

Sessa Marine Key Largo 36

Italian design and exciting performance: she's far more than just a day boat

By Tim Banse

A thousand years from now college professors will be lecturing our descendants on how Italians of the modern era were famous for chianti and spaghetti, and even more famous for building boats so pretty and so powerful they could make a grown man weep. I know this future vision will come to pass because I have just finished a sea trial of the new Sessa Marine Key Largo 36. It's a powerful, luxurious day boat which was so alluring that at the end of the day, they had to throw me off the boat and threaten to call the cops if I didn't go home. You'll understand better if I tell the whole story.

Not long ago I caught up with the Sessa 36 Key Largo in Miami Beach and took her for a little ride. I spent the morning on Biscayne Bay feeling the bumpety-bump of the water against the hull and hearing the trio of Yamaha V-8's singing their siren's song. With 1050 horsepower hanging off the transom, Madame Sessa was undeniably fast. Dumping the throttle felt like I was hanging onto the back of an extreme high-performance personal watercraft. I could literally feel the four-stroke outboards bodily lifting the wetted surface out of the water, and over and on top of the bow-wave. The telling takes longer than the doing. Stopwatch in hand, I clocked acceleration from dead in the water to 30 mph with an elapsed time of just 8.9 seconds. Blistering the water at wide-open throttle the boat nudged the 60 mph mark. I suspect that tweaking and tuning the type of propeller and the pitch might conceivably

raise top speed by one or two mph. By fuel flow meter and GPS readings, and by the seat of my pants, it became apparent that the sweet spot is 40 to 45 mph.

Note that while my test ride was rigged with Yamaha V-8 outboards, diehard Mercury fans could substitute triple supercharged Verado 300-hp V-6s with 150-hp less and still travel 54 mph. Keep this in mind: besides the purchase price of each engine, as well as respective fuel economy and top speed, another vital consideration is the warranty term offered by the manufacturer. As of this writing both Yamaha Marine and Mercury Marine four-stroke outboards have a factory backed three year limited warranty term. Extended service contracts take effect when the limited factory warranty runs out. Yamaha's package adds one, two or three years to the factory coverage, while Mercury's offers incremental extensions up to a seven year maximum for the combined standard limited warranty and extended service contract period.

Before we go any further you need to know the Italian-built, Euro-style, Key Largo 36 was designed for the Med, a sea notorious for big waves kicked up by strong winds like the Sirocco and Gregale and Bora. In other words, here's a sea kindly boat, one that was built to be able to ply rough waters and still maintain an easy motion. No big surprise, the hull form boasts a nice, deep entry that neatly slices through big waves instead of slamming the bow into a wall of water. Underway she feels solid, like the rock



Triple Yamaha 350hp V-8 outboards provide more room inside the cabin, and yet don't interfere with the view.



The Italian-built Sessa features striking lines and an Euro-style whether at anchor or on plane.



The Sessa features a cockpit with more room for entertaining than may be found on some yachts.



Above: Tim Banse at the helm with Fastboats.com owner Randy Sweers.

Bottom: The open and expansive deck of the Key Largo 36 is the idea place to entertain and dine.



of Gibraltar. The ride is eminently comfortable and d-r-y. Handling manners are impeccable. She tracks true going slow or fast. Up on plane the boat pirouettes through the turns like a big woman who's really good at dancing. Dockside she's just as nimble. On the morning of the sea trial, a strong wind was pushing the Sessa hard up against the fuel dock. But shoving off was no problem thanks to the oversized thrusters that felt like they were powerful enough to break loose a cruise ship. Returning to homeport later that day, all that extra thrust gave us finely coordinated control for confident docking maneuvers.

Obviously the powerful outboard motors are the heart and soul of Sessa's new machine. Let's pause a beat for a moment's perspective. Aficionados may remember a couple of years ago when Yamaha Marine first introduced the 350-horsepower V-8s, and similarly, Mercury introduced their supercharged 300-hp V-6 Verados. These powerhouse outboards arrived on the scene because boat builders had been pleading with the engine builders for more powerful outboards that were big enough to push a boat the size and weight of the Sessa Marine 36 Key Largo. It wasn't that long ago that this class of boat didn't even exist. The payoff for having these Jovian-proportioned outboards is as simple as the sea is salt, and contrary to what you might think, it's not just potent performance. Removing a couple thousand pounds-worth of inboard engines and transmissions from the stringers, frees up considerable room inside the boat.

In this case, Sessa's design team transformed what would have been engine room into a massive mid-cabin stateroom. This means the 36-footer boasts the interior space of a much larger boat. One particularly

nice design element is the way the master stateroom is flanked, both port and starboard, by huge panoramic side windows. The net effect is that the already generous accommodation feels bigger than it actually is. And of course, you can also sip coffee and watch the sunrise while laying in bed (It's a twin that converts into a double).

While Sessa touts its Key Largo as a day boat, truth be told, it's more than that. It's also a very capable weekend or longer cruiser. The panoply of galley appliances rivals, or may even surpass, what you have at home in your kitchen. The dinette converts into a double bed so the kids or another couple can come along for the ride. The head, replete with a standup shower, is spacious enough to actually be comfortable. Must-have creature-comfort options include the air conditioning and the electrical generator.

While it's true the Key Largo 36 would be a great place to cook dinner and spend the night in goodly comfort, Madame Sessa's main claim to fame is that she is a real use boat. By that I mean most of the time aboard will be spent outside, skimming along the water, sunning on the forward sunpad, or simply lounging in the aft sundeck with room enough to entertain eight to ten family and friends.

So naturally it follows that there are certain amenities on deck. The list includes things like an L-shaped dinette, a basin with a mixer tap, an electric cooking hob, a cutting board, a fridge and of course an icemak-

er. At the back of the boat the motor platform pulls double duty as a swim platform. Snuggled away inside the compartment resides a shower fixture with hot and cold fresh water. My test ride had the optional retractable (electric) Bimini top.

The helm chair is electric and there's tilt steering to make it easy to get comfortable behind the wheel. On the foredeck resides a generously proportioned, upholstered sun-

deck. Getting forward is surefooted thanks to the rails and the wide walkway. The bow pulpit cutout makes it easy to set or retrieve the anchor.

Finally, Sessa Marine, one of Europe's largest volume boat builders has expanded their horizons into North America. The builder has signed a distributorship in the United States, Randy Sweers of FastBoats.com, in Pompano Beach, Florida. ⚓

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	38' 0" / 11.5 m
Beam	11' 6" / 3.5 m
Fuel capacity	317 gals / 1200 l
Freshwater capacity	60 gals / 230 l
Hot water capacity	5 gals / 20 l
Holding tank capacity	25 gals / 95 l
Headroom	6' 4" / 1.95 m

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

rpm	mph	gph
1000	8.2	4.3
2000	11.0	12.7
3000	20.0	23.0
4000	34	36.0
5000	47.1	60.0
5900	58	100
Time to plane 5.2 seconds		

For more information contact

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