



Marlow-Hunter 31

A spacious yet surprisingly speedy cruiser *by Adam Cort*

Marlow-Hunter has long been a pioneer in the marine industry, creating such innovations as its trademark stainless steel cockpit arch and the easy-to-use backstay-free B&R rig.

However, what really surprised me about the new Marlow-Hunter 31 was its plain-old sailing ability. At the beginning of a sail trial on Chesapeake Bay, the boat had no trouble maintaining a very respectable 6 knots on a close reach in 8 to 10 knots of wind. It also came about crisply in the light seas, so much so that I had to be careful not to bring the boat around too quickly, thanks to its powerful high-aspect rudder.

Then it got windy, and the next thing we knew, we were bombing around doing 7.0, 7.5 and ultimately, 7.8 knots on that same close reach as the wind hit the high teens—with the shoal-draft keel, no less. All the while the boat performed admirably, thanks again to that great rudder below the waterline and the boat's bit of chine aft. I can say with all honesty, it was one of the more memorable and exhilarating test sails I've had.

Of course, this being a Marlow-Hunter design, there's also plenty in the way of accommodations and lounging space to enjoy when you're done sailing. Topsides, the first thing you notice when stepping aboard is the boat's mas-

sive cockpit. This comes as a result of the cockpit coaming having been pushed as far outboard as possible, creating a sailing and lounging space that wouldn't look out of place aboard a 40-footer. To make sure the space works, Marlow-Hunter has included a pair of hinged footrests in the sole for when the boat is heeled and an (optional) adjustable Lewmar pedestal that swings well outboard to port and starboard, ensuring you have a clear view from the helm.

Belowdecks Marlow-Hunter has cleverly specified an in-line galley to maximize the saloon space so that, again, it feels like you're aboard a much bigger boat than a 30-footer. Although there is no nav station, per se, the boat is pre-wired so that a multifunction display can be easily installed alongside the breaker box over the portside settee, allowing the dining table to double as a nav station. Joinery work is done in a cherry veneer, and is first rate. The V-berth forward is a bit tight, but the athwartships double below the cockpit, is nice and big, albeit somewhat limited in terms of vertical space.

Aft, there's a nifty dedicated power cable compartment to starboard of the drop-down swim platform and another compartment large enough to house an inflatable kayak to port. Moving forward, the boat's B&R rig has been configured so that the lowers run inboard, right

Marlow-Hunter 31

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 31ft 11in LWL 29ft 8in
 BEAM 11ft 10in DRAFT 5ft 5in (std); 4ft 5in (shoal)
 DISPLACEMENT 11,854lb (std); 12,000lb (shoal)
 BALLAST 3,379lb (std); 3,525 (shoal)
 SAIL AREA 542ft² AIR DRAFT 51ft 11in
 FUEL/WATER (GAL) 21/50 ENGINE 21hp Yanmar
 BALLAST RATIO 29% SA/D RATIO 17 D/L RATIO 202

What do these ratios mean? Visit sailmagazine.com/ratios

DESIGNER Glenn Henderson/David Marlow
 BUILDER Marlow-Hunter, Alachua, Florida,
 800-771-5556, marlow-hunter.com
 PRICE \$156,600 (sailaway)

alongside the cabintrunk, and the uppers run outboard, providing an obstruction-free passageway along the side decks.

The basic construction of the boat has been fine tuned through the implementation of a number of different techniques and materials, including Kevlar in the layup forward for collision protection; Kevlar encircling the hull and deck in the area of the chainplates to promote strength; craze-resistant gelcoat in the deck layup; a stainless steel L-bracket to reinforce the through-bolted hull-to-deck joint; and a moisture-resistant Nida Core honeycomb in the layup. Spars and blocks are from Seldén; winches are Lewmar; and the standard nav package is from Raymarine.

All in all, a well-constructed boat that is as good a sailer as she is spacious—which is why she was judged to be one of SAIL's Best Boats for 2016. **S**