



review

**Riviera  
395 SUV**

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**KEVIN GREEN AND RIVIERA**

# STYLISH SPORTSTER

Sports utility cruisers can be likened to the hot hatchbacks of the boat world. They have to work hard for their money.





T

he busy sports cruiser category is not for the unimaginative builder. A large flotilla of competitors await – British, Italian, American and many others. So it's a hot category, and the temperature's hottest in the 40-foot zone.

These are transition boats for the mass-production builders and, for the premium market ones like Australia's credentialled Riviera, it's the entry-level model. Riviera has built around this 43-foot size before but the market has moved on significantly since then because of mass-produced competitors snapping from below and premium market competitors pushing hard from above to add value.

This means that differentiators are perhaps becoming more difficult as common components, such as the Volvo IPS pod drives on this Riviera 395 SUV and its competitors, show.

Using the car analogy again, some of the key selling points include a big boot (aft cockpit), being quick at the traffic lights

(to pull a skier out) and sharp handling for easy parking. Other niceties are plenty of usable deck space to be mothership for the water toys in sheltered bays while also pulling enough horsepower to blast offshore for the weekend.

In between there must be liveability at the anchorage, so enough comforts to keep the adults happy yet not be overly complicated or high maintenance as busy owners only want to jump on and blast off.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The open-plan two-cabin Riviera 395 SUV has the specifications to accomplish this well, including a base price on par with several competitors, so I thought it best to find what lay under the bonnet myself.

Aesthetics can make or break the deal for many prospective owners in this category, but for others – and this is where downsizing Riviera owners come in – it must still look like a Riviera. The 395 SUV accomplishes this by continuing



**RIGHT** A luxurious, well-padded settee wraps around the solid timber saloon table.

**FAR RIGHT** From helm station to bathroom, the 395 carries the same immaculate presentation.

**BOTTOM** With galley views like this, concentrating on the cooking might be difficult.



the curved profile of its larger siblings and those undulating hull windows, which definitely makes it look like Riviera, albeit in a fairly compact package.

The newly-designed hull contains the requisite high volume for living below decks and enough flare in the bows to be seaworthy while giving the owner sufficient elbow room in his suite. Other key design points that differentiate a Riviera from, say, European competitors, are the wise use of bulkheads and overhangs to protect you from the harsh southern hemisphere sun.

Water access is another major requirement, as is dockside convenience, and the latter proved fine as I stepped aboard from the pontoon on Australia's Gold Coast where hull number-two gleamed white in the midday sun. The wide swim platform can house a bunch of kids fishing while dad operates the transom barbecue and there is still enough room for the inflatable to be stacked outside against the 316 stainless handrail.





Under that barbecue is a lazaretto to take the deflated dinghy as well.

Stepping into the vast cockpit reveals the corner seating and dining table with bar fridge nearby. Also nearby is the starboard side Volvo IPS joystick control for those tight marina berthing situations. Most of this area is snug under the fibreglass saloon extension and side windows give plenty light and vision.

Al fresco diners can easily reach in through the large opening window to their counterparts at the inside dinette, perhaps where the parents are enjoying a glass or two while the kids mess about in the cockpit area. This is where fuss-free surfaces are needed so simple bare fibreglass flooring (with synthetic teak options) and a vinyl sole in the saloon will withstand a spilt Coke and the substantial saloon door lip prevents sea water entry into the single level inside/outside area.

Given that anchoring is major part of this style of boat, Riviera has ensured that the rode is adequate for all conditions thanks to a deep chain locker that avoids chain build-ups and an oversize electric Muir windlass/capstan with manual override and 35lb anchor.

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- Inflation bellows • Service/repair kit



### Model range –

	710	860	901	1001	1101
Length	2.4	2.6	2.74	3.10	3.48
Beam	1.32	1.42	1.50	1.64	1.65
Weight	28 kg	32 kg	39 kg	50 kg	52 kg
Air Chambers	2	2	2	3	3
Payload	270 kg	360 kg	450 kg	540 kg	630 kg
Max HP	6 S	8 S	9 S	15 S	25 S

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### Model range –

	710	860	901
Ext. Length	2.4	2.6	2.74
Ext. Beam	1.32	1.42	1.50
Gross Weight	26 kg	29 kg	30 kg
Air Chambers	2	2	2
Payload	270 kg	360 kg	450 kg
Max HP/Shaft	4 S	5 S	8 S

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Then it's time to kick-back on the double sun-pad and slip a few coldies into the drinks holders. Guests can safely join you by holding onto the tall 316 stainless handrails when moving forward. Equally good is the large cleating midships and all round should you go alongside the fuel dock.

The saloon is airy and open thanks to vertical bulkheads, large opening side windows and a stylish visor over the front to shade the instrumentation. Access is good via the uncluttered corridor through to the portside steering console with double lounge bench behind it and opposite is the starboard galley. It's sensibly located towards the back so adjoining the aft deck.

This is similar to some other marques but what differentiates Riviera is the detailing. So there are sturdy longitudinal handrails, Sunbrella soft furnishings and light oak wood, plus strong stainless fixings on doors and cupboards. These are built to last, so maintain the value of your asset should you ever sell. Other quality touches include the double







**ABOVE & LEFT** The flow between cockpit and saloon is seamless. On balmy nights al fresco dining is compulsory, with much of the fare served straight from the transom BBQ.

**BOTTOM** If it's solitude and peace you want, retire to the foredeck. If you ask nicely, the skipper will serve the G&Ts.

leather helm bench and an ergonomic leather fascia with Garmin instrumentation.

There's twin 12-inch screens for navigation and a central one for the Volvo engine controls. All other systems are managed by the New Zealand-made Czone digital bus screen and controls. Error finding is a major advantage with these digital bus systems so any problems show on the screen.

Traditionalists will appreciate the chunky buttons for repetitive controls such as wipers, lights, horn and so on while the kids can pump up the volume of the Fusion hi-fi that's piped throughout the 395. The galley is modest but sufficient – reflecting the day use and weekender general clientele for this boat.

There's a deep sink, single electric hob and microwave convection oven – the latter two appliances require the 7 KVA Onan generator to run. Cooking needs to be a stationary affair as there's no fiddles to prevent spillage. On the plus side there's energy-efficient double drawer refrigeration and for the non-perishables, overhead lockers.

### THREE-BED CABIN

A wide central corridor beside the helm leads down below where the single bathroom is starboardside behind the owner's bow cabin and the midships guest one. The large bathroom has dual access so the second door leads to the owner's



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berth. In here volume is high as the tall topsides create an airy space, accentuated by the man-sized opening skylight but the elongated side windows are a wee bit small.

But the open skylight should draw in enough air flow to make those tropical anchorages bearable without the rumble of the aircon and genset combo. Bedtime should be peaceful as the queen-sized semi-island bed has steps alongside and an innerspring mattress that felt substantial when I put my own derriere on it as I clicked on the bulkhead television and reclined.

Thanks to IPS pods there's no bow thruster to disturb my reverie so plenty under-bed space for storage with four large drawers for his and hers. Typical of Riviera, lockers are at premium all round this suite with a tall wardrobe, overhead lockers and shelf space.

The 395 shows good versatility in the guest cabin because it has three beds across its midships layout, ideal for a gaggle of teenagers, or two of the beds can become a double with an infill. Being under the saloon sole, height is obviously restricted but padded headboards should minimise the bumps.

Hull windows on each side reduce that claustrophobic feeling, along with opening portholes (with alarms wired to the helm). There's room for a TV on a bulkhead, vanity table and under-bed storage along with cupboards; so more than enough for a long weekend.

In the bathroom, the most striking feature is its elongated window angled down towards the ocean which means users have this kaleidoscopic feeling as they use the separate shower unit or stand at the vanity sink. Moulded tiles are sure underfoot yet give a quality touch and should be fairly easily scrubbed. Mirrors on the

two overhead lockers are perfectly placed and fresh air is a short reach above to the opening skylight while an electric head finishes these excellent ablutions.

### ACCESSIBLE HULL

The business end of the Riviera 395 SUV is at first not apparent, as a smallish hatch in the aft cockpit lets you only peep at the twin Volvo IPS 500s. But that's only until you press a button and the entire cockpit sole elevates to fully reveal the engines and pod transmissions.

Hull integrity depends on the fit of this large hatch so it has a deep, recessed lip with wide rubber seal and a hydraulic arm to seal it. The 43-foot hull is built around these 370hp supercharged engines with their forward-facing propellers.

Traditionalists understandably view this forward-facing design as being vulnerable to debris but given the well proven nature of this engineering, with Riviera alone having installed over 1,000, there's a lot to be said for them when it comes to manoeuvrability.

Other hazards for any kind of sail drives is electrolysis corrosion and this is something Volvo has tackled with its QL Active Corrosion Protection System. This helps prevent galvanic corrosion attacking the metal parts of your sterndrive, a system that complements the sacrificial anodes. The hand-laid fibreglass hull is heavily laid up with a strong keel, collision bulkhead at the bow and sandwich deck for insulation.

Servicing should be drama-free on this layout because all key points – oilways, filters, belts and electrical connections are accessible from four sides. The AGM batteries are sensibly placed above water level, as are switches and other components, while





**TOP** Flat-out speed is a shade over 30 knots.

**ABOVE** The twin 370hp Volvo Pentas are happy mates for the 395's sporty hull.

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## The ride was smooth with absolutely no rattles.

the bilges have sufficient depth to cope with a leak should a skin fitting fail. Also slightly elevated is the 7KVA Onan generator that sits midships and the air conditioner is on port.

### PERFORMANCE

Leaving the dock is literally child's play with the joystick pod drives precisely controlling all four points of the hull. A twist on the joystick towards your direction of travel pushes the boat that way and Volvo's useful high-power mode is good for windy days, as in fact our day would be.

Sitting on the double leather seat I pushed the throttles down while tweaking the tab button to flatten the bows so that those pesky jet skis buzzing around me wouldn't cause an accident. Using the Interceptor tabs with their wide and deep vertical foils gave precise control to the trim on the 395 as I also could tweak each foil to control our heel as I banked into long slow turns.

Standing at the bolster seat only a light

touch was required on the wheel as I pushed the hull's shoulder deeper to spin through some doughnuts without any sideways slide, then bolted upright again for a blast in the calm waterway with only a faint murmur coming from the Volvos as the Garmin GPS showed our speed topping out at a shade of over 30 knots, the speed barrier for sport cruisers; at least in my eyes.

The ride was smooth with absolutely no rattles from inside or out while the motor spun at 3,655rpm and drank a total of 144 litres. Decelerating to a more economical cruising speed of 26 knots didn't vastly improve consumption, which showed as 144 litres per hour; overall slightly more pessimistic figures than the factory data but nevertheless giving an average range of 300 nautical miles, so more than enough for those blasts along the coast on this sturdy Riviera 395 SUV and lazy long weekends at your favourite anchorage. **BNZ**



### Riviera 395 SUV

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#### SPECIFICATIONS

**loa** 13.27m  
**hull length** 12.06m  
**beam** 4.26m  
**draft** 1.13m  
**displacement** 11,300kg  
**engine** 2 x 370hp Volvo Penta D6-IPS500  
**propellers** IPS twin nibrall three-blade (counter-rotating)  
**fuel** 1,500 litres  
**water** 390 litres  
**holding tank** 80 litres  
**berths** 5 persons  
**cruising speed** 26 knots  
**max speed** 30 knots

#### PERFORMANCE

RPM	SPEED	FUEL
RANGE	KN	LPH
1000	6.9	8
1500	9	18
2000	10.3	46
2600	17	82
3000	22.1	102
3635	31.5	144

