

Sargo 28 Explorer

BOAT TEST

Length (LOA): 8.8m / 28ft 8in

Beam: 2.98m / 9ft 8in

Displacement: 4200kg

Fuel Capacity: 375 litres

Water Capacity: 100 litres

RCD Category: B

Engine as tested:

Single Volvo Penta D6 370hp

Other engine options:

Single Volvo Penta D4 260hp or 300hp,

D6 330hp, Yanmar V8 370hp

or twin Volvo Penta D3 220hp

*Price from **£161,874***

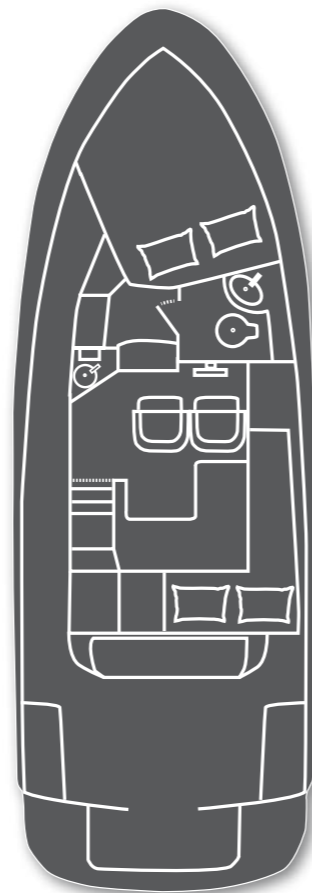




I have always had a bit of a thing for wheelhouse walkaround boats; they just seem to make so much sense for British boating. I think it all started around the turn of the century when I was a guest at Finnboat, Finland's boatbuilding showcase, and I took the helm of what was to become one of my top 10 boats, the Botnia Targa 31.

So here I was, 14 years later, back at Finnboat. In front of me was a boat very similar in many ways to the Targa, but arguably much more contemporary. The boat in question was the Sargo 28 Explorer. Not heard of it? That's possibly because until that very morning, when an official announcement was made, the brand was known as Minor Offshore. The 28 is not a new boat, but the 'Explorer' part of its name is a new concept, available on the four most popular models, the 25, 28, 31

and 36. The Explorer offers styling upgrades designed to appeal to the next generation of boat owner. The list of variations between the standard 28 and the Explorer version are many, but after looking at the pictures you won't be surprised to hear that around 90% of the quite long list have the words black, grey or glass associated with them. If you think boats should be all white and navy blue, look away now. In fact



don't look away, because Sargo also offer a standard 28, which delivers an identical package with a more traditional use of colours and materials.

There's no doubt you are looking at an Explorer model as soon as you set eyes on it. The matt black rails instead of shiny stainless steel, the grey hull and wheelhouse roof edging, it's even got a matt black radome on the roof. I'm usually quite conservative when it comes to styling, but personally I really like what Sargo has done with the Explorer and, for those that like to be different, I have no doubt that it really will appeal.

One of the benefits of a boat like a Sargo is its deck space. Yes you have to sacrifice some internal volume, but for those that understand that boating isn't really all about semi naked ladies lounging on sun pads, the deck space offers a perfect working area. The side decks are very wide, one level and deep, with the bulwarks coming up to knee height, with a rail on top for added safety. A gap in the rails amidships offers an alternative to the bathing platform as a way of getting on board, and an optional small folding step on the inside, helps with what would otherwise be quite a big step down.

Up front, in true Scandinavian style, there is further access over the bow by stepping over the teak laid anchor locker lid, beneath which is a decent sized space for all your anchoring kit. At the aft end, things are just as practical. The large aft cockpit sole lifts almost completely to reveal the engine room. Our test boat was fitted with the largest single engine option, a Volvo Penta D6 370hp, but the boat is also available with twin D3 220hp. With such a large engine hatch, access to the mechanicals, particularly on the single engine boat, is very good. The

“If you think boats should be all white and navy blue, look away now”

downside is that the hatch is quite awkward to lift, as there is very little space left to stand on. In each aft corner there is a useful rope locker that can also double up as a seat. On the aft end of the wheelhouse there is another teak topped bench seat, which conceals a very useful locker below, perfect for storing fenders or other mooring kit.

The easiest access onto the 28 is via the bathing platform. A metal transom gate, in matt black of course, allows access into the cockpit, with just two very small steps to negotiate. The bathing platform itself is large and offers teak middle sections that



The Sargo 28 offers easy boarding from the stern and a host of practical features



The galley and dinette in the wheelhouse separates the two double cabins at either end



The forward cabin has en-suite facilities



lift to provide some access to the drives and props when they are lifted. Two matt black fender baskets on the aft rail provide a convenient place for four of your fenders. The stern anchor, as fitted to our test boat, does somewhat get on the way, but as this is unlikely to find its way onto a UK spec boat,

this is not really an issue.

Access to the boat's accommodation is through a sliding door on either side of the wheelhouse. These doors come with a really simple mechanism that locks them closed or just slightly open. A nicely crafted piece of wood locks over the door handle, it's

simple, elegant and practical. There did not appear to be anyway of fixing the door in the fully open position, which is what you would want on a nice day. This seems like a very easy fix, and one that I am sure the dealer would do for you if required.

From the wheelhouse there are three steps down into the forward cabin, which offers an offset double berth. Beneath the aft end of the berth the mattress lifts to access a storage compartment, and under the forward end of the berth another panel provides access to the bilge. At the foot of the bed is a small standing area with 6 foot headroom, although the lip of the moulding overhead reduces this by a couple of inches in parts. Further storage is provided by a small hanging locker and

cupboard on the port side aft. With the companionway shut for privacy, the only light and ventilation into the forward cabin is provided by the overhead hatch. This, together with the dark wood and materials, means it can feel a little sombre. While the cabin is quite compact, you have to remember that this boat is only 28 feet and a great deal has been given over to usable outside space. Considering this, and the fact there is still so much more of the interior to discover, it is amazing just how much Sargo has squeezed in.

Just off the forward cabin, to starboard, you'll find the toilet compartment. Headroom is a little tight, at between 5ft 7in and 5ft 9in depending upon where you stand, but overall the space is pretty good.



The aft cabin delivers a good sized berth, but with limited headroom





PERFORMANCE
As tested 75% fuel, 40% water, 2 crew, Force 1
These fuel figures are calculated using generic data and may not provide an accurate representation of fuel usage for this combination

RPM	Knots	LPH	GPH	MPG	Range (nm)	Noise (dB)
Idle	4.0	2.1	0.46	8.70	717	62
1000	6.6	4.0	0.88	7.50	619	64
1500	8.4	14.0	3.08	2.73	225	72
2000	12.0	32.0	7.04	1.71	141	75
2500	21.5	37.0	8.14	2.64	218	79
3000	30.0	54.0	11.9	2.52	208	81
3500	37.1	78.0	17.2	2.16	178	82

Our test boat was fitted with a sink and toilet; a shower is an optional extra.

Back up in the wheelhouse, you find a galley forward and to port, beneath the windscreen. It's a reasonably basic arrangement, with a small sink and two-burner hob, but it does come with some useful storage both above and below, and a built in rubbish bin. A fridge is located beneath the helm seats behind you as you stand at the galley.

At the aft end of the wheelhouse Sargo has designed a comfortable U-shaped seating and dinette area. The area looks large enough for a family of four, although the table leg position will probably mean someone having a slightly less comfortable

dinner. On the aft wheelhouse bulkhead there is a large opening window that flips up underneath the cockpit overhang to provide plenty of fresh air, regardless of what the weather is doing. Blinds are fitted to all windows aft of the sliding wheelhouse doors which provide a good degree of privacy when moored stern to. Storage in the wheelhouse is limited to some open space beneath and next to the dinette seating on the starboard side and a high level shelf aft.

The really clever part of this boat can be



Engine options start with a single D4 260 and go up to a pair of D3 220's. Top speeds range from 30 to 39 knots



“It feels like a sportsboat. The D6 370hp gives lively acceleration and a top speed of 37 knots”

found by lifting the port side section of the U-shaped dinette seating. It hinges up on a gas strut and the forward bulkhead suddenly turns into a door. You now have in front of you a couple of steps that lead down into another completely separate cabin with a large double berth. It's a bit of a squeeze to get down there and, once in, headroom is very limited at a little over 5ft, but for an occasional guest cabin or somewhere for the kids to retreat to, it is ideal. There is a single opening port to offer some light and ventilation and a small cupboard, cubby-hole and shelf provide some storage, as well as access to bilge and services.

At the helm Sargo have installed two very comfortable, adjustable and supportive seats and I have to say, the driving position is

excellent. It is very rare to find a boat that offers a really good driving position both standing and seated, but the 28 does just that. This is helped by the sliding seat and lifting bolster, but the pièce de résistance is the way that a whole section of the dashboard, complete with steering wheel, throttles, trim tab and bow thruster controls, swings up for perfect positioning when standing. Both the helm and the navigator seats come with separate footrests for when seated, and the large sliding sunroof overhead, which can be locked open, partially open or closed, allows fresh air and light into the boat when the weather allows. Overhead, large, clear engine instruments and a VHF have been mounted above the helm.

Underway

Sargo tell us they have worked hard on soundproofing and it is clear that it has paid off. The figures speak for themselves, but you don't need a sound meter to appreciate it. It really does seem quiet at all speeds. What is always surprising when jumping in a boat like this, is that it drives like a sportsboat. The 370hp D6 offers very lively acceleration and a top speed of a tad over 37 knots. The twin D3's are said to be good for 39 knots. You can throw it into corners and it simply responds to the command with no fuss and no evidence that it is ever likely to get out of shape. The steering wheel knob is great for quick changes in direction either at speed, or more likely when docking, and throwing the boat into the huge wake produced by our photo boat did little to upset the hull or cause much in the way of slamming. In fact, this boat was so much fun to drive, I found myself looking for wake and waves on the otherwise very calm and flat water. When we did find some, and I managed to really stuff it into them, the flared bow swept the water away, with very little making it onto



Your crew will love you for providing side, fore and aft decks that are so easy and safe to work

the windscreen. As already mentioned the driving position is superb, the helm seat is utterly comfortable and visibility is good, with just a couple of small blind spots on the aft quarters. I could find just one very minor niggle with the helm. When standing, and with the console swung upwards, the steering wheel slightly obscures the multi function display, but I really am nit picking here.

Conclusion

In the UK, the Sargo has lived in the shadow of the Botnia Targa for quite a while and, having now been on one,

that feels rather unjust. It is an equally impressive boat to drive, and offers just as practical a package. If contemporary is your thing you might even say that the Explorer has an edge over the Botnia in the styling department. If you are more traditional, the standard 28 will almost certainly appeal. Yes the cabins are a bit small and access to the toilet compartment for those in the aft cabin means a trip to the forward cabin, but you have to remember that this is a 28 foot boat that manages to offer two separate cabins, full walk around decks and a fully enclosed wheelhouse in a package that is great fun to drive and very sea worthy.

Ten years ago I thought I'd struggle to



Comfortable, supportive and adjustable seats

find a boat to top the Targa 31 in my affections. It may not be quite as big, but the Sargo 28 is right up alongside it in my books, and I can't think of any higher praise.

ENQUIRIES: Marco Marine Tel: 02380 453245 www.marcomarine.co.uk

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE



Nordstar Patrol 28

Another wheelhouse walk around from Finland. The Patrol 28 is also available with a flybridge. Price excludes delivery to the UK

LOA: 9.3m
Beam: 3.1m
Displacement: 4300kg
Enquiries: Nord Star UK
01259 211662
www.nordstar.co.uk
PRICE from £145,243



Botnia Targa 27.1

The starting price is attractive, but add the toilet module, galley and delivery to the UK and it's on a par with the 28.

LOA: 8.9m
Beam: 3.04m
Displacement: 3900kg
Enquiries: Wessex Marine
01202 700702
www.wessexmarine.co.uk
PRICE from £143,940



Sargo 28

If the matt black and grey of the Explorer range is not for you. The standard 28 serves up a more traditionally styled boat.

LOA: 8.8m
Beam: 2.98m
Displacement: 4200kg
Enquiries: Marco Marine
02380 453245
www.marcomarine.co.uk
PRICE from £154,570

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