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STOREBRO
TRUE SCANDINAVIAN

STOREBRO ROYAL CRUISER 465 BISCAY



Simply the best?
to the future with Storebro's RC465



At a Glance

Length
46ft 5in (14.20m)
Flat out
34.5 knots
Engines
Twin 480hp
Volvo TAMD74P EDC
Price from
£438,275 inc VAT

Storebro RC465 Biscay

Traditionally styled, but built using the latest manufacturing technology, and with a quality of finish that surpasses most other marques, the Swedish-made Storebro RC465 Biscay stands out from the crowd

Class conscious

TEXT TONY JONES PHOTOGRAPHS LESTER MCCARTHY





Every builder in the world wants you to believe that their boats are a cut above the rest. The brochures of builders such as Azimut, Fairline, Princess, Sunseeker, and many others are peppered with near-identical phrases: “a unique blend of style, innovation and performance” or “an unrivalled combination of luxury, practicality and seakeeping”. After a while they usher in a feeling of *déjà vu*. One brochure seems much the same as another; differences between boats are outnumbered by the similarities. And why? Because mainstream builders are all chasing roughly the same type of customer, which inevitably leads to their offering roughly the same type of boat. To find a model that’s really out of the ordinary you’ll have to look elsewhere.

Those hunting for something distinctive need search no further than Storebro Royal Cruisers, based in the tiny village of Storebro, near Västerik in Sweden. But what makes this company any different from the others? Well, how many mainstream builders have their own museum with exhibits going back to 1728? Storebro do – located in an immaculately restored 1824 house that was previously the company offices and is now used for entertaining customers.

And Storebro aren’t pursuing that ubiquitous man in a Merc which every other company is desperate to snare. They claim that “everything on a Storebro boat has been designed for life at sea and is ideal for those who spend a lot of their free time on board in search of new and exciting nautical experiences”. ‘Nautical’ is



Lay-up weights

(reinforcement only)

Deck

8.4-11.3oz/ft²
(2.55-3.45kg/m²)
plus 15-30mm
Divinycell core

Topsides

9.7oz/ft² (2.95kg/m²)
plus 20mm Divinycell

Chine

30.7oz/ft² (9.35kg/m²)

Bottom

26.0oz/ft² (7.95kg/m²)

Keel

56.7oz/ft² (17.3kg/m²)

certainly one word I was hard pushed to find in those other brochures. Storebro’s claims might seem over the top if their boats were much the same as everyone else’s. But they’re not. The Storebro RC465 Biscay is no exception, differing from other marques in three main respects: build, price and appearance.

Opinions on looks are clearly subjective. What one person feels is ‘timeless’, another perceives as ‘old-fashioned’. Personally, I think the styling is stuck in that awkward limbo between dated and classic. If I owned a Storebro I would always be slightly worried that people would think I was driving an old Princess or Fairline. But I fancy real Storebro owners don’t concern themselves with the view of others, and particularly not the opinion of anyone capable of making such a mistake.

The odd thing is that Storebro can be really radical when they want to be.

Technical editor David Marsh described their new flagship, the 62ft (19m) GS62, tested earlier this year, as “the most extraordinary 62-footer I have ever set eyes on” (*MBY* June 2001). And the reason it’s so striking is that almost the entire side of the saloon/wheelhouse is a single, enormous pane of glass. You can’t really call it a window. And the interior layout, penned by cruise-ship specialists Tilley Design, is not only a complete departure from normal Storebro practice but has some truly unique features.

Handling and performance

A particularly quiescent Solent – on the day after the Southampton Boat Show – gave no opportunity to test the Storebro’s seakeeping qualities. Crossing the highest and steepest part of the wash from the Nimbus 370 camera boat revealed that the boat needed to be dead upright to get a good, soft cut. That may be because the wide chine flats extend quite well forward. But a wave and a wake are not at all the same thing, so the effect would probably be less obvious at sea.

The design of the hull, coupled with the efficient shaft angle, certainly produces excellent straight-line speeds. And despite the heavy laminates and superb build quality the 465 is not a heavy boat. At 12 tonnes unladen it’s directly comparable with the slightly smaller Fairline Phantom 43.

High-speed turns revealed the hydraulic steering to be under-gearred at five turns lock-to-lock. The last half turn took quite an effort. Increasing the size of the steering ram to give seven or eight turns would help

Storebro RC465 Biscay



Open pulpit makes boarding easier.



Cockpit table large enough for six crew.



Removable safety rails round bathing platform.



a lot, but frankly I would expect power steering on a boat in this price category.

Manoeuvring at close quarters requires a delicate touch on the gear throttles, and a readiness to reselect neutral almost the moment you hear the gears engage. The powerful 10hp bow thruster makes lateral movement easy and immediate. Minimum speed with both engines in gear is five to six knots, but the rudders are powerful enough to make a single engine work at around four knots with no difficulty.

All the effort put into noise suppression is reflected in the decibel figures. In the saloon, 72dB(A) at 34.5 knots just beats the previous best we've recorded on test – 73dB(A) at 35, by the Storebro GS62. And 74dB(A) in the cockpit at cruising speeds is really exceptional.

The lower helm station follows the traditional layout, with a vertically mounted wheel and two pillar-mounted seats. Good adjustable footrests and folding squabs allow you to sit, stand or perch according to personal preference. The console is big, bold and square, there's a huge chart area, and the standard navigation kit is all top-quality Simrad.

This attention to detail reflects the Scandinavian approach to inside helm positions, as opposed to the Mediterranean outlook. The Scandinavians operate on the principle that: "We are often going to go out when the weather isn't good enough to drive from the flybridge, so the inside station needs to be really good." Whereas the Mediterranean view tends to be: "If we can't drive from upstairs we aren't going out."

On the flybridge you sit low behind a



Engines

Twin Volvo Penta
TAMD74P EDC
480hp @ 2,600rpm
6-cylinder
7.28-litre diesels
1.77:1 gearbox ratio
4-bladed props
24in diam × 31in pitch
(610mm × 787mm)
87% blade area ratio

deep, tinted 'destroyer' screen that's more than usually effective at deflecting the slipstream over your head. The passenger seating is superbly flexible. Two hinged backrest sections convert the front part of the settee into a forward-facing seat or allow the aft seats to become part of the sunbed.

And finally, there's another of those special Storebro features. All the cockpit and flybridge cushions are covered with fabric, rather than vinyl, and are made

from three separate grades of foam with an open-mesh drainage and ventilation layer at the base. Storebro says that if you sit on a wet cushion – as we all do from time to time – the water will be squeezed out of its bottom instead of squelching up around yours.

On deck

Mooring and anchoring kit matches the quality of the rest of the boat but fender stowage is a bit sparse. The 465's styling means that fender baskets on the rails wouldn't look out of place. Those expecting to moor stern-to regularly should ask for two extra cleats on the buttresses and ligne-morte rollers forward. Boarding from a pontoon is easy, thanks to the design of the bathing platform that boasts unique removable safety rails around its edge. The guardrails are high, the side decks wide, and teak is standard throughout.

Accommodation

The two-cabin interior layout in the 465 Biscay is completely conventional – but the execution isn't. At first the saloon seems small for a boat with a hull length of just under 45ft. A quick look at the plans shows that a vast amount of room on the starboard side is taken up by what appears to be an oversized settee and dining table. In fact, neither are oversized; they are simply full size. Only to be expected? Well no, because many builders subtly downscale the furniture in their smaller boats. If that sounds crazy, it's a reflection on the store set by initial, but often deceptive impressions of



spaciousness and 'boat show appeal'. You only get to notice the lack of thigh support and backrest cushioning after you've bought the boat.

Producing a settee that is just as comfortable when you are stretching out to relax as when you are sitting up at table is a tricky feat, but Storebro have managed it perfectly. And the table is huge. No need to squash up the place sittings to make room for the salad bowl here. The upholstery quality – and that includes the free-standing armchair behind the helm seats – is top-notch. You'd be more than happy to have this stuff in your sitting room at home.

And there are other unusual features. This report could be filled with a list of 'where most boats do it that way, Storebro do it this way' items. For example, the aft corners of the saloon are used for a bookcase behind the settee and television/video cabinet opposite. Except that it isn't a small portable TV as you might expect, but an expensive 17in diagonal TFT monitor with a separate receiver and video recorder below. Of course, lots of builders use TFT or flat screens now – but not as standard.

Most of the small lockers have vertically sliding doors that simply can't burst open in rough weather – an excellent idea. The doors appear to be solid ply panels, so it took me a little while to twig that in some cases there's no space above the locker for them to slide into. They are, in fact, made from strips cut from a single sheet and glued to a fabric backing. As you lift them they slide up and over the top of the locker, a bit like a roll-top desk. But the

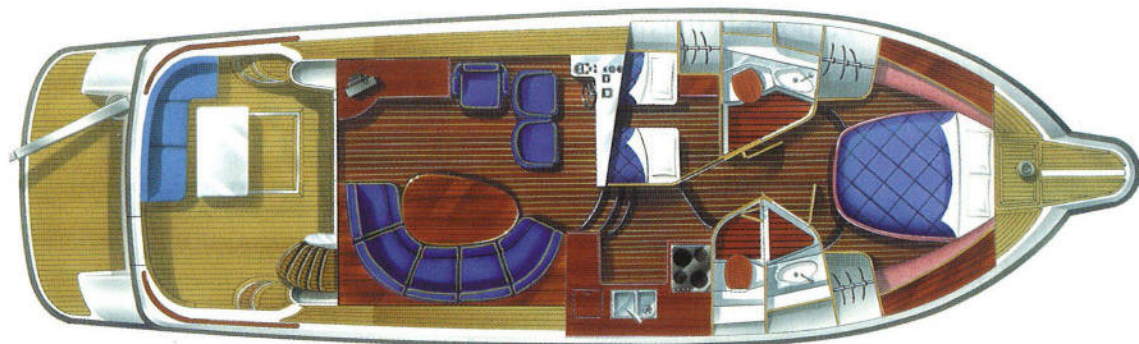
workmanship is so good that when they're closed you can't see the joins.

The woodwork throughout the boat is expensive khaya mahogany ply with a double-thickness outer veneer. It's beautifully crafted, with a restrained but immaculate satin finish, and makes a refreshing change from the ubiquitous high-gloss American cherry. Where there's plenty of light it looks glorious. But I feel that both cabins could do with a little less wood and a little more light-hued fabric to brighten them up. Bigger portlights would help too.

Storebro have clearly taken on board some of the criticisms we made of the GS62 in our test. Both heads now have extractor fans and opening deckhead portlights, and there's a full-length, framed mirror in the master cabin, and more halogens and reading lights. The large skylight hatch in the master cabin has a solar-operated extractor. Yet there are a few flaws that still need to be addressed. Although there are useful



Top: large saloon table has useful built-in chart area. Above: U-shaped galley provides plenty of countertop.





Top: roller doors can't spring open in rough weather. **Above:** deep fiddles double as handholds.



high-level lockers, Storebro haven't got the handy shelves and vanitory stowage everyone else fits at about mattress level. Still, lids on either side of the bed allow access to the space underneath – ideal for storing shoes.

The overall ambience of the interior is traditional rather than modern. For a start, there are no carpets – just teak and holly sole panels, and nearly all have visible lifting rings. Access to the hull interior is unparalleled. With no carpets, high-frequency noise will take advantage of the tiniest gap, so the sole panels need to fit really accurately. And of course they do. Moreover, all the panels are constructed from two layers of ply with a sound-deadening compound in between.

Every horizontal surface has a deep fiddle. In critical places, such as the steps down to the galley, these double up as perfectly placed handholds. In addition, the steps have half-round rubber mouldings at the edge to stop your heel slipping.

Design, construction and engineering

There's nothing radical about the 465's hull shape: it's a classic modified vee with semi tunnels. The props are as far back as they can go and the rudders are hung on the transom. This gives the shallowest possible shaft angle and should improve manoeuvrability. Storebro say that this design should also reduce noise, as the high-pressure impulses from the prop tips impact on the solid edge of the transom rather than the tunnel roof. It works: noise levels in the cockpit, as throughout the rest of the boat, are exceptionally low.

Storebro aren't the only firm to use a separately moulded stringer system but to the best of my knowledge, no one else sands the entire surface of the hull smooth before fitting it. Or uses such beautifully graduated laminations to bond it in. Or produces a flo-coated surface you would be happy to eat your dinner off.



The stringer system – the design of which resembles an egg box – effectively extends the engine bearers right up into the forefoot at full depth, while there are two additional stringers and lateral frames outboard. This does away with the need for a plywood sole support structure in the forward part of the hull and forms a deep central bilge isolated from the rest of the hull. The advantage of this design is that there's no chance of bilge water slopping into the stowage areas underneath the bunks in rough weather.

Where the stringer system blends into the hull, beneath the foot of the bed in the

forward cabin, you would normally find a token collision bulkhead coming up to sole level. I say token, because cabin soles are usually set as low as possible in the interests of headroom and if this area gets flooded it wouldn't take long for water to find its way over the top and start flooding the rest of the hull. Storebro have taken a leaf out of modern tanker design and double skinned the vulnerable forefoot area – with a panel extending from the base of the bulkhead, out to the hull sides and up underneath the chain locker. It's such a cheap and simple safety measure I wonder why it hasn't been done before.

Mechanical engineering is of a very high standard. Auxiliary system components have been gathered together in the lazarette, which makes them easy to service. A few adjustments, such as the addition of a couple of racks, would turn a good installation into an excellent one. Despite the presence of two large waterlift silencers, two big water tanks, a wonderfully accessible battery box and a genset, a clear space has been left down the middle to give access to the steering gear. On top of this, there's still plenty of space left for stowage.

The engineroom is accessed through the saloon sole with the main hatch lifting on gas rams. (No carpets to roll back, remember.) Daily checks could be done from above if only TAMD74Ps had extended dipsticks like the KAD series. The header tanks, raw-water strainers and fuel filters are paired and easily accessible. The fire-extinguishing system uses CO₂, with automatic and manual operation.

Verdict

It's a good job not everyone builds boats like Storebro. If they did, few could afford to go boating. Now we come to the final significant difference between this and other makes – the price.

Whether you consider £438,275 inc VAT as a bit steep, jolly expensive or plain outrageous is a personal matter. But I don't know anyone who would call it cheap.

Once you have brought the specification of the slightly larger, three-cabin Fairline Phantom 46 as close to the Storebro's as is possible (teak side decks standard on the 465 but not available on the Phantom), you'll find this comparable boat comes in at £382,959 inc VAT – a 'saving' of over £55,000. And the Phantom is pretty good boat in its own right.

However, the extra money does at least go on tangible assets, not just a designer label on the waistband or some nebulous brand image. Storebro can show you where every penny has been spent. But many people's eyes glaze over when you start to explain about double-layered, acoustically deadened sole panels and multi-layered foam cushions. And if the less expensive ply used by major British boatbuilders is up to the job and looks pretty smart once it's stained and lacquered, why use khaya mahogany? It's a fair question.

The answer is this: Storebro will build a total of around 30 boats this year. Seven or eight of these will be 465 Biscays. And there are at least seven or eight people worldwide who feel that paying this sort of money is justified for a boat that is above average in most respects and, in some, simply the best. **MBY**

Thumbs up or thumbs down?

UPS

- Exclusivity
- Build quality
- Practicality
- Attention to detail
- Low sound levels
- Performance
- Engineering and construction

DOWN

- Styling (subjective)
- Price

The Rivals

Storebro 475 Commander

Same hull as the 465 Biscay. Cockpit and bathing platform identical. But appears to be a much bigger boat as taller superstructure provides a raised pilothouse and larger flybridge. Moving the galley into the main saloon gives room for three cabins down below. Same engines as the Biscay and one tonne heavier but top speed still well over 30 knots. Changes add £30,000, bringing retail price to £468,825 (see New Boats, p23).



Fairline Phantom 46



Ferretti 430

Fairline Phantom 46

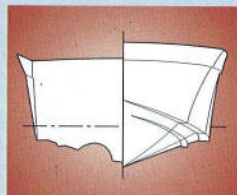
The value-for-money option. Galley-up layout allows two double-bedded and one bunk-bedded cabins to be squeezed in down below while there's the option of a single berth crew/kids cabin right aft. Good build quality and contemporary looks. Excellent helm stations. Twin TAMD74Ps give just over 30 knots. £382,959 with roughly comparable spec, but teak side decks not available.

Ferretti 430

The modern, stylish option – a cut above the norm. A little smaller than the other two rivals, but build quality comparable to the Storebro and the best engineering of all. Choice of three cabins with the galley up and two with it down. Optional crew cabin aft. Useful dinette opposite helm station. Uses the ubiquitous TAMD74P to achieve 31 knots. Underwater exhausts very quiet. £378,454 but passerelle comes as standard.

Data

Overall length	46ft 5in (14.20m)
Hull length	41ft 8in (12.73m)
Beam	13ft 11in (4.25m)
Displacement	12 tonnes light, 14 tonnes loaded
Draught	3ft 3in (1.00m)
Air draught	16ft 6in (5.05m)
Fuel capacity	343 imp gal (1,560 litres)
Water capacity	132 imp gal (600 litres)



RPM	1,000	1,500	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,650
SPEED	8.9	13.8	19.7	23.6	27.3	30.5	34.5
TRIM	2°	7°	7°	6°	5°	4.5°	4°
GPH	4.0	14.1	19.4	21.6	27.3	34.5	44.0
MPG	2.53	1.11	1.19	1.25	1.16	0.98	0.90
RANGE	611	269	279	300	275	243	216

Range allows for 20% fuel reserve, 50% fuel, 50% water, 4 crew, 6in chop. Force 1-2 for speed trials.

Cruising	30.5 knots, 243 miles @ 2,400rpm
Flat out	34.5 knots, 216 miles @ 2,650rpm
Price from	£438,275 inc VAT
Price as tested	£438,275 inc VAT
Designer	Storebro Bruks AB/John H. V. Lindblom (2000)
RCD category	B (for 12 people)
Contact	Tel: +46 492 19 500. Fax: +46 492 30 300. Email: info@storebro.se Website: http://www.storebro.se

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)	Saloon	Cockpit	Flybridge
Cruising at 30.5 knots	69	74	63
Flat out at 34.5 knots	72	78	70

STOREBRO

— a piece of Fine Craftsmanship —



ROYAL CRUISER 475 COMMANDER

An exciting new concept from Storebro, and an addition to Storebro's fleet of classic elegant boats built using the most up to date techniques. The same successful hull has been utilised as on the SRC 465 Biscay, providing an economical soft riding hull with minimal wake, representing the latest in hull design. The interior is designed to give that genuine nautical atmosphere which is synonymous with Storebro. Beautifully varnished interiors in Khaya mahogany and the boat also includes many practical details and solutions that are appreciated by serious and experienced yachtsmen. Storebro's latest techniques for sound insulation makes the 475 possibly the quietest boat on the market today. The Storebro Royal Cruiser 475 Commander is truly a motor yacht built to meet Storebro's motto "The yachtman's yacht".



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