



LOCAL REVIEW

Riviera 39 Sports Motor Yacht

DISREGARDING DICHOTOMY

Combining the sporty layout of a coupe with a discreetly spacious flybridge, the 39 Sports Motor Yacht presents an enigmatic unity.

STORY **Kevin Green** PHOTOS **Kevin Green, Supplied**

“The 39 Sports Motor Yacht didn’t look out of place in the Sydney Superyacht Marina”



Riviera has dabbled in this 43-foot size before, but the market has shifted significantly since then because of mass produced competitors snapping up the lower end and premium market competitors pushing hard from above.

These are transition boats for the mass market European builders, but an entry level model for the premium brands such as Riviera. In this category another challenge is market differentiators, as many builders use common components such as the Volvo IPS pod drives. So, just like in the car industry where similar components are commonplace, it comes down to build standards and overall design to make the difference – this is where Riviera often stands out.

A MATTER OF SIZE

Beginning with a solidly moulded offshore hull, refined over generations of boats but now built around the market-leading Volvo IPS Pod drives, the 39 Sports Motor Yacht has a good base to house three levels of living space while earning the 'sporty' moniker by breaking the 30-knot barrier. Within the hull are two spacious cabins, and a low profile flybridge that gives skippers commanding views yet has minimal windage.

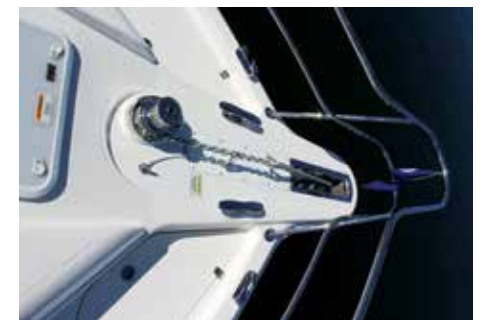
Aesthetics can make or break the deal for many prospective owners in this category but for others – those downsizing to a smaller Riviera – it must still look like a Riviera. The 39 accomplishes this by continuing the curved profile of its larger siblings and those undulating hull windows,

which definitely shouts 'Riviera!', albeit in a fairly compact package. The newly designed hull facilitates 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 the main suite. Other key design points that differentiate a Riviera from, say European competitors, is the wise use of bulkheads and overhangs to protect you from the harsh southern sun.

Water access is another major requirement, as is dockside convenience – the latter proving fine as I stepped aboard from the pontoon beside R Marine Sydney's new office in Rozelle Bay. The 39 Sports Motor Yacht didn't look out of place in the Sydney Superyacht Marina, as hull number one gleamed white in the midday sun.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Lounging on the flybridge with the bimini pulled back; A functional anchor set-up; Wide GRP swim platform



The wide GRP swim platform can entertain 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. Conveniently, under that barbecue is a lazarette to take the deflated dinghy as well.

Stepping into the vast cockpit you'll encounter 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. Alfresco 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, like the synthetic teak in the cockpit and a vinyl sole in the saloon to withstand a spilt Coke. The substantial lip on the saloon door is another good feature, preventing sea water entry into the single level inside/outside area.



DISCRETE FLYBRIDGE

Flybridge access is via a rather steep ladder, which is necessary because the entire cockpit sole is a lifting engine hatch. Senior sailors may balk at this climb, so the alternative is to fit a pull-out ladder as used by some European boats. Climbers are rewarded by a surprisingly spacious flybridge with U-shaped lounge aft and steering console on the forward port quarter. All protected by a lightweight canvas bimini but well supported by the stainless struts that allow it to be quickly stowed in a blow.

The front bench of the lounge doubles as a roomy steering seat from where I had all round views. Key navigation controls are here as well – twin electronic throttles, IPS joystick and two 12-inch Garmin plotter screens which were angled below a lip and were sunlight readable. Other useful gear included the windlass control and obligatory autopilot screen. In the centre was the Czone boat control screen which operates a digital bus system via simple icons; ideal for quick error checking electrics, tankage and batteries.

“This is similar to some other marques but what differentiates a Riviera is the detailing.”



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The flybridge ladder is a tad steep, but worth the climb; A neatly arranged steering console; Vertical bulkheads create a spacious saloon; An apple a day keeps foul weather away



Back at deck level, 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 locker that avoids chain build-ups and an oversize electric Muir windlass/capstan with manual override and 15 kilogram anchor. Then it's time to kick-back on the double sunpad 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 around, should you go alongside the fuel dock.

SALOON

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. There's easy access to the port-side steering console, which is in front of a

double lounge bench and opposite the starboard galley. Handily, the lounge table drops-down to become a day (or night) bed. The galley is sensibly located towards the back, adjoining the aft deck. This is similar to some other marques but what differentiates a Riviera is the detailing. 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 leather helm bench and an ergonomic leather fascia with Garmin instrumentation on the second optional helm fitted to our review boat. There's twin 12-inch screens for navigation and a central display for the Volvo engine controls. All other systems are managed by the New Zealand made Czone digital bus screen and controls.

“Main cabin volume is generous as the tall topsides create an airy space, accentuated by the man-sized opening skylight”

Traditionalists will appreciate the chunky buttons for repetitive controls such as wipers, lights, horn and so on. Kids can pump up the volume on the Fusion hi-fi that's piped throughout the 39 or flick a switch to elevate the television. 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 are no fiddles to prevent spillage. On the plus side there's energy efficient double drawer refrigeration and for the non perishables.

THREE BED CABIN

A wide central corridor beside the helm leads down below, where there's a dual-access bathroom on the starboard-side, behind the owner's bow cabin, as well as a midships guest cabin. Main cabin volume is generous as the tall topsides create an airy space, accentuated by the man-sized opening skylight, but the elongated side windows could be larger. However, the open skylight should draw in enough air flow to make those tropical anchorages bearable without the rumble of the aircon and generator combo.

Facts & Figures

RIVIERA 39 SPORTS MOTOR YACHT

PRICED FROM

\$921,100 (base)

GENERAL

TYPE Planing Monohull

MATERIAL GRP

LENGTH OVERALL 3.27m (43' 6")

HULL LENGTH 12.06m (39'7")

BEAM 4.26m (14'0")

DRAFT 1.25M (4'1")

CAPACITIES

FUEL 1,500L

WATER 390L

HOLDING TANK 80L

BERTHS 5 persons

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Engine 2 x Volvo Penta D6-IPS600 435hp

TYPE In-line 6-cylinder D6 common rail turbo diesel

DISPLACEMENT (light) 12,800kg

PROPELLER IPS twin NiBral 3 blade (counter rotating)

SUPPLIED BY

Riviera
www.riviera.com.au

Sea Trials

Smooth water with 50% tankage and two people aboard, calculated with 10% reserve

RPM	SPEED (kt)	FUEL (L/h)	RANGE (nm)
1000	6.9	8	1164
1500	9	18	675
2000	10.3	46	302
2600	17	89	286
3000	25.8	116	333
3600	34	168	303

* Data supplied by author



Bedtime should be peaceful on a queen sized semi-island bed with steps alongside and an innerspring mattress. It felt substantial when I put my own derrière on it as I clicked on the bulkhead television and reclined. Thanks to IPS pods there are no bow thruster to disturb my reverie and plenty of under-bed space for storage – four large drawers for his and hers. Typical of Riviera, lockers are abundant all round this suite with a tall wardrobe, overhead lockers and shelf space.

The 39 has a versatile guest cabin, with three beds across its midships layout. It's 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

headaches. 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 gives the user a kaleidoscopic feeling as they operate 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.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Time spent at anchor is not wasted aboard the 39 SMY; The entire cockpit sole lifts to reveal the Volvo Penta powerhouse; Comfortable main cabin with plenty of storage; The bathroom is big and bright; Versatile guest cabin



ACCESSIBLE HULL

The business end of the Riviera 39 Sports Motor Yacht is at first not apparent, with just a little hatch in the aft cockpit allowing you only peep at the twin Volvo IPS 600s; 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 closely tighten it.

The 43-foot hull is built around these 435 horse power 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. Another hazard for any kind of sail drive is electrolysis corrosion. This is something Volvo has tackled with its QL Active Corrosion Protection System that helps prevent galvanic corrosion from attacking the metal parts of your stern drive, a system that complements the sacrificial anodes. The hand-laid fibreglass hull is heavily laminated 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 the bilges have sufficient depth to cope with a leak should a skin fitting fail. Also slightly elevated is the 7 KVA Onan generator that sits midships and the air conditioner is on port.

SYDNEY HARBOUR SOJOURN

Motoring away from the dock, the flybridge helm gave me confidence-inspiring views as I pushed the throttles down to hasten our arrival at the bridge exit from Rozelle Bay on Sydney's inner harbour. This narrow channel is fraught with danger due to oncoming vessels and rotting

“I put the throttles fully down and watched the numbers on the Garmin GPS rise quickly to an impressive 34 knots ”



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Easy manoeuvring with the cockpit joystick; The ideal balance of owner-operator functionality and yachting luxury; Elevated helm provides good visibility; Room for two at the helm



Kevin Green

Kevin Green has spent a large part of his life making a living from his love of the sea. Starting in the early days as an apprentice fisherman on his family's North Sea lobster boat, then working with the Royal Navy to latterly as a marine writer and former editor of Australian Yachting Magazine. He's lived and boated in various places around the world, including a glorious seven-year stint on the shores of the Mediterranean before moving to Australia. In between he's undertaken commercial delivery work, been a windsurfing instructor, worked as a superyacht engineer and more recently as a part-time charter skipper on Sydney Harbour.

As a yachting journalist Kevin has covered many international events including America's Cups, Volvo Ocean Races, Clipper circumnavigations, World ARCs and local events such as the Sydney-Hobart. Kevin enjoys most of all just messing about in boats, something that 10-years writing for Trade-a-Boat Magazine has allowed him to do. Doing sea trials on innovative boats is particularly rewarding for him and as a former technology specialist.

Memorable moments over the last five years reporting for Trade-a-Boat have included crewing in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race and introducing readers to new boating experiences, such as the recent feature about motor boating through the French canals. Kevin has witnessed an incredible improvement in boat building and systems; future technologies such as foiling, green energy and recyclable vessels to sustain our fragile planet are among his particular passions.

ironwork, so I really appreciated my elevated position on the 39 Sports Motor Yacht.

After passing the speed restriction zone I accelerated and felt the hull gently rise as the 435 horse power engines went from supercharged to turbocharged modes to easily put us on the plane with the dials showing 17 knots and consumption 89 litres in total. Only a slight tweak of the helm was required to have the 39 veering past slower vessels and then beyond the Harbour Bridge where we sat on the cruising speed (25 knots with the revs at 3,000, fuel burn at 116 litres for a range of about 333 nautical miles) all the way to North Head.

With the swell causing the familiar pendulum affect on the flybridge, I was glad of the optional console down in the saloon which allowed an easier ride – especially once I'd put some clicks on the interceptor tabs that used their wide and deep vertical foils to flatten the trim. Sweeping back into the harbour I threw the 39 into a series of doughnuts and hit a few ferry wakes but no creaks emitted from the furnishings or the hull. I put the throttles fully down and watched the numbers on the Garmin GPS rise quickly to an impressive 34 knots before backing off to enjoy the views from what is a quality Australian sports cruiser. [🔗](#)