

Oceanmaster 680^{DC}

By Alex Smith



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The cockpit gives you plenty of space to move about with offset bow access. The wet bar features a pair of inset fender holders



Like so many modern builders, Norwegian yard, Oceanmaster, has shifted away from its own domestic workforce and opted instead to appoint a Polish manufacturing plant to carry out the construction of its fleet. While most Scandinavian brands tend to attract fairly hefty premiums, that has enabled the company to minimise overheads to such a degree that the latest incarnation of its 680 DC is comparable in terms of price to similar models from famously affordable brands like Jeanneau and Bayliner.

That in itself is an impressive truth but the fact that Oceanmaster retains full design autonomy (as well as significant leverage over quality control) means that this midrange Day Cruiser still manages to look and feel distinctly Nordic. True, on our colour-bleached test day in Poole

Harbour, beneath a thick blanket of winter cloud, the 680 cuts a slightly monochrome figure - but there's still a classical loveliness to this boat that it's difficult to overlook. From the swept foredeck with its restrained forward flare to the subtle downward curve of the rubbing strake, the low-profile black-framed screen and the angled taper of the windows, there's a harmonious simplicity to it that feels almost reminiscent of a miniature Windy. Of course, it would be wrong to overstate the case. This isn't a Windy and it doesn't pretend to be but, given that the base 680 could be yours for less than £47,000, it looks and feels remarkably distinguished.

The cockpit

On the face of it, the cockpit looks like fairly standard fare for a compact cuddy.

Behind the helm seats, there's a convertible wraparound dining station to port, a wet bar to starboard and a deck that meanders its way from the transom gate to the cabin. But what's particularly interesting here is the offset walk-through section in the screen. The fact that it's pushed way over to port, frees up lots of room for a central cabin door, enabling you to make your way below without clattering your bony bits on fiberglass edges. And despite the provision of a set of moulded port steps, the positioning of the co-pilot seat means that, even when people are seated and the recessed fender holders are full, access to the foredeck remains completely unobstructed.

However, this very practical layout does make the co-pilot's position quite passive. After all, with the door, steps and fenders

From £46k, Oceanmasters middle model of its Day Cruiser range is impressive value for money

duly catered for, there's no room left for a chart table, electronics or stereo remote; nor any space for a glove box, power points or a VHF. All you get is a pair of cup holders, a grab handle and a reversible backrest, as if to illustrate the fact that, on this boat at least, your job as the co-pilot is not to assist the skipper with navigation (or helpful advice). It's simply to enjoy the ride or to flip the seat back and engage in the dinner party.

For the most part, ease of movement is also a notable strength. For instance, on the foredeck, the use of flat, grippy, obstruction-free surfaces eradicates any potential problem involved in the portside point of entry; and further aft, at the other end of the broad cockpit walkway, a hinged deck section in the forward part of the engine well enables you to walk from one swim platform to the other and then to trim the engine out when alongside. The aft bench is also interesting. It stops short of the starboard side, creating a useful space to step over the canvass elevated storage box and onto the aft platforms. However, the step itself is currently finished in glossy fiberglass, which gets a bit slick when wet, so the fitting of some laminated teak (or the replacement of the existing section with a textured tread plate) would be a welcome upgrade.

However, the attention to detail here is generally very good. The wet bar supplements its integrated fridge, stove and sink with another couple of fender holders neatly set into the units trailing edge. There are also cushioned corners at both ends of the aft bench to help protect



Cockpit storage is limited in places but a canopy storage system is a useful feature

your hips from the grab rails and canvas stanchions; and you get some useful protection when docking from the broad bars that run fore and aft on either side of the swim platforms. There's also a folding seat base that flips down into the gap between the cockpit seats, creating a sun pad without the need for unwieldy infills. And while the absence of clever hinges or cutaways means you have to remove several of the neighbouring cushions to free up the required arc of travel, it's good to see this feature, not least because it helps preserve the boat's storage spaces for your baggage.



That's particularly important because of how hard the storage spaces have to work on a multi-purpose platform of this scale. For instance, the under-deck compartment is fully occupied by the fuel tank and the test boat's aft bench is filled with the (optional) camping cover. And yet the lidless side-access storage spaces beneath the seating units on the port side are very effective and, as with all compact cuddies, you always have the cabin space to help take up the slack for any storage difficulties elsewhere.

The cuddy

Genuine seating for four is not something you tend to expect in the bow of a streamlined 22-foot sportsboat, so it's no surprise to witness a few compromises



A toilet is concealed to starboard. A separate heads compartment is also available



Performance						
The fuel figures below are taken from generic data and may not accurately represent fuel usage in this combination						
RPM	Knots	LPH	GPH	MPG	Range (nm)	Sound (dB)
800 (idle)	3.0	1.3	0.29	10.3	498	53.4
1000	4.1	3.3	0.77	5.32	257	54.0
1500	5.8	5.6	1.28	4.53	219	57.9
2000	7.7	8.8	1.94	3.97	192	73.4
2500	10.9	11.7	2.57	4.24	205	76.0
3000	15.6	15.4	3.39	4.60	222	80.5
3500	19.8	20.0	4.40	4.50	217	82.7
4000	24.0	27.3	6.01	3.99	193	83.8
4500	28.6	34.4	7.57	3.78	183	87.0
5000	33.4	42.5	9.35	3.57	172	88.9
5250 (WOT)	33.8	47.9	10.5	3.22	155	90.7

down below. Restricted headroom means you cant quite straighten your back when youre sitting around the table and a moulded deckhead ridge across the aft end of the cabin means space at the starboard loo is also quite tight. Even so, the brushed, suede-style, granite-grey fabric is very attractive and there is plenty of natural light, courtesy of the wide aperture for the sliding door, the two overhead skylights and a pair of lengthy hull windows running fore and aft above the rubbing strake.

There are some useful storage compartments beneath the seats, allied to full-length shelves around the periphery of the cabins V, and while the storage capacity is not huge in terms of outright

volume, its plenty for two people on a weekend away or a family on a day out. If youre keen to use the boat for short cruises, you will be pleased to learn that the cassette toilet beneath its hinged plywood lid can be replaced with an enclosed compartment and an electric loo. And while youre investigating Oceanmasters nicely judged options list, you should also consider the all-over



The helm is a wiper short of perfection. The 150 is very decent with light loads at up to 30 knots. Mercurys new V6 200 is definitely worth a look



The drive is very stable and surefooted

camping cover. When speed alongside the cockpit heating option, it enables you to set aside the cabin for sleeping and toilet duties and to bring the entertaining element back up to the comfy seating of the eight-man cockpit, which is precisely where it belongs.

The helm

With its integrated armrest, footbrace and bolster, plus plenty of protection from the elements, easy adjustability and high-quality sports seats, the helm is very effective. The matt dash fabric and steep fascias keep glare to a minimum and when you get to your destination, you can spin your seat to face across to the co-pilot or aft to the cockpits five-man dining station. In fact, with space for a tablet, a drink

and a few small items, the only thing the helm on the test boat appears to lack is a windscreen wiper.

Despite the relative modesty of the Mariner 150 engine option, the first 80% of the performance bracket also feels very user-friendly. Our ability to hit the plane in a shade over four seconds and to reach 30 knots in around ten is very decent by the standards of the type. And yet beyond the 30-knot mark, the throttle response drops way off, leaving you with a 25-second delay before the 34-knot top end clicks into view. Of course, if you dont plan to carry heavy loads, tow chunky wakeboarders or indulge your internal racer, you might believe that this drop-off doesnt much matter, but theres no doubt that a lightweight 175 or even the full 200

would make a handy difference, not just to the upper end, but also to the general versatility that comes with extra reserves of poke.

In terms of the upgrade routes available to you, Fine Design Marine's current options list points toward the Verado 200. And yet, alongside the £2,871 increase in purchase price comes around 80kg of additional transom weight, so there seems to be limited sense in adopting that route. Instead, I would be inclined to look into Mercurys new 3.4-litre V6. In either 175 or 200hp variant, it weighs virtually the same as the Mariner 150 and its physical dimensions are also more transom-friendly than the Verados, which is particularly useful if you want a cuddy that can also

operate as a hub for summer watersports.

Conclusion

The 680 DC is a very pleasing Weekender. There's a muted subtlety to the colourways, a practical simplicity to the layout and an easy compliance to the helming experience. The build, finish and styling feel reassuringly upmarket and yet it remains an affordable family boat, virtually on a par with the industry's most accessible overnighting platforms. Such is the maturity of the driving experience, that I would still be inclined to make fuller use of the 680's talents by specifying the new Mercury V6 200 but, in either case, this likeable Nordic Day Cruiser is a very convincing piece of work.

ENQUIRIES: *Fine Design Marine* www.finedesign-marine.co.uk



BOAT TEST

Length (LOA): 6.80 m
Beam: 2.55 m
Weight: 1,250 kg
Fuel capacity: 220 litres
Water capacity: 60 litres
RCD Category: C8
Max power: 200hp
Engine as tested: Mercury 150
Other engine options: Mercury 115, 200
Price from (115hp): **£46,698**
Price as tested: **£59,477**




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