

BRITAIN'S **BEST SELLING** MOTOR CRUISING MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 1995

# MOTOR BOAT

**AND YACHTING**



**Royal 355**



# Boat Report

**S**torebro, the Swedish boatbuilders, are renowned for their devotion to quality in general, and joinery in particular. The latest in their long line of Royal Cruisers is a 36-footer with aft cabin and flybridge.

## Accommodation

Stepping through the sliding door and down the three steps that lead into the 355's saloon, my first impressions were very much what I had been expecting: masses of immaculate mahogany

joinery, teak-and-holly soles, and a conservative blue and grey colour scheme. In places one might almost describe the finish as utilitarian: the anodised window frames, for instance, are held in place by closely-spaced machine screws. But one can't accuse Storebro of having skimped on their customary attention to detail: as just one example, the saloon carpet had been notched back by about a quarter of an inch to fit around the floor-level heater vents, before being bound to stop >





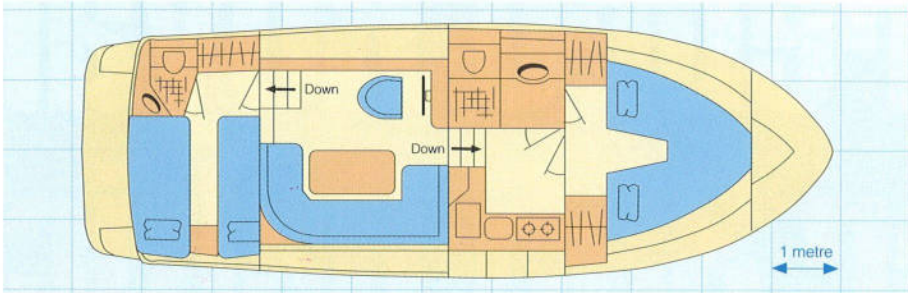
# Storebro Royal Cruiser 355 Baltic

Each new Storebro has a lot to live up to – its builder's reputation for top-notch build quality and finish. The latest is an aft-cabin 36-footer (11m), tested in Sweden by Tim Bartlett. Photographs by Lester McCarthy





# Storebro Royal Cruiser 355 Baltic



its edges fraying. Conservative styling, and quality aside, the other selling point of the 355 is its layout, which provides four berths segregated into opposite ends of the boat.

The saloon/wheelhouse is just under 9ft (2.74m) square, with the helm position somewhat illogically placed to port. To starboard, a thickly upholstered settee wraps around three sides of a hi/low table with a fiddled mahogany top, while the lockers for drinks, TV and VCR are built into the side panelling behind the helm. More general stowage is available under the settee base.

Forward-facing seating is often at a premium at sea, so Storebro have contrived a pantograph arrangement whereby the forward section of the settee can be lifted up, flipped over and clicked into place to make a double seat for the navigator.

Four steps lead down from the saloon to the galley, where there's a 4ft 0in by 3ft 6in (1.22m x 1.07m) rectangle of teak

and holly sole, open to the wheelhouse overhead, with Corian work surfaces around its aft and outboard sides. Flaps in the worktop conceal a 1½-bowl sink, a 58-litre (2.1ft<sup>3</sup>) coolbox and a two-ring gas cooker, with a compact oven underneath, and a 93-litre (3.4ft<sup>3</sup>) fridge. Stowage is generous, and easily accessible. As well as all this, there is exceptionally good access to the bilge spaces below: every section of the floorboards is loose-laid and easily removable.

Opposite the galley, where on most

boats you would find the guest cabin, is an unusually large toilet/shower compartment, roughly 4ft wide, 5ft 4in long and with 6ft 3in headroom (1.22m x 1.63m x 1.91m). It's divided in two by a folding partition, screening the toilet and shower from the doorway.

In the forward cabin, where wall-to-wall mahogany might have seemed oppressive, Storebro have made a feature of the GRP hull liner, setting off the dark wood bulkheads and locker doors very nicely, and making the most of the cabin's impressive (11ft 0in x 8ft



## Design and construction



Above: well set up for navigation, the helm position, and navigator's seat – created by flipping part of the settee-back – both have chart tables. Far left: the forecabin will appeal to those who like a lot of room; the convertible double berth, and stowage space, are larger than on many boats this size. Left: Storebro's famous wood joinery can be seen to good effect in the galley.

6in/3.35m × 2.59m) dimensions.

All that space has been put to good use to provide a pair of 6ft 4in × 2ft 10in (1.93m × 0.86m) vee-berths, with an infill converting them to a massive double – over 8ft 4in (2.54m) at its widest. Having a good-sized gap between the berths means that access to the under-bed stowage spaces is easy: the aft part has been made into lined, open-fronted cave lockers while the forward section, reached by lifting the mattress, gives direct access to the bilge. There is more stowage in lockers outboard of each berth and wide full-height hanging lockers at their heads.

The guest cabin, four steps down ▷

### DIMENSIONS

**Length overall**  
36ft 3in (11.05m)  
**Hull length**  
35ft 0in (10.67m)  
**Waterline length**  
26ft 3in (8.00m)  
**Beam**  
12ft 1in (3.68m)  
**Draught**  
3ft 4in (1.00m)  
**Displacement**  
6½ tons  
**Fuel capacity**  
231gal (1,050 litres)  
**Water capacity**  
77gal (350 litres)

### ACCOMMODATION

One double and one twin cabin, saloon, galley, two toilet/shower compartments, aft deck seating area, and optional flybridge

### CONSTRUCTION

Hand-laid chopped-strand mat and woven rovings in orthophthalic polyester resin, with foam sandwich decks and foam-filled frames and stringers

### LAY-UP WEIGHTS

Reinforcement only  
**Keel**  
18oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (5.5kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Bottom**  
10oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (3.1kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Chines**  
19½oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (5.9kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Topsides**  
7½oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (2.2kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

### DESIGNER

W. Wilke (1994)



The 355 is quite a beamy boat with the maximum waterline beam carried well forward, giving it quite a bluff entry.

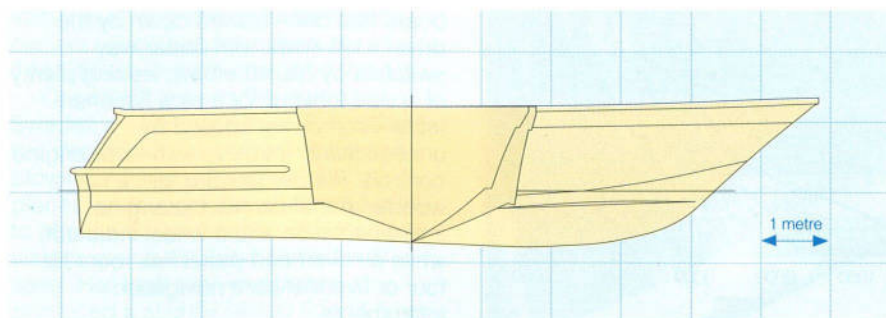
Underwater, the hull shape is unremarkable, reflecting the conservative views of the boat's veteran German designer, Winfried Wilke, and relatively low speed aspirations: the chine flats are small; there is a single, short spray rail on each side; and the boat is without the fashionable propeller tunnels.

The most unusual feature is the exhaust pipes, which are carried below the waterline through hollow fins, like small, fixed rudders. This undoubtedly helps keep noise levels low, and may contribute towards directional stability.

The topsides are quite high, with a single knuckle about a foot below the hull-to-deck joint. The joint itself is virtually horizontal, and is visually emphasised (as well as physically protected) by a heavy rubber fender. Above this, the deck humps upwards over a long side window that runs most of the length of the forward accommodation.

The hull construction is a fairly light lay-up of hand-laid chopped strand mat and woven rovings, relying on lots of foam panel stiffening and foam-filled frames and stringers. Then, in something of a change for Storebro, separately moulded GRP modules are installed, to form the basis for the forward cabin and galley. Most of the interior, however, is still built of wood or exceptionally high-quality ply, and that although a lot of the woodwork is cut by computer-controlled routers, an enormous amount of effort still goes into hand-finishing each piece.

It's almost a shame, in fact, that much of the detailed work that goes into the boat is hidden. I was impressed, for instance, by the trouble that is taken over the important, if unglamorous matter of noise reduction, including sheets of lead polymer added to locker doors to dampen resonance, and engineroom insulation that continues up and around the void spaces behind the saloon panelling.





# Storebro Royal Cruiser 355 Baltic



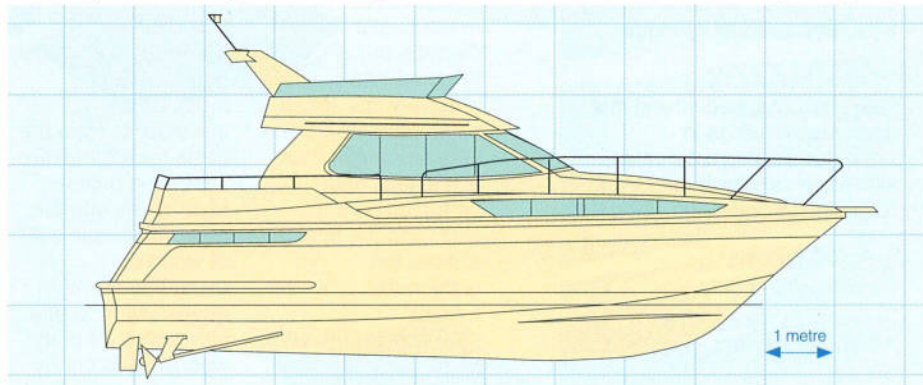
berths are both 6ft 6in x 2ft 7in (1.98m x 0.79m) and separated by an 18in (0.46m) walkway, with good sitting headroom above their thick mattresses and masses of natural light from an escape hatch in the transom.

The under-berth spaces are taken up by tanks, calorifier, batteries and Storebro's customary complimentary tool kit, but there are deep lockers in the forward bulkhead, a bedside cabinet and a locker that combines hanging and shelf space. This cabin also has its own ensuite toilet/shower compartment, though it's smaller than the forward one with floorspace of less than 3ft (0.91m) square and headroom of 5ft 8in (1.73m).

from the rear of the saloon, occupies the full width of the boat and is as long as the aft deck, though headroom over most of its area is just 4ft 6in (1.37m). One could hardly complain of claustrophobia though: its two single

## On deck

Boarding an aft cabin boat from a normal pontoon is usually a scramble, and with sidedecks 4ft 8in (1.42m)



above the waterline the Royal Cruiser 355 is no exception; a boarding ladder would be useful. But the situation is mitigated by a bathing platform that extends well aft and has an easy flight of steps to the aft deck.

In an unusual but effective layout, the aft deck is about 15in (40cm) lower than the sidedecks, so the starboard sidedeck forms an athwartships seat and locker. To port, this idea has been taken further by widening the sidedeck inboard, to form a sunbathing area.

The deck hardware is unusually substantial, with massive stainless steel bits on the bows, quarters and sidedecks, and a 33lb (15kg) Bruce anchor in a self-stowing roller just below the stemhead, served by a Lofrans electric capstan. On the test-boat, this was matched by a similar anchor with a webbing warp on the bathing platform. There's a well-placed grabrail on each side of the superstructure, and tubular guardrails – made unusually rigid by having vertical stanchions all round – but I felt the gap left for a boarding ladder could have done with some form of gate, especially as there is no toerail. An unusual feature – designed, like the stern anchor, to cope with the Swedish technique of anchoring the stern and tying the bows to the shore – is a forward boarding ladder that folds up to become an integral part of the pulpit.

The flybridge is reached by five steps from the aft sunbathing area. Not having an overhang over the aft deck makes it seem small by modern standards, but there is seating for three on an upholstered bench across the rear, and for the helmsman and one passenger in adjustable bucket seats. Instead of a radar arch, a T-shaped pillar sprouts from the middle of the rear seat. This can be lowered to reduce the air-draught by 5ft (1.5m).

## PERFORMANCE

### Top speed

25.1 knots  
3 crew, full fuel

### Cruising speed

20 knots  
Cruising range  
275 miles

## PRICE

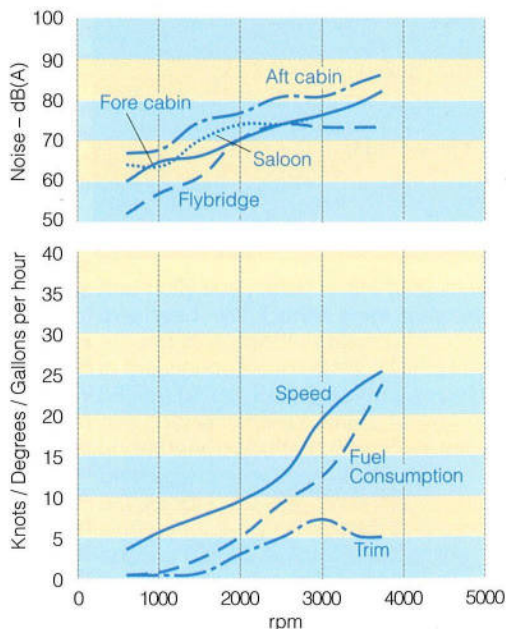
From  
£159,130 (ex VAT)  
As tested  
£191,760 (ex VAT)

## BUILDER

Storebro Royal Cruiser, S59083  
Storebro, Sweden. Tel: 0046 492 19500. Fax: 0046 492 30300

## SUPPLIER

Paul Hadley Boat Sales,  
Northney Marina, Northney  
Road, Hayling Island, Hants  
PO11 0NH. Tel: 01705 461672.  
Fax: 01705 463492.



## Handling and performance

The lower helm station has a high pedestal seat behind a vertical wood-rimmed wheel. The electrical distribution board has been tucked down by the driver's left knee, with under-way switches by his left elbow, leaving plenty of space forward for a nice flat chart table – somewhat spoiled by unnecessarily intrusive twin-lever engine controls. Further forward still, a flat wooden panel carries the engine instrumentation and a wheel indicator, while an overhead panel has room for four or five standard navigation instruments.





Far left: a toolkit is provided as part of the standard fit-out. Above: the flybridge helm and nav station were impressive. Below right: with the smallest engine options, there is plenty of room for access.

All-round visibility is good – the only blind patch is caused by the flybridge steps immediately behind the helmsman – and in less-than-perfect conditions is enormously improved by good arrangements for keeping the windscreens clear, including de-misters, washers, and large two-speed self-parking wipers, with an intermittent sweep facility.

Up on the flybridge, the helmsman is provided with the usual set-up of an inclined wheel, adjustable seat, and basic engine instrumentation, mounted on an angled panel with room for navigation instrument repeaters alongside. Sheltering the electronics against the worst of the weather under a smoked acrylic cowl is a nice touch, but better still is the provision of an acrylic-topped shelf for pilotage charts.

The handling at low speeds was totally predictable, helped by a powerful bow thruster and twin lever controls, and the boat remained quiet and docile up to her cruising speed of around 20 knots. Pushed to 25 knots, she felt as though she was riding very high, making the flybridge feel somewhat precarious. There was no cause for concern, as even in full-power, full-lock turns, she stiffened up dramatically once she immersed her chine, but I think most owners would find the option of TAM63s too much of a good thing.

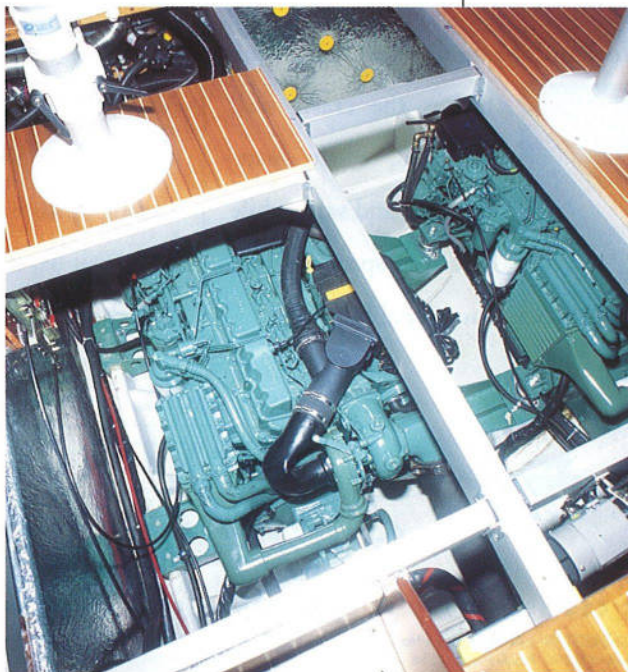
Conditions among the islands of Sweden's east coast didn't fully reflect the strength of the Force 6 that was blowing throughout our test, but in places we found a sea state equivalent to about a Force 4 or 5 in UK coastal waters, which the 355 handled with ease. Her bluff entry inevitably produced a slightly jarring ride at times,

but the boat never complained or threw water around unnecessarily, and noise levels remained impressively low throughout.

### Conclusion

The Storebro 355 is clearly not intended for those who want a quick thrash across the bay, or who revel in frolics in the rough stuff. She is, instead, a relatively sedate cruising boat for those who want to travel in comfort, and linger in genteel surroundings once they have arrived. Such people, I suspect, are more attuned to varnished mahogany than lacquer, and will be particularly appreciative of Storebro's usual high standard of joinery – as well as their exceptionally thick upholstery.

Storebro like to compare themselves with Mercedes cars – and with this Royal Cruiser, once again, they are justified in doing so. □



### ENGINES

Twin Volvo Penta KAMD42 inboard diesels, driving 22in x 22½in (560mm x 570mm) four-bladed propellers through 2.62:1 reduction gearboxes.

### Capacity

3,590cc

### Cylinders

6

### Max rpm

3,800

### Max hp

230

The test boat, and the non-flybridge version that we were using as a camera boat, were both powered by Volvo Penta KAMD42 inboard diesels developing 230hp apiece, though TAM63s are offered as an alternative. Having the smallest engines offered leaves ample space around them: once the saloon sole boards have been lifted, the port engine is as accessible as if it were in a workshop cradle.

Access to the starboard engine is hampered by the dinette overhead making complete removal of the sole more difficult: it could be done if necessary but for normal maintenance there is so much clearance above the engine that leaning across should be no problem, as the only routine service points affected are the dipstick, air filter and supercharger oil.

The whole installation is – as we expect of Storebro – highly impressive, and not only for those sometimes-neglected essentials such as double-clipped raw water pipes, and cushioned supports for pipes and cables: even down here the woodwork is varnished, and the insulation is held in place by screws with 3in (75mm) washers to make sure it stays in place.

One omission was the fire extinguisher: the hand-held dry-powder cylinder in the galley is hardly suitable for engineroom fires and would not satisfy a British insurer.



The Storebro Royal Cruiser aft cabin models:

# MORE QUALITY PER FOOT



THE NEW SRC 355 BALTIC

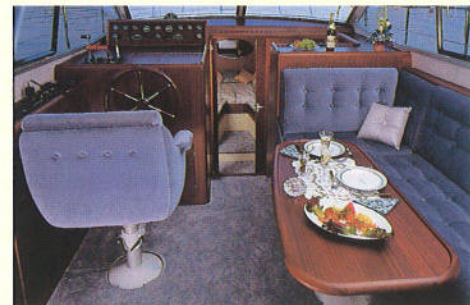
The STOREBRO ROYAL CRUISER 355 & 420 BALTIC models have ample accommodation for both family and guests. Modern design and traditional craftsmanship combine to create an exclusive package. The elegant, wood finished interiors are typical Storebro. Every detail honed to perfection. The immaculate hull design

makes the crafts well balanced, easily manoeuvred and safe, while offering spacious and functional interiors.

At the Southampton International Boat Show, 16 – 24 September 1995, we are proud to present our latest success, the *new* Storebro Royal Cruiser

355 Baltic. A richly equipped aft cabin boat, available with or without flying bridge, and with several engine options.

Visit us, step on board and experience the famous Storebro feeling.



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SRC 420 BALTIC



SRC 355



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