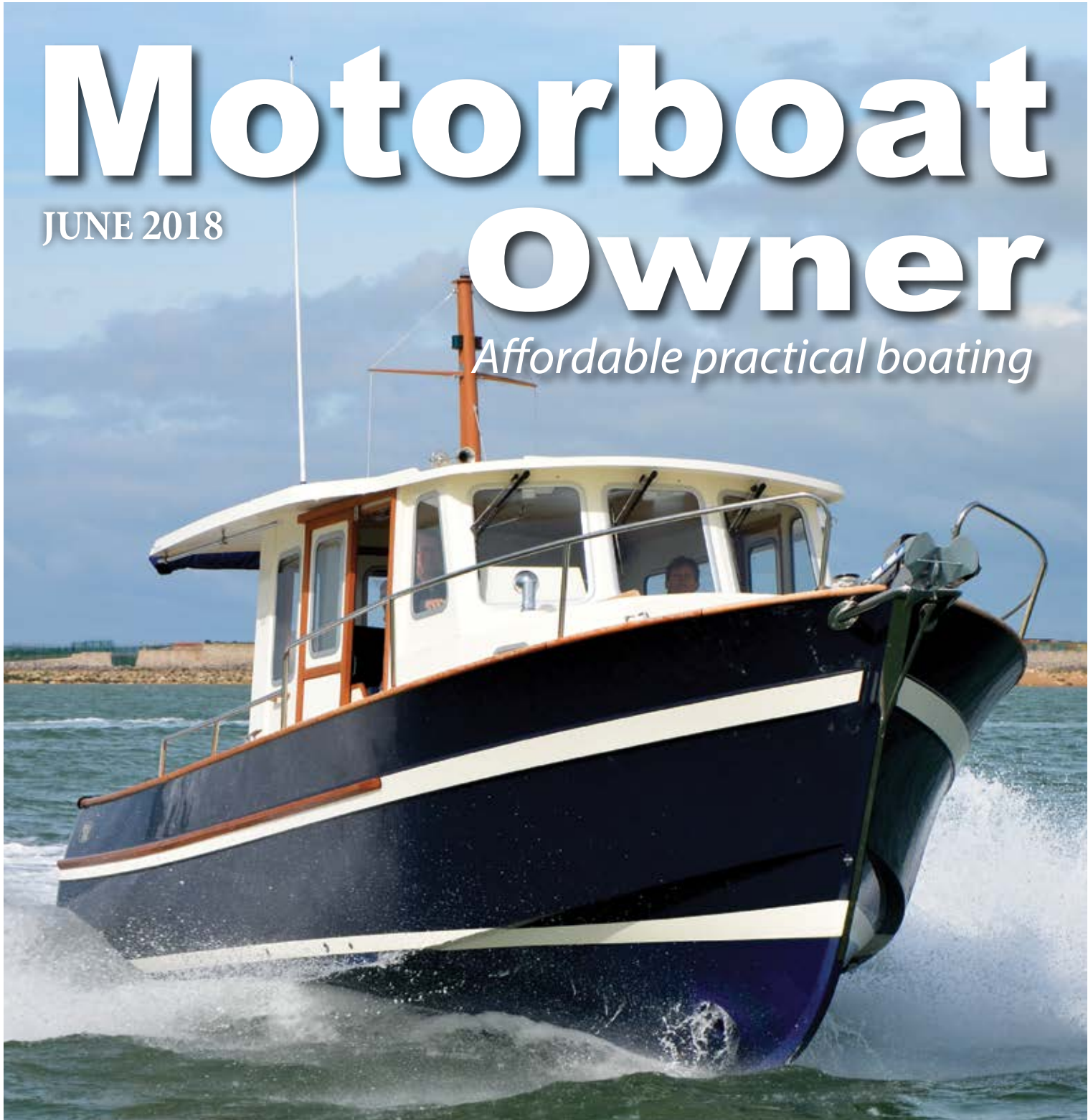


**FREE DIGITAL MAGAZINE**

# Motorboat Owner

JUNE 2018

*Affordable practical boating*



**BOAT TEST**

*Rh ea 850 Timonier*



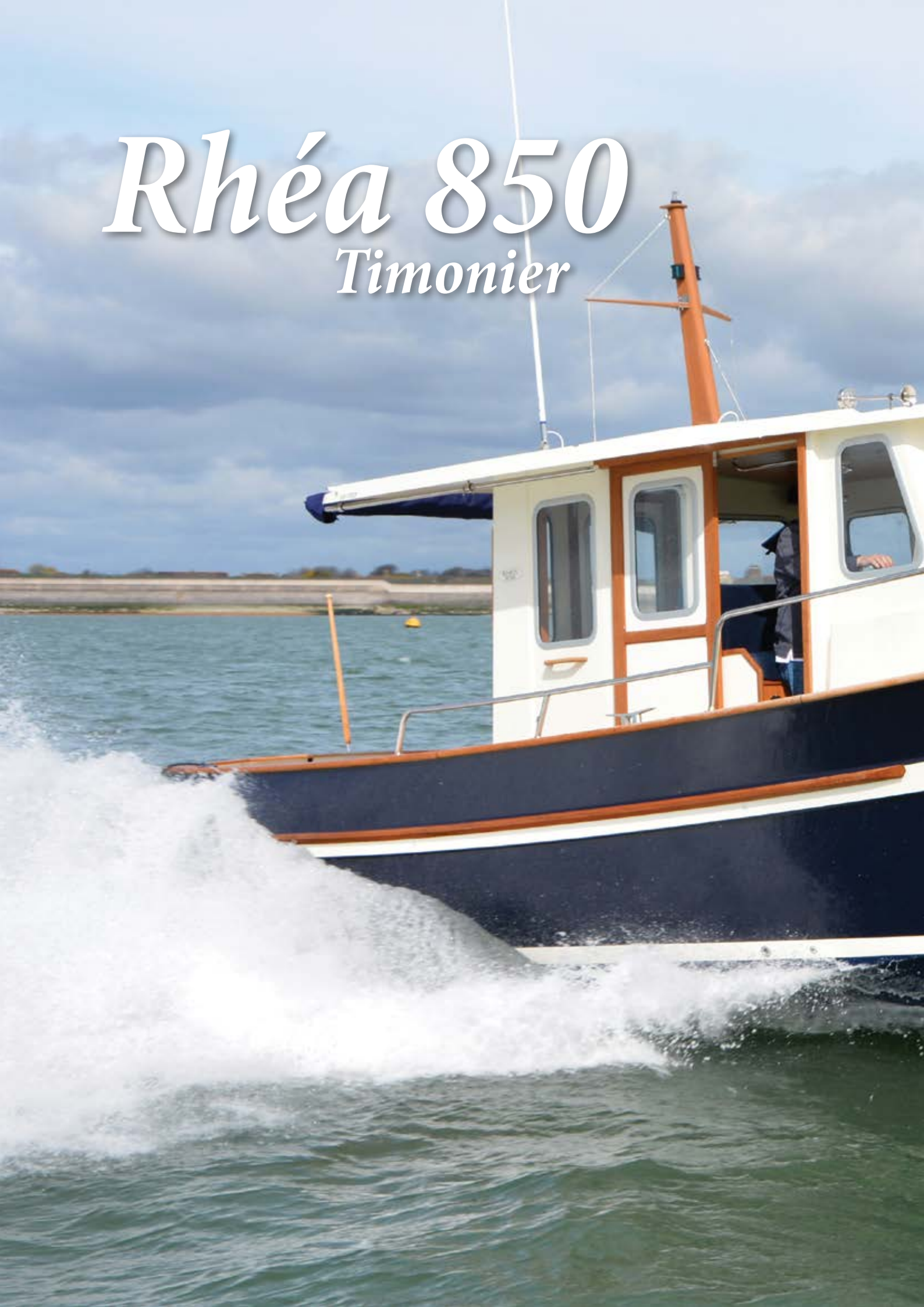
*Destination Guide*  
**PLYMOUTH**



Falcon 27 ● Battery checks ● Petrol engine troubleshooting

# *Rh ea 850*

*Timonier*



## BOAT TEST

*Length (LOA): 8.5m / 27ft 9in*

*Beam: 3.3m / 10ft 8in*

*Displacement: 4,500kg*

*Fuel capacity: 550 litres*

*Water capacity: 200 litres*

*RCD category: B8 / C10*

*Engine as tested: Twin Volvo Penta D3 220hp*

*Other engine options: Twin Nanni 230hp or*

*Single Nanni T8V 320hp, Volvo Penta D6  
370hp, Yanmar 8LV 370hp*

*Price from **£209,577***





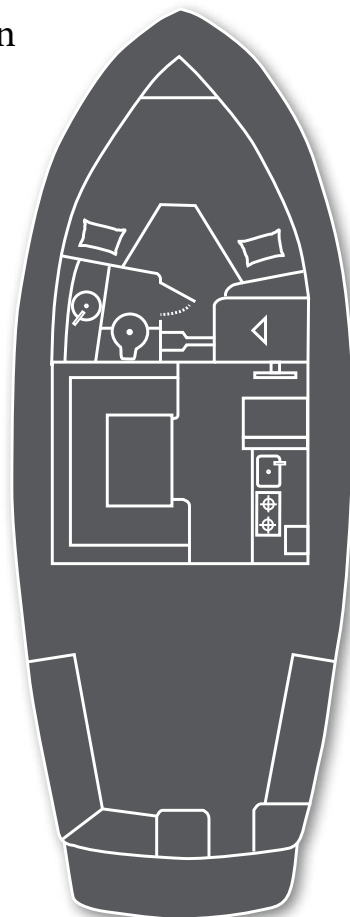
**W**hile the name Rhéa may have a Spanish sound to it, it is, in fact routed in Greek mythology.

Rhéa Marine, on the other hand, is as French as Camembert, Champagne and Baguettes. Rhéa boats have had a low key presence in the UK since their launch in 1996, but with a new committed UK dealer, the brand, consisting 15 models from the Open 23 right up to the Trawler 57, is a name that you are likely to become far more familiar with. As well as the six-boat Open range, and the five-model Trawler line up, there is a single Evolution model and a range of four Timonier boats. Timonier, meaning helmsman or navigator, are essentially wheelhouse cruisers, and the boat we are looking at here is the third model in a line up

spanning 24 to 36ft in length, the 28ft [850](#).

Walking up to the 850, you get the feel of a much bigger boat. It has a bulk, and an imposing on-the-water presence, that defies its LOA. Even as you step onboard, the chunkiness of the mouldings and tactile parts add to the feeling that this is a serious bit of kit.

While you can access the cockpit by





*“A traditional style  
French fisher  
packed with  
character”*



*Lots of practical features such as wide side decks, easy access and an uncluttered bathing platform*

stepping over the gunwales, the easiest approach is to enter via the bathing platform and full height transom gate. The bathing platform is a good size, adding another 0.8m to the overall length, and it's an option that I can't see many buyers leaving off, not least because of the aforementioned ease of access it provides. Like many parts of this boat, the platform is simple, yet practical with details such as the hand sized cut-out just above the bathing ladder to provide a handy, and trip free, hand-hold when boarding from the water.

Enter the cockpit and close the transom gate behind you and you have a huge, deep, fully enclosed cockpit that is a bit of a blank canvas, lending itself to fishing or just the placement of some

free standing furniture, depending upon your needs. Our test boat has the optional folding benches to both starboard and port, with a small return along the port transom to create an L shape. These are both functional and, with some cushions on top, comfortable. A huge hatch in the floor, just aft of the wheelhouse doors, lifts from the starboard side to access the engine bay. The engine installation on our test boat was impeccably tidy, and access to the aft end and tops of the engines was very easy, with the forward end a little more difficult as they are sited beneath the wheelhouse entrance. This is not an issue, however, as access to the front of the engines is also available from the wheelhouse.

Just aft of the engine bay is a second



floor hatch, this time opening up to reveal a reasonably sized lazarette and, behind this, on the transom is a hatch to access the steering gear and hydraulics. The wheelhouse roof provides a good-sized overhang to deliver some shelter to the forward section of cockpit, and an optional pull out bimini extends this further, should the need arise. Options for canvas are varied and include a full camper canopy to enclose the whole cockpit.

The side decks are wide enough to walk down without turning side-on and deep enough to provide good protection and security to those using them. The wheelhouse roof overhangs on either side too, for an extra bit of added weather protection. Just in front of the wheelhouse,

two steps lead up to the foredeck. Here, the guardrail rises to maintain the thigh high security enjoyed further aft. Up front, the forward working deck area remains sunken, with a raised section at the bow that houses a large anchor locker and optional electric anchor winch, with adjacent deck mounted foot controls. At the prow you get some very sturdy deck gear with twin anchor rollers, and atop the wheelhouse the boat comes with a mast that can be made to lower, as an option, to keep the air draft down.

The main entrance into the boat is via a single, large sliding door from the cockpit. Once inside, you have the galley immediately to starboard and the dinette to port. The galley comprises a single, deep sink and a hob, both with covers to

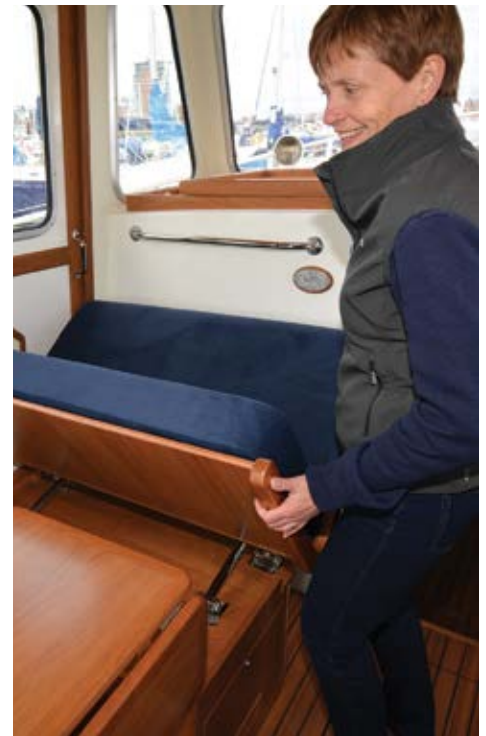


conceal them when not in use to provide a continuous run of worktop. Below the hob is an oven, and a fridge can be found forward of the galley, below the helm seat. Storage space is good, with a large locker below the sink, a smaller locker below the oven and a column of three drawers, and a further small locker below, aft. Above the worktop is yet more storage solutions with an open, fiddled shelf unit.

The dinette opposite seats four comfortably, with a table that can drop down to create an occasional double berth if required. If used this way, the wheelhouse can be fully enclosed with a curtain/blind package for privacy. There is further drawer storage under both the forward and aft dinette seats, with the aft one housing a built-in wine rack that

***“The 850 is a joy to crew, and the side doors are great for single-handing”***

slides out for ease of access. The forward dinette bench lifts and flips to turn it into a double, forward facing, comfortable, navigator's seat. Here, your crew have access to a good chart locker and table in front of them, together with some useful, easy-to-access storage for personal items when underway. You can choose to have a side door on this side, to mirror the one at the helm and, at a little over £1,000, this



*A dinette that easily accommodates four, with a forward bench that doubles as a navigator's seat*

seems like a good option to tick to give your crew easy port side deck access.

Between the dinette and galley, in the wheelhouse floor, is the hatch that provides access to the front of the engines. Down here you will also find the boat's primary fuel filters, which means an emergency filter change at sea doesn't even require you to leave the safety and comfort of the wheelhouse. Another hatch in the floor, forward of this, provides access

to a huge storage area, perfectly placed centrally and low down for heavier items, as well as access to the boat's black water and fuel tanks, the latter with a convenient and easy to access bottom drain.

The helm comes with a single seat, a vertical, trawler style steering wheel, and a functional binnacle and layout. Our test boat was fitted with an 8" multi-function display, but with a bit of reorganising, there should be room on



*Lots of storage in and around the galley, including a sliding wine rack*





the upper binnacle for a display of up to 12", if required. Standing headroom at the helm is good, at 6"5", and this continues throughout the wheelhouse, with a practical, centrally placed grab rail overhead to aid moving around in any kind of sea conditions. The almost full height side door is a great feature to either allow easy deck access for the helm, or simply to allow some air into the boat on a nice day. There is also an overhead hatch in the wheelhouse roof to offer light and ventilation when necessary.

Moving forward, the companionway hatch also offers some storage for small items required at the helm and passing through the bi-fold door, and down a couple of steps delivers you to the lower accommodation. This offers an open plan area that consists of a cabin with



*Basic and functional, the toilet compartment is adequately equipped for a few days afloat*



## PERFORMANCE

*As tested 80% fuel 80% Water 3 crew Force 3*

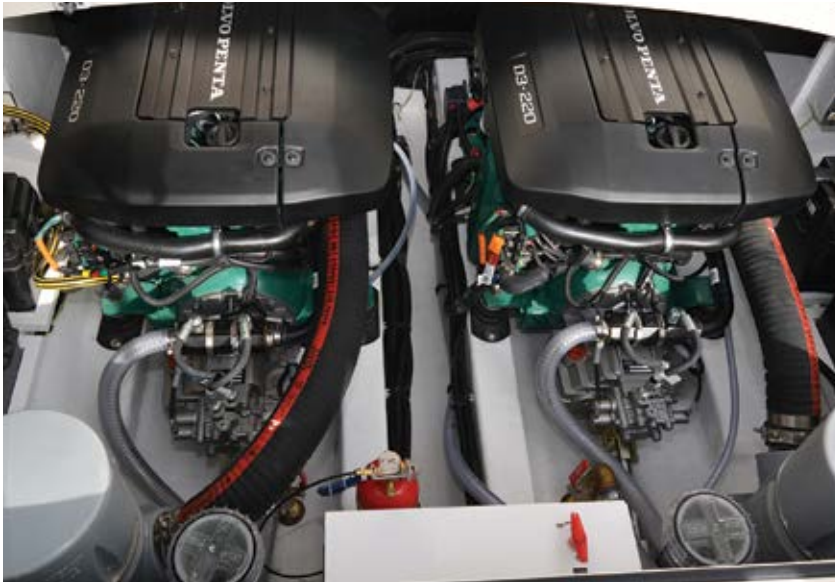
*\* the following fuel figures are calculated using generic data for the specific engine, and may not provide an accurately representation of fuel usage for this combination*

RPM	Knots	LPH	GPH	MPG	Range (nm)	Sound levels dB*
700	3.0	2.0	0.68	4.41	533	63
1000	4.2	3.4	1.06	3.96	479	64
1500	6.7	10.5	2.18	3.07	371	70
2000	8.4	24.0	4.66	1.80	217	77
2500	10.9	36.2	7.66	1.42	171	80
3000	15.7	48.8	10.3	1.52	184	82
3500	20.5	60.3	13.4	1.53	185	86
4000	24.2	93.9	20.3	1.19	144	89
4160	25.8	101.1	22.2	1.16	140	90

twin Vee berths and an infill to create a double, and a separate toilet compartment to port. There is plenty of storage in the forward section, with a half height hanging locker to starboard, a small locker above, lockers below the bunks and plenty of open shelf space. There is also access to the bilge below the bunks as well as via two hatches in the cabin floor. Light and ventilation are delivered by an opening port on either side and an overhead hatch. With the companionway door closed you effectively get a private cabin with en-suite facilities and a generous amount of floor space, with 5ft 11in headroom, for two to move around and get dressed. If you are sharing the boat with guests in

the wheelhouse, the privacy is not so complete, as they will need to enter your cabin to use the onboard facilities.

The toilet compartment, like the forward cabin, also offers 5ft 11in headroom and comprises a fairly compact and basic fit out, but with all the facilities you would need including a sink, toilet and shower. You also get a useful amount of storage, courtesy of two lockers, and an opening port.



*Available with single or twin engine options. Twin 220hp D3s deliver just under 26 knots*

*“Comfortable and confident, the 850 cruises with minimal fuss”*



### **Underway**

With its semi-displacement hull, skeg-protected propellers and rudders and central keel, the Rhéa is never going to offer ‘seat of the pants’ performance. What it does provide is a solid, reassuring and altogether grown up ride. It simply feels like a bigger, heavier boat than it is. Having said that, it is no slouch either, getting up on the plane in around 5 seconds and having a decent amount of mid-range grunt too. While the 850 will hit 25 knots with the twin 220hp Volvos, it really felt at home at around 3250 RPM where it was comfortably eating up the miles at around 17.5 knots. At this cruising speed the boat felt so comfortable, so at one with the water, that

it was easy to forget the short Solent chop that the force 3 was kicking up. If you had some distance to cruise it felt like you could set the throttles, hit the autopilot and the 850 would get you there with minimal fuss in all but the choppiest of conditions. If the waves did pick up, and you needed to throttle back, more for your own comfort than the boat’s ability, it was good to see that the hull would plane right down to around 13.5 knots, meaning you could still make good progress without dropping into displacement mode. In fact the whole 14-18 knot range was just one easy going and comfortable cruising sector, and you could happily select any speed within that range for a comfortable and economical cruise. The boat is not

fitted with tabs and it felt unlikely that they would be needed. It was unaffected laterally by the wind during our test, and the bow rises just a little between 8 and 10 knots and then sits there as you accelerate further, always delivering a decent view forward.

The mullions in the forward section are quite large so some small blind spots are inevitable, but generally, and this aside, the wheelhouse, with all its glass, offers very good visibility. Slow speed handling is not quite as agile as a typical twin shaft drive planing hulled boat, where you can set the wheel centrally and manoeuvre the boat with ease, but add a bit of rudder into the mix and close quarters becomes precise and predictable.

While the helm seat is large and comfortable, it is fixed in place, so the seated helm position may not suit everyone. For me it was fine as long as I could set the throttles and leave them alone, as they were quite a stretch away, unless seated right on the forward edge. Having said that, in the sort of sea that would require throttle work in this boat, you would almost certainly be standing and leaning against the seat, which I found the most comfortable helming position anyway, and the fold down flap should ensure that this would be the case for any helmsman, regardless of height.



*Tidy decks. Cockpit storage is provided by a usefully-sized lazarette compartment*

As is often the case on this style of boat, a choppy sea combined with a stiff breeze over the bow will see a certain amount of water thrown up and potentially onto the windscreen. Three separate self-parking pantograph wipers should mean that the spray will give you little trouble at all.

Fuel consumption for a twin shaft drive boat is not too bad, at around 1.5nmpg if you pick a sensible cruising speed. If fuel economy takes precedence over twin-engine manoeuvrability and reliability, then you could opt for one of the single engine options, which should reduce the fuel consumption down to something approaching 2nmpg for a similar speed. You could also use some of the savings on the purchase price to pay for the bowthruster option, which will remove the first of the two objections to going for a single.



## Conclusion

I came away rather impressed with the Rhéa. Its price may seem a tad on the high side when compared to other French built wheelhouse boats, but to compare them in this sense is like putting a Ford up against a Mercedes. They both offer the same basic package in principle, but that doesn't stop people paying more for one marque over the other. With the Rhéa it feels that the extra cost is visible in the way the boat is built and finished and, of course, you also get a semi-custom build that you won't find on more mass-produced boats. When onboard, and in particular when out at sea, it just feels a bit more substantial, a bit



*The semi-displacement hull delivers a solid ride*

more serious and grown up than some of the more affordable alternatives. In short, it's about value for money, rather than bottom line price, and on that score the Rhéa stacks up well against its rivals.

**ENQUIRIES: Marco Marine Tel: 02380 453245 [www.rheaboats.co.uk](http://www.rheaboats.co.uk)**

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