

ON TEST

WORDS & IMAGES: GREG COPP

SALPA

SUN SIX JET SET

Compact and capable, this keenly priced 6m boat will appeal to a wide audience, according to Greg Copp.



It is often said that the best fun afloat is in a small boat. This concept is not lost on this Italian company, which has a track record of building sturdy, functional, compact craft that are also great fun to drive. Having tested three models from this yard in the past, I was not surprised to find that the Sun Six has the same blend of practicality and performance. This Sun Six is the 'Jet Set' version, as opposed to the more basic 'Freeway', which is aimed at the Italian rental sector.

Our test boat had it all - well, as much as you can realistically fit into a 6m open boat. The design does a very good job of making use of every inch of space - starting with the hull design, which does a clever job of making use of the full beam, pretty much right up to the bow. It does this by having a near-vertical stem, and wide chine flats that run up to and around the bow. On board you could easily be forgiven for thinking you are in a cathedral hull dory. Obviously this 'bullet nose bow' has to have some point of entry in order not to drive like a can of beans, which is achieved by a sharp near-vertical forefoot beneath the chines. On deck, the benefits of this design are fourfold: firstly, a big forward seating area; secondly, with the infill this large seating area becomes a big sunbed; thirdly, beneath the seating area is a vast storage cavity, into which you could store more water toys than this boat can tow; and fourthly, the blunt bow is wide enough to house a big anchor locker with windlass - a rarity in a 6m boat. This whole area is surrounded by high guard rails, with a pulpit over the bow.

The helm is equally well thought out. Every item on the dash can either be easily seen or comes easily to hand, notably the throttle. The display sits just to port of the wheel, and the



The bimini is a standard feature.

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compass is sited on the centre line, so if you were to do some old-school chartwork before you cast off, you could easily steer on a course. All the system's primary switches sit on a very neat carbon-effect panel, and a Fusion hi-fi and charging socket can be found on the port side of the console. On this note, some form of smartphone storage would be a good idea

next to the socket, especially as there is room for it. The thick, tall windscreen is surrounded by a grab rail, so apart from anything else, you can't inadvertently be pitched face first onto the edge of the screen. The helm seating is just about right for two people. There is no seat back; however, the rear is contained within a raised lip, and should you wish to stand, the seat base hinges forward to create a bolster into which you can wedge your rear end, with your feet against the console. It is simple but effective. Under the

Left: 1. The tall console provides plenty of weather protection. 2. The helm seat can be raised to convert to a bolster-type seat. 3. Under the seat lives the sink.





SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 6.15m
Beam: 2.25m
Displacement: 750kg (dry)
Power options: From single 60hp Mercury outboard to single 140hp Mercury outboard
Fuel capacity: 90L
RCD category: C for 7
Test engine: Single 115hp Mercury outboard

PRICE

As tested: £42,950 (inc. VAT)

CONTACT

Gibbs Quay Boat Sales
www.gibbsboatsales.co.uk
Nautica Salpa
www.salpa.com

seat is a forward-entry watertight locker, and on top of this there is a sink. The sink is accessed by folding the seat base forward, and water is supplied via a pump tap, fed from a 30L water tank under the aft bench seat. Another simple but effective feature is a small fold-out table

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located on the back of the seat, which serves the bench seat.

The stern section of the boat is only slightly less innovative than the bow section, as the bench seat converts to a double sunbed by folding down its seat back. This also serves as an aft-facing observer's seat if you are towing a skier. Each quarter has a bathing platform, with the port platform housing a slide-away ladder. The inside of the aft coamings either side of the bench seat is lined with a padded upholstered section, forward of which are inset open storage areas, ideal for warps and fenders. Under the bench seat is the usual large cavity, which extends down to the bilge and gives access to the battery and water tank. All decking is suitably non-slip, with adequate drainage to the bilge.

Driving the Sun Six

This boat is available with a wide range of Mercury engine options from 60hp to 140hp, but the most realistic are the 90hp and 115hp

Left 1. The helm layout and ergonomics are very good. **2.** The forward seating area benefits from the generous beam. **3.** Enclosed on either side, the bench seat provides secure seating.

– the latter being fitted to our test boat. The Mercury 115hp 4-stroke works well with the stepped hull, which unlike most stepped designs has a medium-vee hull, with a transom deadrise angle of 19 degrees. The logic behind this combination, one can suppose, is to provide some extra lift and efficiency, while benefiting from extra stability at rest – not a bad mix for a family boat. The Sun Six planes at 13 knots and picks up instantly, hitting 30 knots in under 10 seconds. The 115hp Mercury has a great low-down power delivery for an engine its size and, weighing in at 163kg, it is not overweight. Simple things like this make a difference in a boat that only displaces 750kg – in particular, this boat has good natural fore and aft trim. You need only a small amount of trim out on the engine to get the last couple of knots from her, and in the main you generally tend to drive this boat with the trim left in a low setting. In tight turns she holds a steady line, with a slight tendency to cavitate when powering out of slow, tight corners, but with no inclination to slide the stern.

Running into the sharp wake of the photo boat was the only seaway we had to test the hull. Given that a beamy 6m medium-vee boat is not built to cut through tall ridges of water at 30 knots, the Salpa did very well. Coming down on the wide amidships section of the

hull not surprisingly produced a few jarring moments, but it left me in little doubt as to the strength of the lay-up. The steering is composed but not super-quick. I found it ideal, though some might prefer a lighter response.

Verdict

Like many practical small open boats, its potential customers will be both first-timers and experienced boaters. Its makers are aware of this, so it has the option of several sensible extras, like a power windlass with 25m of chain. It is a fun boat to drive, but anything less or more than the 115hp Mercury, I suspect, will not provide the same balanced performance. It is a strong rival for the ever-popular RIB, and its lower price, extra deck space and far better accessibility make it a no-brainer. In its tested state it came fitted with a few extras, but even fully specified this boat has a sensible price tag. ■

Left 1. The storage in the bow section is simply vast. **2.** A windlass is a rare feature on a 6m boat. **3.** The forward seating converts to a big sunbed. **4.** The bench seat converts to a double sunbed.

PERFORMANCE (no fuel flow meter fitted)

RPM	Speed (knots)
2000	6.5
2500	7.7
3000	11.7
3500	17.0
4000	22.7
4500	25.0
5000	29.5
5500	32.5
6000 (WOT)	36.3

WHAT WE THOUGHT

FOR

- ▲ Solid build quality
- ▲ Easy deck movement
- ▲ Forward sunbathing space
- ▲ Storage
- ▲ Wide helm seat
- ▲ Good wind protection
- ▲ Plenty of sunbathing space

AGAINST

- ▼ The steering may be a touch on the heavy side for some
- ▼ You are charged extra for a compass



The example cost to finance this boat is **£534.35** per month with a **20%** deposit at marine-finance.org/pbr

