



SABRE 38 SALON EXPRESS

SOMETIMES, A BOAT JUST FITS

You know the fit of those worn-in shoes or your favorite pair of jeans? Comfortable, right? Sometimes a car or a smartphone just fits your life, too, but it's a rare quality, one that makes you feel good right from the start. That's how I felt as we headed out of San Diego Bay, bringing a new Sabre 38 Salon Express to Newport Harbor. From the minute I stepped aboard hull #6 of the model, I somehow knew where things were, mostly all within reach and intuitive to use. The boat just fit.

The Sabre 38 is a Kevin Burns design, a mix of traditional Down East styling and high-tech construction. The hull has a 24-degree deadrise amidships, which tapers back to 17 degrees at the transom. The construction is a solid resin infusion with biaxial stringers bonded to a foam core to

reduce weight. The result is a lighter, stronger boat that runs with smaller engines and has better fuel economy.

ONBOARD

If a boat can have feng shui, this one has it. The onboard experience, both inside and out, is all about flow and open living. I stepped aboard the ample swim step, where gates on either side lead up into the cockpit, where there is a straight settee built into the transom and a shorter aft-facing settee to port — the two separated by a high-gloss cherry wood table. In a stroke of genius, Sabre made this space modifiable, so the entire transom with the settee and the table can slide 14 inches aft over the swim platform, to open up the cockpit and make it easy to move around when at anchor. Everything also slides in

to join the seating areas and create a nice aft-deck dinette. This is one of the more clever uses of space I've seen and makes a 38-foot boat more practical and seemingly a bit larger.

The twin Volvo Penta D4 300 hp diesels with IPS pod drives are accessed via the cockpit sole, so maintenance is easy. Two 150-gallon rotomolded fuel tanks flank the 6 kw Kohler genset. Because the tanks are translucent, they're a great visual backup to the fuel gauges at the helm. With the hatch open, there's plenty of room to perform basic maintenance tasks or even more extensive work, with fresh air and plenty of light.

CREATURE COMFORTS

The inviting flow of the cockpit continues as the outside joins the inside when the large aft electric window lowers and the bifold glass door to starboard opens, effectively creating an indoor/outdoor great room. In the salon, a straight cabinet is to starboard and houses an LED TV on an



electric lift and a stereo. A U-shaped settee and a high-low pedestal table are to port. Another clever use of space is the backrest of the forward part of the settee, which swings aft and creates a small forward-facing L-shaped lounge where one or two people can curl up while carrying on a conversation with the helmsman. With large windows all around, there's plenty of natural light, and passengers have a 360-degree view from anywhere in the salon, even when seated. The entire interior has the trademark Sabre satin-varnished cherry finish and dovetailed maple drawers, and it is subtly lit by LEDs throughout.

To starboard is the helm with a single Stidd chair, a 16-inch Stazo wood-trimmed wheel and a well-laid-out dash. Our test boat has Volvo IPS electronic controls, a joystick, a VHF, a Garmin 5215 MFD and a Volvo Penta color display for all engine functions. It is not equipped with an autopilot, but there is room on the dash for the control unit.

Three steps amidships lead down

ABOVE Sabre's trademark satin-varnished cherry finish dominates the interior of the 38 Salon Express, which contrasts nicely with the white captain's chairs, settees and countertops. Windows all around and two hatches in the roof let in lots of natural light.

to the galley, which removes kitchen clutter from the social space but still leaves the cook connected to the conversation. There is a Kenyon electric cooktop, a microwave oven, two-drawer refrigeration and significant storage throughout. A circular sink is tucked in the corner and has a solid-surface cover, but the odd thing is there's no evident place to store the cover when the sink is in use. One idea would be to trim it with wood on the bottom, so it could be used as a cutting or serving board when turned over. Aft of the galley is an open L-shaped lounge that converts to a double bed for occasional guests or the kids. With the large optional fixed portlight, the area is surprisingly bright.

The master stateroom is forward, with a queen-size walk-around bed, a TV, a stereo and large drawers under the berth. It has direct access to

the large single head with a Jabsco QuietFlush freshwater electric head, a tasteful vessel sink and a very spacious shower behind a glass door. The master cabin can be closed off for privacy, but it can also be part of the belowdecks flow, because the panel that houses the 26-inch LED TV between the galley and the stateroom also lowers (manually or with the optional electric assist) to open the cabin. With the panel down, you can see from the bed through the salon and out to the transom settee. Now, that's great flow.

UNDER WAY

Broker Walter Johnson of JK3 Yachts was charged with running the boat up the coast for a function at Newport Harbor Yacht Club, so I and a prospective client joined him for a lovely day on the water. For our test, the Pacific Ocean delivered an amaz-



➔ SPEC BOX

LOA 38 ft. BEAM 13 ft., 4 in.

DRAFT 3 ft., 4 in.

DISPLACEMENT 21,500 lbs.

FUEL 300 gals. WATER 100 gals.

ENGINES Twin Volvo Penta D4 300 hp with IPS drives

BASE PRICE \$525,000

PRICE AS TESTED \$579,000

CONSTRUCTION

Built using dry-stack resin infusion where all materials are loaded dry into the mold and then infused with resin, resulting in a greener process and a lighter boat.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Twin Volvo Penta D4 300 hp engines w/twin IPS pod drives and joystick, Lenco Auto Glide trim tabs, 6 kw genset, 2 150-gal. rotomolded fuel tanks, 2 30A shore-power cords, 2 dedicated engine start batteries and two 4D 210 Ah house batteries, Delta anchor, Quik electric anchor windlass, Stidd helm chair, 2-burner Kenyon electric stovetop, 2-drawer refrigeration, microwave, Jabsco QuietFlush freshwater head and more.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Garmin electronics suite, custom hull colors, aluminum mast for electronics on hardtop, electric sunroof, underwater LED lights, 2,800-watt sine wave inverter, ice-maker, Ultrasuede upholstery, saltwater washdown fore and aft, Fusion stereo and more.

BUILDER

SABRE YACHTS, South Casco, Maine; (208) 655-3831; sabreyachts.com

WEST COAST DEALERS

JK3 YACHT SALES, San Diego; (619) 224-6200; jk3yachts.com

JK3 YACHT SALES, Newport Beach, Calif.; (949) 675-8053; jk3yachts.com

BELLINGHAM YACHTS, Bellingham, Wash.; (360) 671-0990; bellinghamyachts.com

ing Southern California day with temperatures in the low 70s and water as flat as a lake. These were perfect conditions for a 65-mile delivery but not so great to test a boat, so we made our own fun. In Emerald Cove off Laguna, we sidled up to the swimming-bound-

TESTER'S OPINION:

The Sabre 38 SE is a well-built coastal cruiser that is a perfect couple's boat for the Pacific Northwest or weekend in Catalina and just about everywhere in between.

ary buoy to test the Volvo IPS pods, coming at it from various angles to see how the boat responded. It livened up the crew, and smiles broke out all around. Driving pods is easy, not to mention just plain fun.

Once outside Newport Harbor, I drove in circles to create sloppy wakes. I tightened my stomach muscles each time we came at the waves — nothing. The Sabre sliced through as if to ask, “What else you got?” Thanks to the Lenco Auto Glide trim tabs, this 38-footer drives like a much bigger boat, with decisive turns that hold the boat rail-steady. I was almost disappointed that I couldn’t make her jump. Almost.

The vectored thrust of pod drives is more efficient and allows you to reach higher speeds with less horsepower and, therefore, less fuel, so the 300 hp engines deliver exceptional efficiency. The boat popped up on plane at around 15 knots while burning 16 gph, and then settled in at a cruising speed of 25 knots, where it burned 22.5 gph,

less than 1 gallon per mile, with just a 3-degree rise. We cut back to 20 knots to enjoy the day. According to Sabre, the consumption stays more-or-less the same between 20 and 30 knots, which is WOT.

A bevy of options is available, mostly having to do with electronics and décor. Two are most worth mentioning. First is the electric sunroof that opens up the forward part of the salon over the helm and passenger seat. It’s nice but expensive, adding \$15,000 to the bottom line. Our boat has the standard twin sliding hatches, which seemed perfectly adequate. Another option is the Reverso oil change system, which runs about \$1,400. I’d say this is a necessity, so there are no “deferred maintenance” issues.

Sabre is a Maine boat builder steeped in tradition and history. The company is focused on delivering old-world craftsmanship neatly mixed with state-of-the-art technology. It still builds sailboats but has added modified-V planing-hull luxury powerboats, and the 38 is now the baby in its power line. Like other Sabres, the 38 SE comes with the dedicated iPad, called the LaunchPad, preloaded with a variety of manuals, schematics and information. Oh, and don’t forget the custom tool drawer — a must.

The base price of the Sabre 38 SE is \$525,000, and our test boat came in around \$580,000, complete with commissioning. Most of the options are reasonably priced and will add quite a bit to the usability and comfort of the boat. It is a well-built coastal cruiser that is a perfect couple’s boat

for the Pacific Northwest or weekend in Catalina and just about everywhere in between. The boat has stolen the spotlight at many boat shows already, and undoubtedly, most couples will find it a perfect fit. 🍷