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6 PAGE **NEW F380** SEA TRIAL

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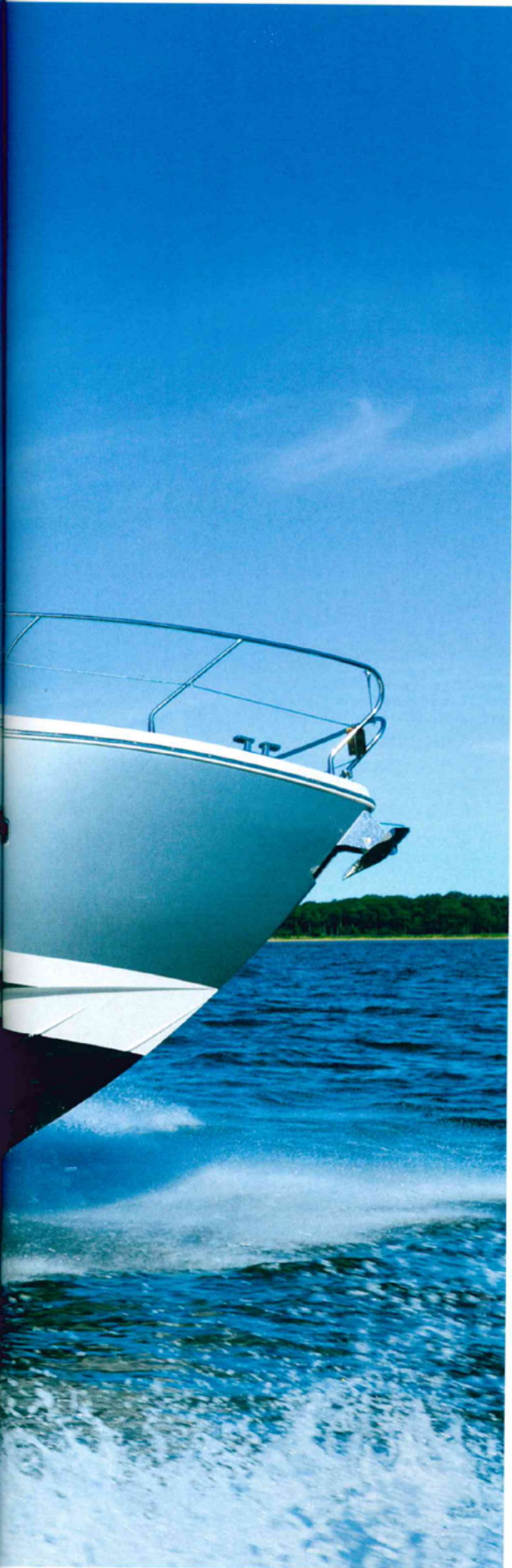


SEALINE F380

Hugely anticipated, Sealine's first new boat hits the water. And it is brimming with practicality, drives like a dream and looks better than ever – clearly good things come to those who wait

Text: **Jack Haines** Photos: **Lester McCarthy**





The Sealine F380 is not the most expensive or glamorous boat that you will read about in the magazine this year but it may just be the most important. This is the first new model since the brand was bought out of receivership last June and much hangs on its success. But it is also hugely important for all would-be buyers of small flybridge boats.

This is a model that harks back to Sealine's heartland, a boat that it should have been building for years and one that faces very little direct competition. Entry-level flybridge boats, once ten a penny, are a dying breed so a new arrival on the market from a well-known builder with the sort of underpinnings the F380 has is big news.

Let's start with what we know. The F380 shares a hull with the excellent SC35 (now the S380) and also uses the same sterndrive set up. Power comes from Volvo in D4 260, D6 300 and D6 330 variations. The S380 is one of those rare beasts that despite a voluminous hull is still a lot of fun to chuck around with a surprising ability to iron out the chop on longer jaunts. Adding an extra deck up top is unlikely to help (some sterndrive flybridges are prone to dramatic lean angles) but if the F380 can replicate some of its sibling's fast, fun, fuel-efficient abilities, it's a very good place to start.

Some more factoids? Okay, the F380 now speaks German and is built in the Hanse factory alongside the Fjord range of motorboats as well as Hanse, Dehler and Moody sailing yachts. Aurelia, the private equity group which owns all these marques, bought the Sealine brand and the rights to the pick of its model range last year after the Kidderminster yard called in the receivers.

The group specialises in building sailing boats and a hell of a lot of them, too. At full capacity its state-of-the-art factory could pump out 2,000 boats per year from its rolling production line. The yard is run in typically Germanic fashion and the production line monitored within an inch of its life. Make no mistake, Hanse is right up there with the likes of Jeanneau and Bénéteau when it comes to production boatbuilding.

I am handed the keys with the sun fading on a perfect early summer's day in Griefswald, northern Germany, home to the Hanse factory. The water in the protected bay where the test will take place is placid and oily, inviting the sort of lock-to-lock lunacy that only sterndrives can deliver. This is going to be interesting.

The flybridge helm has to be the place to start; sun in the face, wind in the hair and the added fun of leaning into the turns from the elevated spot on the F380's top deck. You slide into the cosy double helm seat and the wheel and throttles sprout out just where you need them. One hand on the wheel, one on the levers – exactly how it should be. Even at slow speed you can feel the instantaneous response of the sterndrives at even the merest nudge of the wheel. Sterndrive propulsion is so fantastically direct and, of course, you have the extra ability to tweak the ride thanks to the moveable legs working in cahoots with the trim tabs.

A SEXIER SKILLED SEALINE

Nudge the speed up to 20 knots and the F380 comes alive. It nips on to the plane and into an easy canter. The steering livens up even more and we begin to jink around the chase boat. A sharp turn to port reveals the true depths of the F380's agility. There's a big lurch as it dips a shoulder into the turn. The first time it happens is slightly alarming but after a few more hard turns you begin to trust the hull. It never falls out of line even though you can achieve some hilarious angles of heel. Trust the grip and the hull's refusal to slide at the stern and you can really start to have some fun. Proper, laugh out loud, grinning-like-an-idiot fun. There are 700hp RIBs that are less enjoyable to hare around in than this and it's because the fun is so accessible. You're not sitting there with clenched teeth and wet palms, you're simply enjoying a boat that handles so confidently and so sweetly yet looks like, well, a short Sealine flybridge.

In the glassy calm it was so easy to make minor adjustments thanks to the light, direct steering and the hull's grip and solidity. With the throttles pinned to the dash we managed a healthy 32.6 knots. The boat tester in me longed for the D6 370s and their extra grunt as the hull feels like it would relish the power. But,

To have an entry-level flybridge from a well-known builder with the sort of underpinnings the F380 has is great for buyers

in truth, for what people who are going to buy this boat need, the 330s are a good match.

The driving experience is no less engaging downstairs. If anything, the ergonomics are even better and the view through Sealine's trademark enormous windscreen is excellent. With the aft doors shut and drowning out the motors, which are tucked right at the back of the hull, 25 knots on the GPS and my arm dangling out of the side window the F380 felt like an accomplished cruiser. This is a lower helm that you want to use, not just when it's raining stair rods either. Sealine always did do a good helm station and nothing has changed. It looks good for a start, classy grey is twinned with sand-coloured vinyl on the dash top and arm rest plus there's cream leather on the grab rail on the port side. The dials are clear and cupholders plus a little storage tray mean you can always find somewhere to chuck loose items and an LED map light on a bendy stalk makes reading charts at night that bit easier.

HEY, GOOD LOOKING!

The well-designed helm sets the tone for a boat that is littered with smart practical detailing. First of all there is the sheer amount of storage that Sealine has managed to cram inside the F380. It starts in the engineroom where the motors being pushed right up to the transom make space for a vast storage area in front. You would need to invest in some storage crates but the empty space is there for you to use. Just don't spend too much time crawling around down there as the choice of floor material – hard plastic grating – seems as if it was chosen to purposefully inflict as much pain on your knees as possible.

The storage voids continue in the saloon where there are two large, dry storage spaces under the saloon floor – the aft one is big enough to swallow really quite bulky items. If there is some space going spare then you can guarantee Sealine has made it into a cubby hole. The galley steps, galley floor, the helm seat base and even the pull-out bench opposite the dinette opens to reveal a deep chest for extra stowage. On a boat of this size, storage like this is a massive benefit.

The clever packaging of the interior continues with the cabins. How Sealine has managed to fit two good cabins and separate

bathrooms into this hull is hard to fathom but it's done it and they don't even feel cramped in. Yes, the guest cabin suffers the typical intrusion from the saloon floor and you can only stand up in the cabin entrance but the master feels plenty big enough, helped by the fact it has a small lobby to increase the perception of space. Storage, you'll not be surprised to read, is excellent but so is the variation of lockers and cubbies. Some big, some small but all with chunky fiddles and touches like sockets inside the cubby by the bed with grooves cut out of the lid for cables to run through.

Unusually for a Sealine report we've come this far without mentioning the looks. The F380's will split opinion just as every boat since the SC35 has. The F380, being a short and tall flybridge, had the potential to suffer at the hands of Sealine's slab-sided styling but in the flesh I'd go as far to say that it's the best looking new flybridge it's made. It doesn't look tall or ungainly it looks very cool, especially with the silver vinyl wrap of our test boat twinkling in the evening sun. The all-white version Sealine had on site looked good, too.

What's most impressive is that it's made the boat look good without scrimping on the flybridge. It has tall, comfortable seat backs and high rails all the way around to grab on to. The two-way back rest on the helm seat means you have two extra seats facing into the flybridge and the small slither of sunpad to starboard has an adjustable backrest so it can usefully be used as another forward-facing seat. The table is set a bit low, though, and the thin teak top looked and felt a bit cheap.

VERDICT

The rest of the boat feels perfectly well put together. Hanse says it learned a lot about building motor boats through taking on Fjord and that knowledge, along with a wealth of guidance and experience from Kiddimister, has been applied to the F380. Everything felt solid enough but only time will tell whether Hanse has got it right. It feels no better or worse than when the boats were being built in the UK – it feels like a Sealine. And that's important because the pricing of the F380 is key. Buyers' standards are higher than ever and they need to feel that they are buying into



The test boat's walnut and grey cloth looks great but there's a host of other options

Saloon table can be removed and locked down in the cockpit for alfresco dining



Bed is tall in the master but steps either side make get in and out much easier





SEE THE VIDEO



mby.com/slt380



A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

CLEVER STORAGE

The hob and the sink have removable covers. It can be a real pain to store them but Sealine has designed two separate slots to contain them.



CUBBIES GALORE

Not only is there a lot of storage on this boat it's also clever. Auto-illumination in large cupboards and fiddles to stop items spilling out on to the floor.



COCKPIT SEATS

For £3,500 you can spec these two-way seats over the standard transom bench. I found myself gravitating towards them on many occasions.



ENGINE ROOM

Stern drives mean excellent access and lots of space, too. With the help of some crates you could store most of your kit down here. But Sealine, please change the flooring!



Bags of storage in the galley, including beneath the steps, where the bins are kept



Proper shower cubicle in the master ensuite



Extended window helps brighten up the mid cabin

THE RIVALS

Galeon 380 Fly

Price from £276,000

There is a huge amount of choice for buyers. Two or three cabins, five engine options and you can have shafts or stern drives.



Prestige 420

Price from €329,600

Being launched at the Southampton Boat show, the new 420 boasts two cabins - including a full-beam master - and IPS400 or 500.



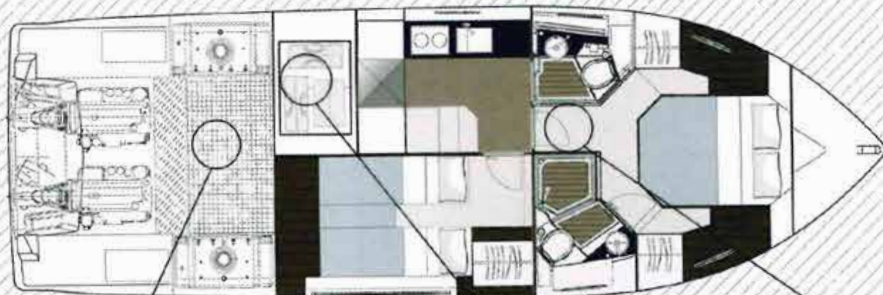
Plenty of space to spread out on with deep screens, backrests and tail grabrails for added protection



THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 37ft 4in (11.4m)

BEAM
14ft 4in
(3.77m)



There is a huge storage space in front of the engines although you will need to secure items in place

This void under the saloon is totally dry and a great place to store bulky items like crew bags and stores

It seems insignificant but this small corridor increases the feeling of space in the forward cabin

FUEL CAPACITY
200 imp gal (910 litres)
WATER CAPACITY
20 imp gal (315 litres)
DRAUGHT
3ft 1in (0.95m)
RCD CATEGORY
B for 12 people
DESIGNER
Sealine
DISPLACEMENT
9.8 tonnes

Side decks are quite narrow but tall guardrails and handholds on the flybridge make crewing easier



There's a very good boat here and the fact it's one of the most enjoyable boats to drive I've ever tested is just an unexpected bonus

a quality product. A UK-spec F380 with mid-range D6 330s comes in at around £350,000, not cheap but a very appealing package. There is also a lot of tweaking to be done with the spec, including bigger and smaller engines and countless different trim options, so tailoring the F380 to a budget shouldn't be hard. The good news is that whatever you spend, the core qualities remain; comfortable accommodation, practical detailing, fuel-efficient cruising and good looks inside and out. The fact that it is also one of the most enjoyable boats to drive I've ever tested is an unexpected bonus.

Admittedly, few people buy a family cruising boat like this to hoon about in but that lithe hull and sterndrive agility will really come into their own in a following sea and there's nothing wrong with taking your boat for a blast now and then, especially when you can outturn boats half this size.

The F380 is the Sealine that we have all been waiting and hoping for. Having weathered the worst storm in the company's history and come out the other side with a boat like this, it seems that the future is looking as bright as it has for a while.

Contact See www.sealine.com for dealers

THE HELM VIEW

Major controls and dials closely grouped, easy to read and even easier to use. How it should be done

One ergonomic slip up is the location of the trim tabs. Leaning over the throttles to reach them is awkward

Sealine's through-hull anchor arrangement saves space but makes access to the anchor tricky

Wheel and throttle in the perfect positions and the arm rest is a nice touch for longer journeys

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Twin Volvo Penta D6-330. 330hp @ 3,600rpm. 6-cylinder, 5.5 litre diesels.

MBY TEST FIGURES

	600	1,000	ECO	1,500	2,000	2,500	FAST	MAX
RPM	600	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,500
Speed	3.5	6.0	8.0	10.0	19.0	25.0	32.0	32.0
LPH	10	14	18	30	56	86	124	124
GPH	2.19	3.08	3.96	6.59	12.3	18.9	27.3	27.3
MPG	1.59	1.95	2.02	1.52	1.54	1.32	1.17	1.17
Range	255	312	323	242	247	211	188	188

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)

	ECO	FAST	MAX
Saloon	69	73	79
Cockpit	85	88	80
Helm	68	75	82

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on manufacturers readings, your figures may vary considerably. All prices include UK VAT. 53% fuel, 0% water, 4 crew and minimal stores/no tender, calm F1 for sea speed trials.

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from £272,798 (Twin 260hp)

Prices as tested £356,532 (Twin 330hp)

Convertible transom seats £3,589

Front screen demister std

Navigation pack (Raymarine i70 multifunctional display; Raymarine E125 plotter; Raymarine

Autopilot; Raymarine 260 VHF. All with repeaters

on flybridge). £14,872

Eberspächer heating £5,123

Walnut flooring in saloon £2,872

Mastervolt inverter £1,949

LED lights on sidedecks £1,477

= Options on test boat

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