



if looks Could kill

Luhrs' easy-on-the-eye 36 Convertible is a bit of an all-rounder. It sports a nifty spread of onboard amenities and features a voluminous interior.

As the recreational captain of a flybridge cruiser who is forever curious about alternatives, the new Luhrs 36 Convertible caught my eye. With graceful sheerline, blanked-out forward windscreen and flared bow, the boat was designed to please the aesthete. Add moulded stairs to the flybridge – Luhrs calls it a 'bridgewalk' – and this fishy 36 is suddenly welcoming the whole family aboard.

When you head inside there are much greater comforts to embrace: a big saloon, twin cabins with an island double berth in

the bow, and large bathroom with American-sized shower. At this point, it is obvious the Luhrs 36 Convertible is really starting to covet attention from those looking to buy in the fishing/family flybridge market, which has been the domain of Australia's biggest boat builder, Riviera, for some time.

What of the price? At \$580,000 as a self-contained convertible as tested, powered by the latest electronic Volvo 370hp D6 motors, in need only of some outriggers and electronics for the fishing side of things, the Luhrs 36 Convertible is competitively priced. A Riviera 37 with the same motors

and similar specification is about \$540,000, yet I suspect the sharper 19 degrees of deadrise on the Luhrs and its finer entry up will create a smoother and drier ride into a head sea. You'll have to rely on the words of a professional skipper for the ride report later.

Meantime, all these attributes at least go some way to explain why, in the northern hemisphere, the 36 Convertible has been among the Luhrs Group's best selling boats. The company's mantra is very much 'more boat for your buck', as the 36 is based on an especially wide hull that, despite being





Main: Expect a 32kt top-speed from the Luhrs 36. **Opposite, clockwise from top, left:** U-shaped lounge can convert to a bed; **Moulded steps leading to flybridge;** **Enclosed shower stall in the head (far right);** **A polished alloy wheel and lots of dash room for aftermarket gauges (far left)** are a feature of the helm.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The one-piece moulded deck, with padded coamings tracing the safe cockpit, is a real highlight. There are hawsepipes and below-deck cleats to create a snag-free fishing area, flush-mounted rodholders listed as standard, a fresh and saltwater wash down, and a walk-through marlin door with a heavy-duty hinge. The self-draining floor incorporates a backing plate for mounting a fighting chair, though this is more your stand-and-fight fish boat. The boarding platform on the boat is a must-have option for family days. Nothing out of the ordinary thus far, you say, and you would be right. But then comes the impressive port-side bait-prep centre, incorporating a sink and cutting board, livewell, and tackle locker. With its lid down, it's a handy place to hang out in the shade. There's also an in-transom fish/bait/drinks well – you could plumb it with a pump as a second livewell – plus an insulated icebox under the moulded steps in the bridgewalk.

As ever, the lazarette grants access to the bilge and steering gear, while moulded steps lead to the side decks. Alloy rails follow the lovely window line forward to the matching bowrail, whereupon toe rails trace the broad foredeck. The wide working area of diamond-pattern non-skid is big enough to hang out or cast a line. A davit and ducky on a cradle are possibilities and, considering the local agents have engaged shipwrights to do the Luhrs pre-deliveries, many other customisations are possible.

WALK TO THE HEAVENS

In calm water, the bridgewalk makes topside access a hands-free saunter and that detail alone is responsible for this being a great family boat. I anticipate the only complaint may come from hardcore anglers who see the bottom step as an intrusion into their cockpit. No worries, though, the boat wasn't being pitched at just them.

The hardtop comes gratis but, unlike in America, the local agents added clear curtains for all-weather comfort.

They are a must, considering this is the boat's sole driving station. A rail was fixed to the brow of the cabin as a mounting point for the clears, thereby giving them some flowing rake instead of creating a boxy enclosure.

Seating comes by way of custom helm and co-pilot chairs and a forward-facing lounge before the big dash.

I wouldn't mind seeing a bit more freeboard in the bridge, maybe a rail above the moulded superstructure, but at least there was room for a family of four to travel up top and plenty of head room under the hardtop.

Just as importantly, there was room for a big spread of aftermarket 10-inch-plus screens recessed on the moulded dash. The Volvos come with those neat electronic shifts and electronic systems panels, plus analogue gauges.

There's a polished alloy wheel and great views to all quarters for berthing or chasing big fish. Your choice. The aft rocket

launcher, which stows six rods, is standard, but outriggers are extra.

INDOOR LIVING

On-water luxury can be found in the saloon, which featured an interior soft-furnishing upgrade, with ultraleather in nubuck brown on the optional port-side lounge/sofa bed. Slimline timber blinds add to privacy, but with the blinds up you have aft views and outboard as you fish or cruise. Engage the air-con and you create a real cocoon. Satin-finished cherry wood joinery and trick down lighting add to the style.

With the sofa bed extended, the 36 Convertible can sleep up to six aboard. Would you do that? I doubt it, but from experience that saloon bed is invaluable when hanging out in lousy weather with the TV/DVD playing and those occasions when the anchorage is lousy and the water is belting on the bow, preventing you from sleeping. Mark my words, at such times a saloon bed is a godsend.

When not being used as a bed, the U-shaped lounge around the movable high/low timber table forms a convenient dinette. The supplied 42cm television and sound system are forward, in clear view, while the longitudinal starboard galley is across the way, on the same saloon level, where it also ties in with the cockpit for easier entertaining. Carpet runners are needed, but not much else. The microwave oven could be a bigger unit with convection function, but there's a two-burner electric stove and

HIGHS

- Attractive
- A wide beam for maximum volume
- The bridgewalk encourages family access to the flybridge
- Improved finish and attention to detail
- Great cockpit with excellent ergonomics
- Very accommodating saloon
- From all reports, excellent seaworthiness and an economical cruise
- Excellent local shipwrights for the pre-delivery
- Competitively priced

LOWS

- No external engine room access
- Tight access outboard of motors to sea strainers
- Saloon carpet needs a runner for protection
- Needs davit and dinghy, barbecue and cutting board, outriggers and electronics
- Small microwave oven and, unless I am mistaken, no extractor fans in galley or head. And where's the water gauge?
- More freeboard or extra rails around the flybridge are needed.
- Check to see how far it leans in the tight turns... not that you would drive a boat like this as you would a sports cruiser.

one metre shorter than the Riviera 37, is just one centimetre narrower than it. There's a lot of headroom and shoulder room – I guess the boat was tailor-made for girth-challenged Americans – and by any measure the 36 Convertible is a big 36-footer.

It mightn't be immediately obvious, but the boat boasts good engineering for offshore work and moulded decks that are mindful of anglers and crew. Indoors is all that space with the mod-cons for cruising away for a week at a time. And, not that I need to remind you, this is a pretty boat, too. Add the bridgewalk, which takes the monkey work out of heading up top, and the Luhrs 36 Convertible is a convertible in the true sense of the word.

INTO THE ENGINEERING

Though there isn't external access for trades, engine access on the 36 is pretty simple – you lift up a large hatch in the saloon and jump down a short ladder to the non-skid floor between the motors. There are the usual high-water alarm and fire suppression systems, plus an optional 8kW Kohler generator. All the through hulls are bronze below the waterline, with gate valves, and the Volvos

have Racor fuel/water separators.

While internal sea strainers are listed as an option, this 36 Convertible had inline types that were kind of difficult to reach outboard of the motors. Access could be better around those outboard sides but, by and large, I found nothing out of the ordinary on the engineering front. Hull construction is a mix of low-tech tough GRP and weight-saving Baltec-cored hull sides.

The twin air-con units, battery charger and plumbing items live in a large separate utility room under the companionway steps and forward of the engine room. There's oodles of room left over for storing long-term victuals, chairs, fishing rods, and so on. On the electrical side of things, there's colour-coded wiring linked to a really nice AC/DC control panel, with generator-start panel.

The boat's tankage was designed to meet mid-term live-aboard boaters. Water of 355lt is down 100lt on the Riv' 37, the holding tanks are a reasonable 114lt, but fuel is up almost 300lt at 1514lt. Strangely, water and holding tanks monitors were optional but, providing you watch how much you shower, there is the means to spend a week aboard at least.





LUHRS 36 CONVERTIBLE

reasonable counter-height fridge with small freezer. The counters are upmarket Corian and have useful food-prep space. There's above pot, appliance, pantry, crockery and cutlery storage. I couldn't find the extractor fan, however, and the thoroughfare through the saloon to the cabins is nice and broad.

The two-cabin layout is accommodating, with a starboard guest's room with an upper Pullman bunk that converts to a sofa and, therefore, creates a walk-in dressing room when in single-couple cruising mode. There are cedar-lined hanging locker for swinging the weekend clobber, concealed rod storage under the lower bunk, trick reading lights, and a hatch for fresh air. But the boat reveals its inner glory in the forward stateroom where you can't miss the inviting island berth with innerspring mattress raised on a

Below: Plenty of aft storage and room to throw a line in. Bottom: Island double bed in one of the two cabins, with hatch for fresh air.



frame to a point where you attain volume in the flared-bow hull. There are his and hers cedar-lined hanging lockers, drawers and cupboards, a television connection, and speakers for the stereo and reading lights. Soft-touch liners add to the luxury, as does the nearby head.

A bathroom by domestic standards, the head is bound to woo the women. There is an electric loo, hatch only for ventilation, moulded vanity

"THIS IS MORE YOUR STAND-AND-FIGHT FISH BOAT."

with Corian counter and very generous storage space. However, it's the generous floor space and king-size separate shower that appealed. To me and many others, a big head and island double bed, a good hull and fishy cockpit are ingredients that sell convertible boats.

As for the ride, well, mine was in dead-flat conditions and the boat had left for the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show before I had a chance to tackle the rough stuff. So I can only pass on the comments of professional skipper Steve Haygarth, who drove the 36 Convertible from Sydney to the show.

"Smooth," he said, adding that you could sit your beer down while travelling without it vibrating off the tabletop. A good measure, indeed. "It's also dry," he said after a down-sea ocean passage sitting on 23kts at 2800rpm, where the Volvos used around 97lt/h. That's a pretty good outcome if you are paying the fuel bills, equating to a range from the 1514lt fuel supply of more than 325 nautical miles over 14 to 15 hours, leaving 10 per cent of the fuel in reserve. With 19 degrees of deadrise in the hull and what appears to be a fine entry, I expected a smooth passage into the sea, too. Top speed was 32kts and there are engine options to twin 480hp Yanmars if you want more speed. The boat isn't, I'm told, as stable as some of its competitors in the turns and I note that the water capacity of 355lt isn't huge. But even going nowhere much at all it's bound to draw interest due to its gorgeous looks alone.

PRICE AS TESTED

Approx \$580,000 w/ twin Volvo D6 electronic diesel engines, options and dealer add-ons

OPTIONS FITTED

Boarding platform, windlass, 8kW Kohler generator and twin air-con, sofa bed and furnishing upgrade, dripless shaft seals, custom clears, antifouling, and delivery

PRICE FROM

\$540,000 w/ twin Volvo D6 electronic diesel engines

GENERAL

Materials: GRP hull and Baltec-cored hull sides
Type: Deep-vee monohull
Length overall: 11.86m with pulpit
Beam: 4.22m
Draft: 1.04m
Deadrise: 19 degrees at transom
Weight: 9988kg dry std boat

CAPACITIES

Berths: 4+2
Fuel: 1514lt
Water: 355lt
Holding tank: 114lt

ENGINE

Make/model: Volvo D6
Type: Fully electronic straight-six turbocharged and aftercooled diesel engine
Rated HP: 370hp @ 3500rpm
Displacement: 5.5lt
Weight: 706kg
Gearboxes (make/ratio): ZF Vee Drive
Props: Four-blade bronze

FOR MORE INFORMATION

BlueWater Power Yachts, Gibson Marina, 1710 Pittwater Road, Bayview, NSW, 2104.
Tel (02) 9979 9755.
Visit www.bpy.com.au,
www.luhrs.com