

Fountain 33 Sportfish Cruiser

HOT, GOOD, GONE

First come, first served. BY KEVIN FALVEY

In inspecting the Fountain 33 Sportfish Cruiser's hull shape on dry land showed me that this boat is more than just another go-fast with a fishboat deck bolted on top. The forward hull sections below the waterline are full and slightly convex, providing increased accommodation space and enhanced lift when approaching oncoming swells. Its stem, raked at about 30 degrees, displays less distance between the stem at the waterline and the stem at the deck than you'd find on a raceboat, minimizing the chances for stuffing the bow while trolling. And its topsides flare widely, Carolina



UNBELIEVABLE! THIS BOAT CRUISES AT ITS COMPETITORS' MAXIMUM SPEEDS. TOP END: 52.2 MPH.

style, providing reserve buoyancy and spray deflection, though it comes at the expense of wind resistance. Make no mistake, the 33 Sportfish Cruiser is still faster than a single herring in a hundred gallon livewell: My test boat hit the published top speed of its closest competitor and still had rpm in reserve. It's built to be a fast fisherman, but speed isn't this boat's only objective.

The 33 Sportfish Cruiser's cockpit tells the story. Sporting deep fishboxes, two livewells, locking rod stowage, and 60 square feet of unobstructed area abaft the helm deck, there's no mistaking this boat for a froufrou girlie-getter. But don't worry—if there happens to be a bevy of beauties in your life, the 33 Sportfish Cruiser's cabin won't leave them the least bit disappointed. It has what it takes to please the fairer sex. Its enclosed head, two berths, and attractive decor attest to that.

Is there anything not to like? Come along for a ride.

THRILL AND KILL. Take command of the 33 Sportfish Cruiser at its center helm console, which provides a great view of your course, your wake, your cockpit, and your crew. Note the cool flip-up jump seats that allow your crew to join you for the trek. When you don't want company, they fold neatly out of the way.

Now hit the throttles. The 33 Sportfish Cruiser gets on top responsively, thanks to its twin-step hull and a pair of four-bladed propellers. Running in following seas won't be a problem. Acceleration is more powerful than quick because this is a big boat. It's heavier than the 10,000-pound Grady-White Express 330, but faster nonetheless.

We topped 52 mph with twin 275-hp Mercury Verado outboards during my test. Grady-White says its Express 330 tops out at 44 mph when powered by a pair of 250-hp Yamaha F250 outboard motors (\$244,680). The 33 Sportfish Cruiser made 41.6 mph, while burning 35.8 gph at 5000 rpm. It cruised most economically at 4000 rpm, where it sped along at 29.8 mph and burned 22.4 gph for an economy of 1.33 mpg. I'd say that credit goes to the 33 Sportfish Cruiser's stepped hull and skinnier beam, which combined well with the supercharged Verados to best the Grady-White's numbers. At the opposite end of the spectrum, it posted a 12-mph minimum planing speed, a surprisingly good low number, especially for a stepped-hull boat. Most are only good at going fast.

Whip the wheel, and the 33 Sportfish Cruiser handles like a touring car, carving right around, which is also impressive for a stepped-hull boat (Fountain's hulls are among the few stepped designs I've found that don't require extra attention during maneuvers). While slow trolling, two wide, clear alleys are in its wake. Fast trolling, it produced a foamy and well-defined wave 50 feet behind the boat, perfect for swimming tuna lures.

PHOTO RIGHT: FOREST JOHNSON



BOATING

Certified Test Results

Fountain 33

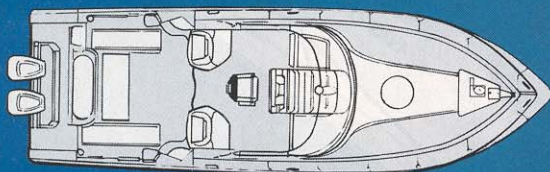


THE HIGHS Wraparound helm seating is cool beans. Great job plumbing the genset and air—you can run 'em while you're running. Speed and efficiency in good supply.

THE LOWS Helm needs more space for electronics. Lazarette hatch needs a gas strut. Bow cleat position doesn't work well with the recessed windlass and flush anchor.

rpm	SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level
1000	3.8	4.4	1.4	2.7	3.1	737	849	0	50
1500	6.1	7.0	3.2	1.9	2.2	513	591	0	52
2000	7.5	8.6	5.8	1.3	1.5	348	400	2	56
2500	8.1	9.3	10.6	0.8	0.9	206	237	4	59
3000	12.0	13.8	14.8	0.8	0.9	219	252	5	63
3500	17.6	20.3	19.6	0.9	1.0	243	280	6	64
4000	25.9	29.8	22.4	1.2	1.3	312	359	5	65
4500	31.8	36.6	29.6	1.1	1.2	290	334	4	66
5000	36.2	41.6	35.8	1.0	1.2	273	314	3	68
5500	41.8	48.1	46.0	0.9	1.0	245	282	3	70
6000	45.4	52.2	56.0	0.8	0.9	219	252	3	71

Advertised fuel capacity 300 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with two persons aboard, one-half fuel, no water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.



LOA	33'0"
Beam	10'9"
Draft (max.)	2'7"
Displacement (lbs., approx.; w/o power)	11,800
Transom deadrise	21°
Bridge clearance	11'4"
Minimum cockpit depth	2'2½"
Max. cabin headroom	6'3"
Fuel capacity (gal.)	300
Water capacity (gal.)	40
Price (w/standard power)	\$235,204
Price (w/test power)	\$243,040

STANDARD POWER Twin 225-hp Mercury OptiMax V-6 gasoline outboards.

OPTIONAL POWER Twin Mercury

outboards to 550 hp total.

TEST BOAT POWER Twin 275-hp Mercury Verado in-line-6 outboards with 158.5 cid, 3.23" bore x 3.23" stroke, swinging 17" x 19" four-bladed ss props through 1.85:1 reductions.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT (major items) Windlass; integrated anchor; rigging station; 30a battery charger; 2 livewells; tackle center; raw/freshwater wash-downs; electronic compass; flat-screen TV/DVD; microwave; refrigerator/freezer; single-burner stove; hi-lo table; mechanical trim indicators; half-tower w/canvas enclosure; vacuum-flush commode; water heater; lockable rod stowage; 30a shorepower; a/c; AM/FM/CD stereo w/4 speakers and remote.

CONTACT Fountain Powerboats, Dept. B, Drawer 457, Washington, NC 27889, 252/975-2000, www.fountainpowerboats.com.

What was one thing I didn't like about running the 33 Sportfish Cruiser? There was room for only one electronics display at the helm. Serious anglers need room for at least two screens, such as the box provided aboard the Grady-White 330 Express. Fountain says a mounting area will be incorporated onto the helm's starboard side, where the chart flat is currently located.

OVER THE RAIL. The 33 Sportfish Cruiser's cockpit is arranged for serious catching. Under-gunwale rod stowage secures a pair of 50s per side, is lockable, and has 7' PVC tubing to protect the tips of your rods. The transom livewell is also smart. The lid has a small hatch to keep water from sloshing out, but the lid can also be removed entirely if you want to use the livewell as a fish-box. But that will likely never be necessary: Two massive, macerated fishboxes reside in the sole. A rigging station is on the transom. At the cockpit's forward end are another livewell and a tackle storage unit. These modules are the perfect height for crew to sit on and watch strikes. The standard half-tower includes an array of rocket launchers and includes Taco's new outriggers that can be swung out or lowered without having to stand on the gunwale.

On centerline, a large hatch, which lacks a strut to hold it open, provides access to the generator (\$9,980; it's standard on the Grady). Batteries, bilge pumps, and the raw-water plumbing for both the air-conditioner and genset are here. Fountain devised a clever method of delivering cooling water to the genny and air-conditioner even at high speed. Pickups on the transom force water into the plumbing and through strainers. If the devices had been plumbed in-line with the strainers, the stream would be too fast for their pumps. So instead, the air and genset are connected via a T-fitting, which slows down the stream. It also creates a reserve, of sorts, for rough days when the transom may leave the water, momentarily cutting off the water supply. Great job.

BORN IN SIN, COME ON IN. Sultry defines the mood set by the 33 Sportfish Cruiser's interior. Indirect lighting; curved, high-gloss laminate cabinetry; solid door frames; supple headlining; and lounge upholstery counterpoint its all-business topsides. There's an enclosed head with shower (plus a hot and cold transom shower), a galley complete with solid-surface counters and enough appliances to cook for a weekend, and sleeping accommodations for six.

Crawl into the aft berth, which is private and roomy enough for a couple. A hatch in the aft bulkhead provides access to the water heater and freshwater pump, neither of which I'd look forward to servicing: It's just too tight. Fountain says it will improve the service access in production models.

The forward V-berth is formed by filling in the dinette. It's comfortable and long, though I wish it had reading lamps. You'll need to get out of bed to turn off the lights. A screened hatch overhead provides ventilation, the only opening into the exterior of the cabin. Portholes and such almost invariably leak, so chalk this up as one more good detail aboard a cruising fishboat that's full of them. †



EXTRA POINT

A hidden, horizontally mounted pneumatic strut automatically secures the companionway hatch both open and closed.