

bella italia





Sessa 35

BY STUART REININGER

SESSA MARINE IS A FAMILY-OWNED

Italian builder that's been making fine cruisers since 1958. The Sessa line ranges from an open 25 to a 52-foot sport yacht, although most boaters in the U.S. haven't seen these models in their local ports. Sessa just recently began distributing in North America. One of the first models to hit our shores is the C 35, and it's making a big splash. This is an upscale, express-style yacht that's catching the eyes of experienced boaters with a taste for fine machinery.

In addition to its obvious Mediterranean heritage (note the curvaceous lines, the swept-back windshield and radar arch), the C 35 sports a pair of Volvo Penta diesel sterndrives. This is interesting propulsion on a midsize express because many boats of this type more often have inboard or V-drive power. However, it was difficult for me to perceive a big difference in performance on the C 35. There were times when I felt as if I was driving a boat with a pair of deep-biting inboards under the hatch.

I ran the Sessa in late February off Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., where the ocean had built to a sharp chop driven by a northerly that had been howling for three days. I've unhappily weathered conditions like these in other sterndrive-powered boats of lesser mettle. The Sessa, though,



SESSA 35

SPECIFICATIONS

BASE PRICE (w/TEST POWER):
\$268,000

LOA: 35'0"

BEAM: 11'16"

FUEL: 132 gals.

WATER: 63 gals.

TEST POWER: (2) 260-hp Volvo
Penta D4 diesel stern drives
turning a G8 DuoProp set
through a 2:1 reduction.

PERFORMANCE

RPM	MPH	KNOTS	DB-A
900	8.2	7.1	70
1200	10.4	9.0	77
1500	13.2	9.7	79
1800	14.1	12.2	84
2100	15.4	16.0	86
2400	16.0	22.6	84
2700	16.0	31.3	85
3000	11.0	35.6	86
3200	42.0	36.5	86

Speeds measured by GPS
in the Atlantic Ocean off Ft.
Lauderdale, Fla., in 17-mph
winds and four-foot seas with
two people aboard, 3/4 fuel and
no water.

Sessa Marine
www.sessamarine.com

gambled through that stop, and with more finesse than other boats with V-drives I've run. When she slammed into the seas there was no pounding. When surfing downwind and running in troughs, there was just a bit of fishtailing and she skittered along the crests on occasion, but the Sessa produced no chine walking, and handling was sure, even in the lumpy conditions. I attribute that solid performance to the C 35's hefty displacement (dry weight is 13,668 pounds), generous beam and a sharp entry that flattens quickly to a moderate-V hull with 18 degrees of transom deadrise. Pair that running bottom with Volvo's Ocean Series DuoProp drives and you have a happy marriage of hull and powertrain.

For access to the Volvo iron, Sessa installed a ram-supported cockpit hatch over the engine room, where there's plenty of space for servicing. Dedicated hatches cover tankage, wiring and plumbing, too. Wiring and plumbing, incidentally, are meticulously installed.

The Sessa's topside layout reflects its status as a well-made express cruiser from an experienced builder. There's plenty of upholstered seating and a choice of sunpads. A built-in cockpit refreshment center has a surprisingly spacious icebox, prep area and stainless sink,

all within reach for the passengers lounging nearby. The hefty stainless steel-rimmed windshield is impressive; two solid supports serve as handrails for passengers stepping through the opening portion. There's another dedicated rail parallel to the companionway hatch. That's a thoughtful installation, as it can be a long fall if you lose your footing while climbing up to the walk-through.

You can also access the foredeck from the sidedecks; they're narrow but rails are usually within reach. The foredeck, which is relatively wide and flat and covered with a deep diamond-cut nonskid, can effectively serve as a social hangout. There are two molded recesses for the upholstered sunpads, but get the pads below when the boat is under way because they won't stay in place at speed. Farther forward, a positive-locking hatch covers the chain locker and the windlass. A neat, teak-planked seat is built into the bow pulpit.

Don't expect the integrated swim platform to serve as more than a swim platform. It's a bit narrow for a PWC or a big watertoy. The hefty, four-rung swim ladder has its own hatch and can easily be deployed by a swimmer.

One of the boat's most innovative features is the aft cabin. On most express cruisers it's

SOCIAL SPACE: The salon and galley are on the same level to create one big entertaining space (below). To port of the companionway, a door leads to a private aft cabin, one of the most unique features on this express cruiser.



a cave-like area tucked behind the companionway steps, a place where gear gets stowed and kids are forced to endure time-outs. Access here, however, is to port through a locking door that leads to a small foyer with seating. But this entry area, which includes shelving and stowage niches, is significant. It means the aft cabin is much more than a berth made up from a sofa or a table.

The aft cabin is an actual stateroom that affords a level of privacy and comfort rarely seen in this size cruiser. Another neat piece of engineering is the private entrance from the aft cabin to the boat's single head/shower compartment. Another door allows passengers to enter the head from the salon.

The salon is dominated by a huge settee. It faces a handcrafted table that folds down to form a double berth when the sofa is pulled out. The galley with stainless steel accents is on the same level so the cook can work and socialize with guests. The forward master cabin has a pedestal-style double berth, shelving, a hanging locker, a seating area and privacy curtain.

Overall, the Sessa C 35 is a fine cruiser with many yacht-like qualities. There's a level of craftsmanship and attention to detail that's refreshing in a boat this size. The price you pay for that is \$268,000 with the Volvo diesel sterndrives, but for many boaters, the fit and finish are worth it. Plus, driving the Sessa is sheer pleasure. ☼

HOT

- 1 Effortless hike shots with adjustable bow rise make for great sight lines at all times.
- 2 High deck cleats make it possible to wrap a line well.
- 3 Piced bow rails are easier to replace if damaged.
- 4 Single electronic shift/throttle makes maneuvering easier.

NOT SO HOT

- 1 The beauty interior or needs a few sturdy handrails to keep the crew steady when the boat is under way.
- 2 Back to the drawing board for sunpad straps; heads are hard to secure and remove.

PEER GROUP



AEGL 37

■ ■ ■ This well-appointed cruiser comes with many standards, including A/C and windlass. Price is \$301,919 with 260-hp Volvo D4 diesel sterndrives.



CRANCHI 32

■ ■ ■ The Cranchi Zaffiro is another beautifully appointed Italian express cruiser priced at \$219,306 with twin 260-hp Volvo D4 VC Duoprop sterndrives.



SEARAY 34

■ ■ ■ This Sundancer is available with V-drive or stern-drive power. Price is \$275,915 with twin 375-hp MerCruiser 496 Magnum Bravo Three sterndrives.