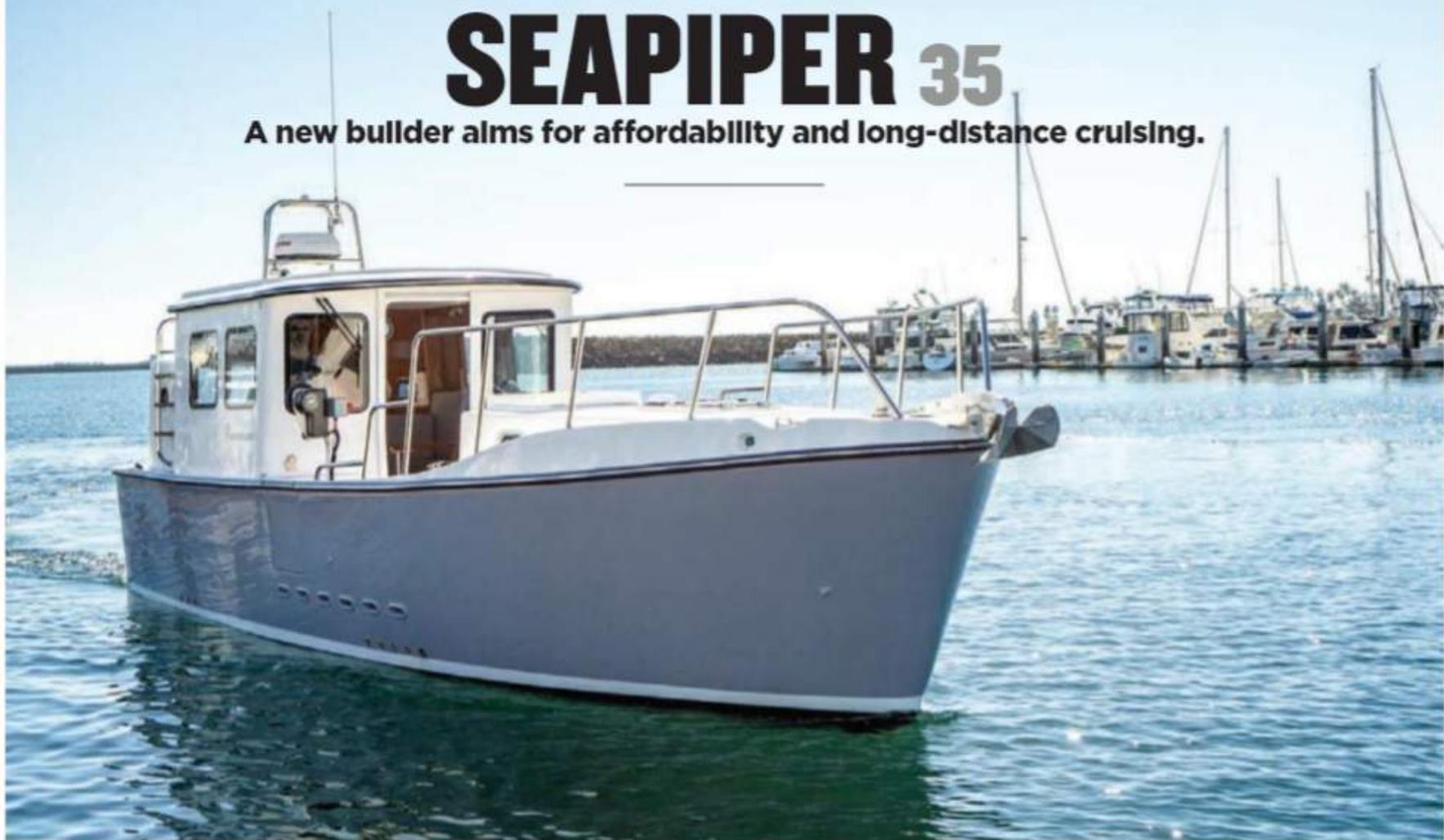


# SEAPIPER 35

A new bulder aims for affordability and long-distance cruising.



ATTENDEES WHO STROLL AROUND boat shows will notice a sea (pun intended) of excellent powerboats on display. There are all sorts of different designs — fast, plush, compact and super-sized — but in general, they have one thing in common: they're a significant financial obligation. Probably the second-biggest one most people will make.

Noting this, SeaPiper designer and California resident Ritzo Muntinga set his sights on producing a durable, long-distance boat that would be easy to maintain and attainable for the average boater, even purchased new. Built in China, the new 35-footer is a no-nonsense vessel that will take its owners to places the others will, for less.

The SeaPiper 35 is altogether a different kind of trawler, which I saw immediately from the dock. Like a crabbing trawler, its main outside space is amidships, abutted at the front by a sleeping cabin and head and aft by the pilothouse and galley. Farther aft is a compact cockpit with two seats.

It has the hardy look of a boat that can wander far, and with a single diesel in the engine space, that's pretty much true. The 60-square-foot center cockpit, which houses a service winch, evokes thoughts of a workboat, but I can think of three positive reasons to have the

main outdoor area in the middle. First, it's the area on the boat with the least motion, so it's comfortable even for folks who aren't at ease on the sea. Second, it's in full view of the pilothouse, so it can be monitored by the captain while underway, and its 30-inch coamings make it a safe area for small kids. Third, it sits low behind the forward accommodations and at anchor it's protected.

Side doors both port and starboard provide easy access from the dock, and from here passengers can go forward to stow clothes in the cabin or aft to pack provisions in the galley. These doors are also handy for boarding from a dinghy or as water access for swimming or diving, and the winch will make it easy to lift jerry cans or dive gear aboard.

Bench seats along either side accommodate up to eight people for a gathering and also serve as steps up to the sidedecks,

## SPECS

**LOA** 35 ft.

**Beam** 8 ft. 6 in.

**Draft** 2 ft., 11 in.

**Displacement**  
17,000 lbs.

**Fuel** 270 gal.

**Water** 140 gal.

**Engine** Betamarine  
85 hp diesel

**Price (as tested)**  
\$169,000



which lead to the bow. Here, a split anchor locker is accessible via two deck hatches, and the Maxwell RC8-8 electric windlass and the self-launching anchor roller will make light work of anchoring. Two 8-inch cleats are well placed to handle a snubber line or bridle, for extended periods at anchor. There's also a collision bulkhead between the anchor locker and the forward cabin.

Passengers who board via the aft swim platform will step in through transom doors whose reversing center post allows them to open inward or outward. Sliding doors open to two steps that lead down from the cockpit to the galley, which houses a two-burner LPG cooktop — no more running the genset just to make coffee — a 4.6-cubic-foot refrigerator, a single stainless steel sink and a microwave. Our test boat was equipped with the optional oven. There's a 2,200-watt inverter to power the outlets and plenty of Corian countertop space atop which to prepare meals.

Three steps up is the pilothouse, which includes a four-person L-shaped dinette whose high/low table can be converted into a 6-foot, 6-inch-long single berth (or a really cozy double) for the occasional guest. To starboard is an additional small settee and just ahead is the helm. It's tucked into the corner and has space for an optional Raymarine electronics package installed on the dash. A destroyer wheel is mounted on the bulkhead and the steering is hydraulic.

The finish here needs some rethinking, as does the space, which could use a more elegant layout for the electronics. Also, the helm seat needs a footrest the captain can use to steady himself in rough seas. A nice design feature is the inclusion of aft and forward doors. Open them both and the wind shoots through and cools down the space quickly, even if it's been closed up and the sun has been beating through the surrounding windows. For ventilation underway, an overhead hatch and four opening portlights in the galley will draw air.

The only cabin aboard is forward, separated from the rest of the interior and accessible via the mid-cockpit. There's a nice V-berth forward, a hanging locker to starboard and a wet head with a Sealand electric macerating freshwater head to port. The freshwater head is an interesting choice on a vessel that is otherwise marked by its straightforward simplicity. The freshwater rinse will prevent odors from building up in the plumbing, but it will also be a draw on the freshwater supply, which is 140 gallons separated into three tanks. Add a water-maker, and it shouldn't be a problem.

We tested hull #1 of the SeaPiper off the coast of Newport Beach in Southern California. Hull #2 is due for delivery in September and

will include some minor tweaks. It's great that the designer and builder are open to boater feedback, which will change the details in future hulls.

It was a typical day on the Pacific, with a 1-foot chop and a light breeze from the northwest. With the 22-inch four-blade prop turning at 2350 rpm, we settled in at 8.6 knots. That's a little faster than the boat's best economy cruise, which is between 6.5 and 7 knots, where it burns 1 gph and has a nearly 2,000-mile range on 270 gallons of fuel. We're talking sailboat efficiency here, and that's nice, but pushing for just an extra knot of speed doubles the fuel burn. At wide-open throttle with four people aboard and half-filled tanks, the SeaPiper reached 9.8 knots at 2800 rpm.

**The SeaPiper's sleeping cabin (two bottom left photos) is forward, while the main cabin — galley, salon, helm — is aft of the amidships cockpit.**





While it can reach 9.8 knots easily, the SeaPiper 35 excels at around 6.5 knots, where its range stretches beyond 2,000 miles.

I found the boat a bit roly when it was beam-to the swell, but not terribly so, and a Seakeeper gyro-stabilizer is an option — there's room built for it — for owners who want one.

The single 85 hp Betamarine diesel is accessible via the cockpit sole just ahead of the pilothouse and also via interior floorboards. A ladder leads down from the cockpit to an engine room and auxiliary space that has good stowage capacity for additional systems, such as a water-maker. Onboard electrical is provided by four Group 31 house batteries, for a total of 420 amp hours, plus a separate engine starting battery that can be connected in parallel, if necessary.

The diesel drives a 1¾-inch-thick stainless steel shaft that runs from amidships just about all the way aft and has a conventional shaft seal and cutlass bearing for easy DIY maintenance. Fuel is drawn in from wing tanks, each with its own fuel filter and deck fill.

The SeaPiper has an easy way about it, running smoothly, turning gradually and generally behaving like a displacement vessel, which will be in the comfort zone for ex-sailors. A long keel keeps it tracking and will protect the prop and rudder in case of a beach grounding. Six watertight compartments have been added throughout the vessel for added safety.

Visibility from the helm varies. Sightlines are good aft, and the captain can always keep an eye on what's going on in the central cockpit ahead. I couldn't quite see the bow, however, so docking or picking up a mooring will best be done by two people. Since the big prop kicks to port in reverse, the Vetus bow thruster helps immensely during backing maneuvers.

Per the designer, another attractive feature of the

SeaPiper is that it's trailerable, so owners can choose to cruise both coastal and inland waters. For example, with the optional Espar forced air heater, the 35 will be a good Great Loop boat, and with its workboat aesthetic, it will be right a home in the Pacific Northwest. Given its 17,000-pound displacement, the 35 will likely need a super-duty truck — think F450 — as a tow vehicle. With solid FRP construction below the waterline and coring above, it's not light for its size, but that's likely to keep it more stable in snotty seas.

The boat features a flat keel section that it can sit on and a highway-legal beam, so owners can take it from one cruising ground to another at 60 mph instead of at 8 knots,

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### **DETAILS**

#### **Standard Equipment**

Betamarine 85 hp diesel and TwinDisc transmission, 22-in. 4-blade prop, dripless shaft seal, LPG cooktop, Maxwell electric windlass, Sealand electric fresh-water head and more.

#### **Optional Equipment**

NextGen 3.5 kw diesel genset, Espar diesel forced air heating, Dometic air conditioning, raw-water washdown, utility winch, bow thruster, Raymarine electronics suite, oven upgrade, Seakeeper gyro-stabilizer and more.

#### **Builder**

SeaPiper, Aliso Viejo, Calif. (factory in China); seapiper.com.

#### **West Coast Dealer**

Dick Simon Yachts, Dana Point, Calif.; dicksimonyachts.com; (949) 493-2011

which opens a whole world of options. And of course, with a trailer, it can be stored on the hard instead of in the water when it's not in use.

The SeaPiper 35 is old school in its systems, which is refreshing in a world where everything is electronic and therefore more difficult to maintain. There's really nothing on this boat that can't be managed by an even minimally handy crew who are none too technical. A couple will be more than comfortable on long passages, and with ample stowage space both inside and out, they won't have to leave much behind.

Buyers looking for a flashy speedster won't find the SeaPiper 35 to be right for them. It won't plane or get to Catalina in less than an hour, and it won't seat a big crowd for wild parties. But someone looking for a boat to cruise to Mexico singlehanded or a couple looking to travel up and down the coast will find it to be a good fit, not only for its range but also for its affordability. With \$34,000 in added options, our test boat came in at \$169,000. For a new boat, that's a lot of bang for the buck. 🍷

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