

Cruise in **comfort**

With comfort and ease of handling to the fore the new Hunter 39 will win the hearts of many cruising sailors, reports **Kevin Green**.

Hunter Marine's successor to the popular Hunter 38, the Hunter 39 has just arrived on Australian shores and we are lucky to be one of the early recipients of this new spacious family cruiser.

The Florida based manufacturer, well known for its range of cruising boats, from day sailors up to 50 footers, surprisingly also has a pedigree in racing but nowadays this aspect of its history is only reflected in some design features such as the rig.

The rig's distinctive feature is a lack of backstay, with swept back spreaders, just like used in some offshore racing designs and catamarans of course. Another feature, common to American manufacturers, is the good array of options and general fit-out throughout the range. Combined gives you a pretty well thought-out range of boats,



ALL PHOTOS BY KEVIN GREEN



with comfort and ease of handling key features in the design remit.

Penning a sleeker looking overall shape was also a goal and looking at the new 39 as it bobbed alongside the pontoons among a fleet of other Hunters at US Yachts base in Darling Harbour, Sydney, it is evident that the successor to the 38 has certainly moved on.

Company owner Matt Hayes (a former Olympic sailor) pointed out some of the improvements from the 38. Major changes include twin steering wheels (on a 39!) and smoother cabin and deck profile, cleverly disguising the tall topsides. Most of the dimensions between the two boats are the same, apart from the extra 18 inches of LOA, so no surprises for 38 owners considering a trade-in.

Climbing aboard is easy via the guard rail gates or new enlarged swim platform with saloon style stern doors. These lead into a cavernous cockpit which is uncluttered with rounded fibreglass combings.

The twin helms neatly sit behind a separate bulkhead with Lewmar primary winches and double ended mainsheet controls all to hand. This arrangement leaves a large cockpit with a sizable table for crew or entertaining; while overhead, Hunter's trade mark bimini provides the shade.

The heavily built steel twin legs of the bimini also house the mainsheet traveller, ensuring that the long boom (a feature of the Bergstrom & Ridder designed rig) is controlled well back from the mast.

Steering controls all come to hand, with the new swivelling chart plotter giving information to both helms, plus the optional Mariner package fitted to the stock boat showing an array of the latest Raymarine ST70 instruments on



the cabin top bulkhead – too far from the helm, however, for this short sighted writer to see easily.

Alongside them the Sony Marine entertainment system and bimini overhead speakers should keep any party lively. Forward visibility is good thanks to the uncluttered cabin top and stylish flush mounted hatches. Walking forward is easily done, with the wide beam (another feature required to support the B&R rig) and spacious decks. All lines lead aft through gutters which again gives a clean feel to the forward part of the boat, and a handy platform for lounging on in quiet anchorages; very spacious for a 39 foot cruiser.

Twin dorade vents ensure that the main saloon is naturally vented and enough hatch space is available to keep the boat well aired, unless you prefer to fit the optional air conditioner which could be switched on with shore power.

Up forward the bow area is functional, with the moulded toe rail an aide to footing should things get lively and the electrical Maxwell windlass conveniently having two bow rollers to work through, though I would have preferred the windlass foot controls to be sheltered below the bow locker cover, rather than exposed on deck.



OPPOSITE PAGE:

The swept back spreaders of the fractional rig and lack of back stay allow for a long footed mainsail, keeping the sail power low down, in the in-mast furling version.

CLOCKWISE FROM CENTRE:

The new Hunter 39 has restyled profile and snappier lines than its predecessor, the 38.

Darkish cherry wood gives warmth to the functional saloon with smooth combings and a good general finish, reflective of the company's modular build style.

The dinette area has 'ultra leather' coverings and the table folds down to become a double berth.



CREDIT: HUNTER MARINE

LEFT: The athwartships owner's cabin has ensuite access to the shower and head.

BELOW: Galley is substantial with optional freezer (stainless reflective front shown) and plenty of good standard equipment including a microwave.



LEFT TO RIGHT FROM ABOVE: Raymarine's new ST70 instruments come with Hunter's Mariner's package and includes an autopilot.

Cockpit seats on the guard rail are a comfortable cruising perch with handy cup holders.

Easy access to the Yanmar shaft driven engine.

In-mast furling main is controlled by a substantial mechanism.



The deck join to the hull has a sturdy steel rubrail right around the boat, a good protective feature.

The wide hull carries its beam right back to the squarish stern, with a small amount of forward rake both fore and aft, but enough to ensure the overall hull has pleasing lines. Hunter builds with balsa-cored sandwich glass above the waterline and below uses solid glass with Kevlar reinforcements at the bow. Keeping things upright is a shallow draft bulbed cast iron keel; ideal for "gunkholing" as they say in Florida. However our review boat came with the optional deep keel, intended to give better windward performance. Steering via the Edson rack and pin system, connected to a deep spade rudder, gave a positive feel to the boat, I found.

The rig is perhaps the most unusual aspect of Hunter boats with some purists questioning the robustness of not having a backstay. But this racing-orientated setup has proven itself worldwide. Recently I spent some time

with Hunter owner Mike Harker on his successful round the world trip and, despite getting into some serious scrapes, he told me the rig stood up well. No doubt helped by the large chain plates, wide aspect set of the raked shrouds and quality Selden spars fitted to the fractional rig.

The wide footed mainsail keeps the centre of effort low and, with no backstay to impede its travel, has a long boom. A powerful mainsail allows for a modest headsail size with a manageable 110 per cent jib. This means that with much of the power in the main keeping it correctly trimmed is important – playing the traveller, tweaking the solid boom vang and roller-reefing when required – ensures that that the wetted area of the wide hull is not overdone. With slightly less sail area (5.5m² less compared to the 38) the new Hunter 39 is intended to be more manageable for couples but the optional cruising chute would add plenty of horsepower to get you quickly to that favourite anchorage in light airs.

Below deck

Down below won't be a disappointment either, with comfortable ultra leather settees to lounge on and a dinette area that can easily sit a family of six. Again, not bad for a 39 footer.

A warm feel, thanks to the abundant cheery wood interior, pervades the saloon. Starboardside, the L-shaped galley is finished off in hard wearing Corian including covers over the deep twin sinks adjoining the double burner gimbaled oven. Overhead locker space is excellent and all fixtures and fittings are quality metal components. Nice features included the pull-out wine rack and the optional freezer, ensuring no need to leave that secluded anchorage for a week or two. Under the laminated floor boards an unusually deep bilge also added greatly to overall storage, as well as stability in the event of a flood. Dual access to the stern cabin with its generous athwartships sprung bed is another handy feature in this layout (a three cabin version is also available).

My only slight gripe was a lack of natural light.

The portside shower/head and separate utility room doubles as an ensuite, giving the owner a totally



SPECIFICATIONS

Length Overall	39'5"	12.01 m
Hull Length	38'9"	11.18 m
Waterline Length	34'8"	10.57 m
Beam	12'11"	3.38 m
Draft – Shoal	5'0"	1.52 m
Draft – Deep	6'6"	1.98 m
Displacement – Shoal	18,501 lbs	8,391 kg
Ballast – Shoal	6,027 lbs	2,734 kg
Ballast – Deep	5,603 lbs	2,541 kg
Sail Area – Std	991 ft ²	92.07 m ²
Sail Area – Furling	904 ft ²	83.98 m ²
Inboard Engine	29 HP	21.3 kW
Fuel Capacity	136 L	
Water Capacity	284 L	
Holding Tank Capacity	94 L	
CE Classification	A/10	
Price:	\$327,326.00 (review boat)	

LIKES

- Level of comfort
- Spacious
- Overall quality

DISLIKES

- Dimly lit stern cabin
- Exposed electrics at windlass

Hunter signature design is plenty beam, bimini mainsheet track and 'look, no backstay'.



private area. Also outside the portside cabin door is the navigation area with its sizeable chart table. Nice touches here include a handy night vision light, beautifully smooth combings and a user-friendly control panel on the bulkhead. The navigator can comfortably sit here and run his electronic charts on the large flat screen in the forward bulkhead, when the kids aren't watching TV or using one of the two entertainment systems that can be optionally fitted. The Sony Marine system on the review boat looked stylish and multifunctional, with obligatory MP3 capabilities, and the Bose DVD system finished off the multimedia entertainment.

Powering all this gear is an 80AMP alternator attached to the 29HP Yanmar, however a 120AMP model is available, as well as the optional 40HP motor.

Another feature I liked was the simplicity of a shaft drive, rather than the more complex sail drive, and engine access was excellent with gas struts easily lifting the engine box for all round views of the donk.

Moving forward, past the stainless mast compression post, to the V-berth, the tall topsides clearly pay dividends here with good headroom and locker space.

Another plus point is the multitude of handrails and stanchions ensuring the main cabin is secure for crew moving about while at sea.

At Sea

Leaving our own marina for a trip down the harbour, the 40HP Yanmar and shaft drive triple bladed prop pushed us along easily. I noted 7.2 knots as revs maxed out at 3200rpm before slowing us down to pull out the roller furling mainsail, effortlessly done after Matt released the mechanism at the mast.

Paying out the Furlex headsail went without dramas, powering us up the harbour quickly. With the mainsail able to be controlled from the cabin top winch or the primaries at the helm, the crew or single hander could manage the sail plan easily. Adjusting the traveller proved a bit of a mystery, as it's hidden on top of the bimini, but

any owner should become accustomed to this arrangement. Steering with the dual helm gives the purist sailor plenty of options – sit out watching the headsail tell tales during twilight races or hunker down below the bimini on longer passages.

The 39 proved well mannered on all points of sail, with broad reaching perhaps the most comfortable. Upwind performance was impressive, given the wide jib sheeting angles of the rig, with a wind angle of 32 degrees noted while doing 7.4kts in the 17kt breeze. While running you had to watch the mainsail on the raked back shrouds and spreaders, so ideally gibing your way downwind was the best plan of action.

In a crowded market the new Hunter 39 certainly stands out I'd say, mainly for its overall quality and user friendliness with enough options to satiate even the most demanding owner. As the Aussie dollar matches strongly to its US counterpart at the moment cruising in style to that favourite anchorage won't break the bank.

