



# OPEN FOR EXCITEMENT!

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PHOTOGRAPHY: WARREN STEPTOE; COURTESY OF RIVIERA



Riviera's new 43 Open Flybridge makes an excellent cruising/family boat and, as Warren Steptoe excitedly discovered, when ordered with 'fishing' styling, it makes a first-class gameboat, too. With a design maximising the benefits of Volvo's sensational IPS drives, this is a very proud addition to the substantial Riviera stable.

**T**he release of Riviera's 43 Open Flybridge ('Open' refers to the flybridge enclosure being clear rather than window glass) at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show this year met with immediate success. An amazing nine boats were sold on the spot and the orders since then have kept coming.

Having survived the global financial meltdown, it looks like

Riviera is well and truly back on track with another winner.

Therefore, as I approached the test boat at the dock, I was surprised when my initial reaction was disappointment. Without even stepping aboard, two things caught my eye. The first was a massive swim platform gracing the transom. It makes a wonderful place to swim and a real feature in a boat used for cruising, and family and social



A single bunk beside the entryway in our test boat could easily be changed for bedroom furniture handily located beside a cedar-lined hanging space. Like the one in the bows, the aft stateroom has its own bathroom and a queen-size bed mounted on slides for convenience.

Both staterooms can be optioned with their own 10,000 BTU reverse cycle air-conditioners (saloon climate is controlled by a standard equipment 16,000 BTU unit). Ventilation in the aft stateroom is supplemented by three portholes set into the windows, one portside and two to starboard.

Open-air ventilation is always difficult to supply to any cabin space – and always a good idea of course. However, thinking about it later, I wasn't completely comfortable with opening portholes in the hull sides, so I emailed Riviera and an answer from their naval architect, Alan Dowd, was soon forthcoming: "For these aspects in particular, the

standards are ISO 1221, Windows & Portlights Strength & Watertightness requirements and ISO 12215 Hull Construction & Scantlings. This allows the vessel to meet the requirements for CE approval. The portlights are therefore approved for use in Category A1 areas, which is the hull side above the waterline", Allan said. I also note there are alarms, which sound if a porthole is left open when the ignition is switched on.

**CLASSY SALOON**

Up in the saloon, the décor is about what you'd expect from Riviera. Very classy! I doubt that even very particular ladies would be disappointed. The saloon is very, very nice and the neat galley uses minimal space despite being equipped with a dual-element cooktop, a microwave convection oven, and a twin-drawer fridge and freezer unit.

The bench top is Corian (a non-porous acrylic polymer) with

an inset stainless steel sink big enough to actually wash up in. Stowage in the galley area is one of those perennial premiums in any boat, but there's plenty of that too, although some is lost when a washer-dryer is optioned.

Speaking of stowage and of things fishing, a rod locker of impressive proportions drops from the saloon ceiling above the dinette at the touch of a button. The table beneath is a neat piece of work, too. It can be folded up compactly or opened out to cater for extra guests. Another neat touch is a portside two-seater lounge that's actually a pair of lounges, which can be pulled across to expand seating at the dinette.

**REVOLUTIONARY SYSTEM**

Now, before moving outside, mention must be made of what Riviera call 'C Zone'. From an innocent-looking little box

"As a cruising/social/family boat, it has a great deal to offer."

boating, but these are a complete pain in the butt (to put it mildly) while fishing.

The second was the moulded cockpit. I can't imagine any reader would disagree with my view about the importance of having your upper leg contact the side of a cockpit before your foot does. It's why bluewater fishing boats have had overhanging covering boards around their cockpit periphery for generations. Securing your footing by locking your thighs under the overhang is fundamental to comfort and safety while fishing at sea in any boat. Both hands are busy fishing, leaving nothing to hang on with when the boat moves unexpectedly.

I kept my thoughts to myself through a guided tour by the Riviera people, which very quickly revealed why this new model has been so well received. As a cruising/social/family boat, there is no doubt that it has a great deal to offer.

However, as BlueWater is tightly focused on fishing performance, it made the moulded cockpit and swim platform genuine concerns. After asking whether offshore sport and game fishing were seen as a serious role for the boat, and receiving an affirmative, it was time to discuss these anomalies.

Neither of these concerns appeared especially difficult to deal with and, as it turned out, they weren't. The swim platform is an option they conceded only non-fishing owners would consider, and adding overhanging timber covering boards (presumably in

teak to match the deck) around the cockpit periphery wouldn't be a problem either. We also agreed they'd actually make an already good-looking boat even better.

With that out of the way, we can now delve deeper.

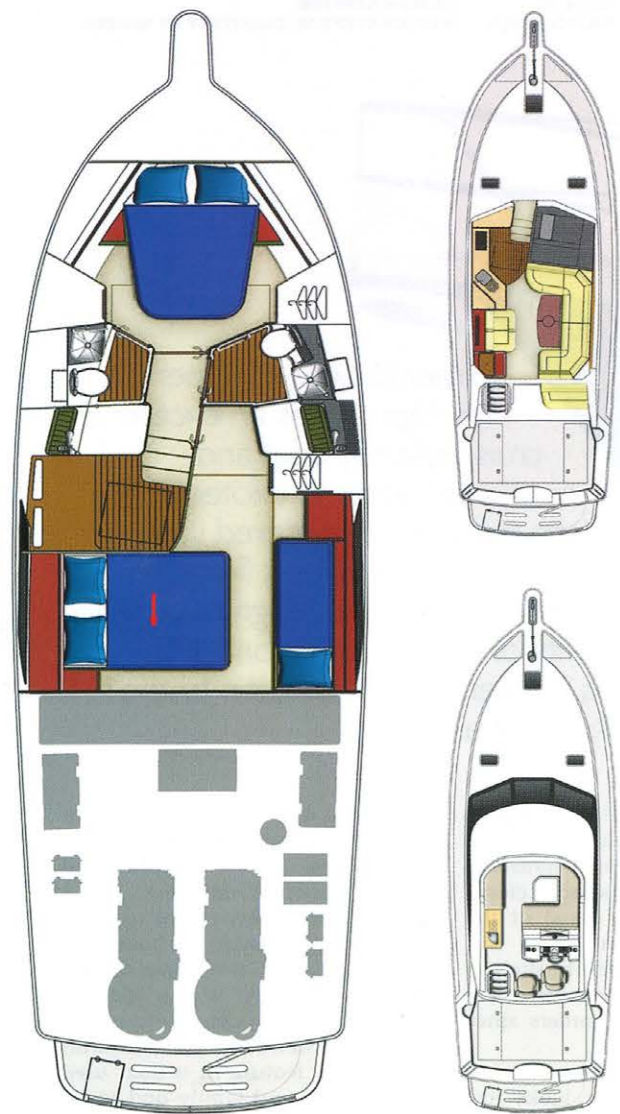
**DESIGNED FOR IPS DRIVES**

Volvo Penta's Inboard Performance System (better known as IPS) – their version of the increasingly popular pod drive – is the only power option available for this boat.

Pod drives, like IPS and Mercury's Zeus system, are rapidly achieving huge market acceptance and here we find another good reason why. IPS locates the engines much farther aft than conventional shaft drives do, and it leaves a substantial space amidships, which Riviera cleverly utilise with a spacious aft cabin set largely below the saloon.

In the bows, there's the usual stateroom with a queen-size bed. It offers ample locker room, including a cedar-lined hanging space, and has a dedicated ensuite. This is all very nice, but whether you'd use it as the master stateroom becomes a very good question when the vee shape of a bow stateroom is compared to the sheer spaciousness of the aft (or more correctly amidships) one.

Admittedly, the ceiling in the aft stateroom is lower, although this is mainly above the bed – so the room doesn't feel cramped. Large windows in the hull sides and a big skylight above the entryway from the saloon, supply plenty of daylight.





**Above:** The smoothly-contoured bulge in the centre of the transom can be ordered with either a barbecue or a large livebait tank. Outside the breezy opening to the saloon is a comfortable lounge that would make a wonderful perch to watch the lures.

**Above right:** The flybridge has its own wet bar and refrigeration which, together with the lounges, will ensure the skipper always has company to enjoy the views while travelling.

**Below:** The entire cockpit deck conveniently rises on a hydraulic ram to enable easy access to the pair of Volvo IPS 600 engines.



with an LCD screen and touch pad beside the saloon door, this revolutionary system can operate, control and monitor everything electrical onboard.

It talks the same data language as Volvo's IPS system, so engine parameters can be added to power supply, pumps, lights, entertainment and navigation electronics, refrigeration and climate control on C Zone's 'can do' list. It's also extensively programmable, allowing pre-set modes such as 'secure at the dock', 'party lighting' or 'night-time fishing' to be selected at the touch of a key pad. Wow!

Saloon access from the cockpit is through a sliding glass door. To starboard in the cockpit, against the cabin bulkhead, there's a comfortable lounge, which would be a great place to watch lures from. If this was my boat though, I'd prefer a tackle locker, freezer and rigging bench to occupy that space.

Above the lounge is a feature sure to win approval with the social set – a window opening out from the cabin. The bridge ladder is to

port, and while a bridge ladder is a bridge ladder, I thought this one notably easier than most to negotiate – thanks to a sensible angle and big, chunky, teak step treads. You couldn't quite call it a set of stairs, but I think it will keep those folk cautious about flybridge ladders very happy.

Speaking of the social set, our test boat had a flash-looking barbecue, centrally located in the transom moulding, beside a generous transom door. My (and your) thoughts are obvious here; this is where a livewell should go. Sure enough, replacing the barbie with a livebait well big enough for me to bathe in is among Riviera's options.

### LEVITATING DECK!

Now, for something you don't suspect until someone in the know shows you. The cockpit's entire deck raises itself on a ram to reveal the pair of Volvo IPS 600s in all their glory. Anyone who has ever crammed into a tiny engine room to do fluid checks or carry out routine maintenance has to love having everything so easy to access and open to inspection; dipsticks, filters, drive belts – there they are.

However, that 'self-raising deck' does present a concern for anyone intending to use a Riviera 43 Open Flybridge for heavy-tackle fishing. As we all know, a heavy-tackle chair applies considerable stress and strain to the deck, and that's where the deck's lifting mechanism comes into question.

For some buyers it would be a major drawback if a heavy-tackle chair couldn't be installed – so I was keen to hear what Riviera had to say about the matter. Alan Dowd soon provided the answer and again I quote: "If a game chair is to be fitted, the linear actuator

*needs to be upgraded to suit the additional weight on the floor. This is a custom option. All boats are laminated with an aluminium plate in the deck ready to fix a game chair base or table base. As the actuator is a fixed part that actually drives up and down, when the floor is down it is held in place by the actuator and hinges. In the case of a game chair being fitted, the larger actuator acts as a support strut directly below the chair base. The arrangement of the hinges aft, and the actuator connections to the hull and hatch, provides a triangulated hold for the floor."*

Upstairs, the so called 'open' flybridge actually includes a moulded hardtop and a full set of the very necessary clears, which are standard. Our test boat had a wet bar with refrigeration along the portside beside a moulded, lockable hatch closing off the ladder. Forward of the helm, a lounge with stowage underneath occupies most of the space.

Navigation and fish-finding duties in our test boat were taken care of by an integrated Raymarine package, displaying its wares on what, today, I suppose are the usual

pair of 14-inch display screens in front of the helm. Raymarine's suite included a 4kw radar and an ST70 SPX-Can autopilot, DSM-300 sounder and LP125 mapping GPS unit.

### EFFORTLESS HANDLING

Out on the water, the 435hp Volvo IPS 600s will move the boat along effortlessly to a top speed around 31 knots, depending on load and sea conditions. Riviera claims a range of 340 nautical miles from the 1800 litre fuel capacity.

At speed, the IPS system's electronic, variable-ratio power steering made running the 43 Open Flybridge easy. We headed out through the Gold Coast Seaway and far enough east to see how she handled a mild, yet somewhat confused sea. She handled it as easily as if it were a boat a quarter the size. The boat's motion at cruising speeds of around 25 knots was quite gentle and user friendly, too – although I didn't get the opportunity to experience life in rougher conditions.

At low speeds within the confines of a marina, the IPS system's joystick made manoeuvring into marina pens and fuelling docks easier than playing a kid's computer game. Volvo also offers an optional 'fishing' mode with IPS. This allows more revs to be used than normally available on the joystick, greatly facilitating fish fighting and any

other situation where more power becomes necessary for more radical moves than appropriate in a marina.

Reflecting on Riviera's 43 Open Flybridge, I had an uncharacteristic philosophic wandering, presumably due to our returning to port into a timely sunset! It occurred to me that most of the people who buy this boat won't do so just because it is, or easily can be, a respectable bluewater fishing boat. As much as we obsessive fishing nuts don't like to admit it, some of the best fun you can have in a boat doesn't necessarily involve fishing at all – and that's where this particular boat really shines. Sure it's a fishing boat every bit as good as lots of other fishing boats. However, you'll search long and hard among those boats to find one that will facilitate family and social boating, or be as comfortable a cruiser, as this one. ⚓

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Innovative amidships cabin configuration
- Extremely nice interior decor
- Great cruising/family/social boat that also fishes well



## SPEC CHECK

### RIVIERA 43 OPEN FLYBRIDGE

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$955,690

#### PRICED FROM

\$812,809

#### STANDARD EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

2 x Volvo IPS 600s, Volvo Active Corrosion Protection system, Onan EQD 9.5kw gen set, electric trim tabs, C Zone system, 16,000 BTU climate control system, LED DC lighting, twin ring cooktop, convection microwave oven, 2 drawer fridge/freezer, exhaust fan, electrically actuated engine room access, audio/visual system.

#### OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

Individual 10,000 BTU climate control for staterooms, extra 300 litre fuel tank, high pressure wash down system, underwater lighting, GRP moulded hardtop and clears, 32" LCD TV and DVD, Raymarine Electronics Package Number 4 (2 x 120W 14" displays, LP125 GPS antenna, DSM-300 sounder, B164 1kw transducer, ST70 SPX-Can autopilot, engine room camera, Raymarine hub), flybridge rod holders, teak cockpit deck, electric BBQ, swim platform, dishwasher, ice maker, flybridge fridge, cockpit awning, leather upholstery, Amtico flooring in galley and saloon, soft furnishing package, roller blinds.

#### GENERAL

Material: GRP composite laminates, hand laid GRP below waterline, cored laminates in topsides and deck.

Length: 14.46 metres

Beam: 4.57 metres

Draft: 1.13 metres

Deadrise: n/s

Weight: 14.2 tonnes

#### CAPACITIES

Fuel: 1800 litres

Freshwater: 460 litres

Holding Tank: 150 litres

#### ENGINE

Make/model: Volvo IPS 600 - D6 (x 2)

Type: 24 valve inline 6 cyl turbocharged, aftercooled marine diesel

Rated hp: 435hp

Displacement: 336cu.in

Weight: 900kg

Gearbox ratio: 1.82:1

Propellers used for test: Volvo Duoprop T2

#### SUPPLIED BY

The Riviera Group

Coomera, Qld

www.riviera.com