder, 5.5-litre diesels

FIGURES	ECO							FAST	MAX
	RPM	1,300	2,000	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000		
Speed	7.9	12.6	20.3	25.3	25.3	29.4	31.7	35.1	

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)

	66	71	74	76	77	78	85	86
Helm	66	71	74	76	77	78	85	86
Cockpit	74	75	82	87	87	89	89	90

Speed in knots. Calculated figures taken from on-board fuel gauges; your figures may vary considerably. No fuel figures available at the time of testing. F1 and calm seas for trial. All prices include VAT @ 20%

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from £199,950
Price as tested £233,124

Bow thruster	Std
Teak cockpit	Std
Electric anchor winch	£5,520
Courtesy lights on deck	£576
Sunpad cushions for foredeck	£1,194
Teak side decks	£7,140
Diesel heating	£3,540
TV antenna and sockets	£738
Niroxx grey upholstery in cockpit	£984
Netex grey dashboard	£936

= Options on test boat

RIVALS

Nimbus 305 Drophead

Price from £186,023

Not as exciting to drive as the 310 but beautifully made with a safe semi-displacement hull.

Buy the test: mby.com/dh

Aquador 30 ST

Price from £209,684

A well-built and handsome boat with a raft of engine options. Not as spacious as the 310 but a talented performer.

