

# Hunter 39

A fast, comfortable and well-thought-out family cruiser

BY PETER A. ROBSON



**THIS SLEEK NEW** offering from Florida-based Hunter Marine replaces the company's very successful Hunter 38, which when introduced in 2005, won the *Cruising World* Boat of the Year award. Hunter has been building sailboats for 35 years and now produces many models from a 14-foot day sailor to a 50-foot centre cockpit cruiser. Over the years, Hunter has provided good value while consistently improving the quality of its yachts. Designer Glenn Henderson has made significant changes to the hull, deck and interior of the 38 that have resulted in a fresh new look and improvements in speed, comfort and sea keeping. Like the 38, the 39 is easily manageable by a couple for local or offshore cruising.

**Design and Construction** Most striking is the new sleeker cabin profile and the use of elliptical windows. The waterline length has been extended by a foot, and the beam carried further aft to accommodate dual steering stations. The underbody and fin keel have also been modified for better performance. Both shallow draft (5 feet) and deep draft (6 feet, 6 inches) models are available, though the deep draft version is 424 pounds lighter and more suited to our waters. To reduce the hobby-horsing effect associated with pounding into big seas, Henderson reduced the buoyancy of the bow through the use of a slightly concave shape. At the back end, the under body is also slightly concave, called "hull reflex," and offers a smoother exit flow under the

transom that pushes the stern wave aft and essentially increases the waterline length beyond the LWL of 34 feet, 8 inches.

As with all Hunters, the hull is hand-laid using a modified epoxy resin. It is solid below the waterline with balsa core above and plywood core in the decks. The cores are composed of 3-inch square blocks of end-grain balsa, each framed in resin so that should water ever find its way into the core, it would only affect an area of 3 inches. Like other Hunters, Kevlar reinforcement is incorporated into the underbody forward of the keel for added collision protection. The hull is CE Certified as Category A, which means it is rated for offshore cruising and built to stringent ABYC standards. And like other Hunters, the interior and structural >





hatches—one forward opening, one aft opening—to assure ventilation regardless of the wind direction. There is plenty of storage throughout and the finishing is well executed.

**Systems** The test boat was equipped with the optional 40-hp Yanmar diesel with shaft drive and three-blade fixed prop. Engine access was very good all around and sound insulation was also good. An 80-amp alternator is standard and suitable for most short-term cruisers. There is a single start battery and four 6-volt house batteries. All thru-hulls, except for the speedometer and depth sounder transducer, are easily accessible being grouped under the saloon floor. The test boat was equipped with hydronic (hot water) heating, which takes up much less space (no ducting) and provides better zone control than forced air heating.

**Underway** Unfortunately, it was rainy and windless in English Bay on the day of the sea trial. However, the strong sailing performance characteristics of Hunters have been well-established and are unlikely

↑ **Above** The Hunter 39's interior is well-executed and attractive, and features a large full width aft-cabin (top right).

to affect a buying decision. We did raise the sails and test their controls. The in-mast furling made it a simple matter to set the main. No hoisting, just haul it out along the boom. The Seldon rack-and-pinion reef gear makes for easy and fast reefing when compared to conventional slab or in-mast worm-gear reefing, and the main can be furled or reefed even when sailing downwind. The double ended mainsheet is controlled from either the arch or the cabin top. Because of the end-boom sheeting, it takes less muscle (and a lighter extrusion) to bring in the main than with a mid-boom arrangement. The jib winches are mounted just forward of the helms and, like the mainsail, can be easily operated by the helmsman.

The large, furling mainsail will likely provide plenty of driving power while the well-matched 110 percent jib should make for easy tacking without excessive grinding as well as provide good visibility looking forward.

As with other Hunters, the almost plumb bow and short overhangs provide the 39 with a relatively long sailing waterline compared to its overall length. Both the displacement to length ratio and the sail area to displacement ratio (see box) mean that the 39 should move easily in light breezes and attain a good turn of speed in stronger winds with plenty of power to beat into choppy seas.

The spade rudder and fin keel make for tight turns and under power, the 40-hp Yanmar makes for easy manoeuvring at a cruising speed of just over 7 knots (2,900 RPM). Maximum RPM is 3,150 RPM. Sound levels under power were a reasonable 79 dBA measured in the centre of the saloon.

➔ **THE NEW 39 WITH ITS** many performance oriented design features should easily out-sail its predecessor. Its sleek new cabin and window arrangement, comfortable, well-equipped interior, easy sailing characteristics and security of a hull rated Category A make it a winner all around. Base price, including the essential Mariner Package fitted on the test boat, is a very reasonable US\$234,949. Ⓢ

#### THE SPECS

##### ➤ HUNTER 39

<b>LOA</b>	39'5"	12.01 m
<b>LWL</b>	34'8"	10.57 m
<b>Beam</b>	12'11"	3.94 m
<b>Draft - Deep</b>	6' 6"	1.98 m
<b>Displ. (light)</b>	18,501 lbs	8,392 kg
<b>Ballast-Deep</b>	5,603 lbs	2,541 kg
<b>Sail Area (Furling w/vertical battens)</b>	904 sq-ft	83.98 sq-m
<b>Sail Area (Standard rig)</b>	991 sq-ft	92.07 sq-m
<b>SA/D (Furling)</b>	20.7	
<b>SA/D (Standard)</b>	22.7	
<b>D/L</b>	198	
<b>Fuel</b>	36 gal	136 L
<b>Water</b>	75 gal	284 L
<b>Holding</b>	25 gal	94 L
<b>Power</b>	40-hp Yanmar diesel	
	with shaft drive	

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