

The new Paragon 25 hits British shores, fresh from winning the 'Motor Boat of the Show' award at the 2008 Helsinki Boat Show.

Size isn't everything. And this applies as much to boats as it does to anything else you may care to mention.

An overall length of 26'7" is by no means big in the world of sports cruisers; but then not everyone wants (or needs) the biggest boat he can afford. Many owners of large boats want to downsize these days, and equally many sailing boat owners want to change to power; albeit to handy and seaworthy power that can be used in any weather by a man and his wife.

I was bowled over the first time I saw the striking looking new Paragon 25 at the Earls Court Boat Show in November this year. In fact I'd just bumped into David Hopkins, an experienced marine surveyor, old friend and owner of a Nimbus motor boat. And he said to me "You should go and look at the Paragon 25 on the Offshore Powerboats stand. It comes from the Nimbus stable. It's very different and a great piece of kit." So I did, finding it parked beside the pool and attracting a steady stream of visitors.

And Hopkins was right. The Paragon 25 is not 'just another' sports cruiser. Nor is it a RIB with a lid. It's unique and looks like a splendid combination of the two types. It really does represent a new type of motor boat. So when Boats and Yachts for sale asked me to visit Offshore Powerboats' Lymington base and put the Paragon through its paces, I jumped at the opportunity.

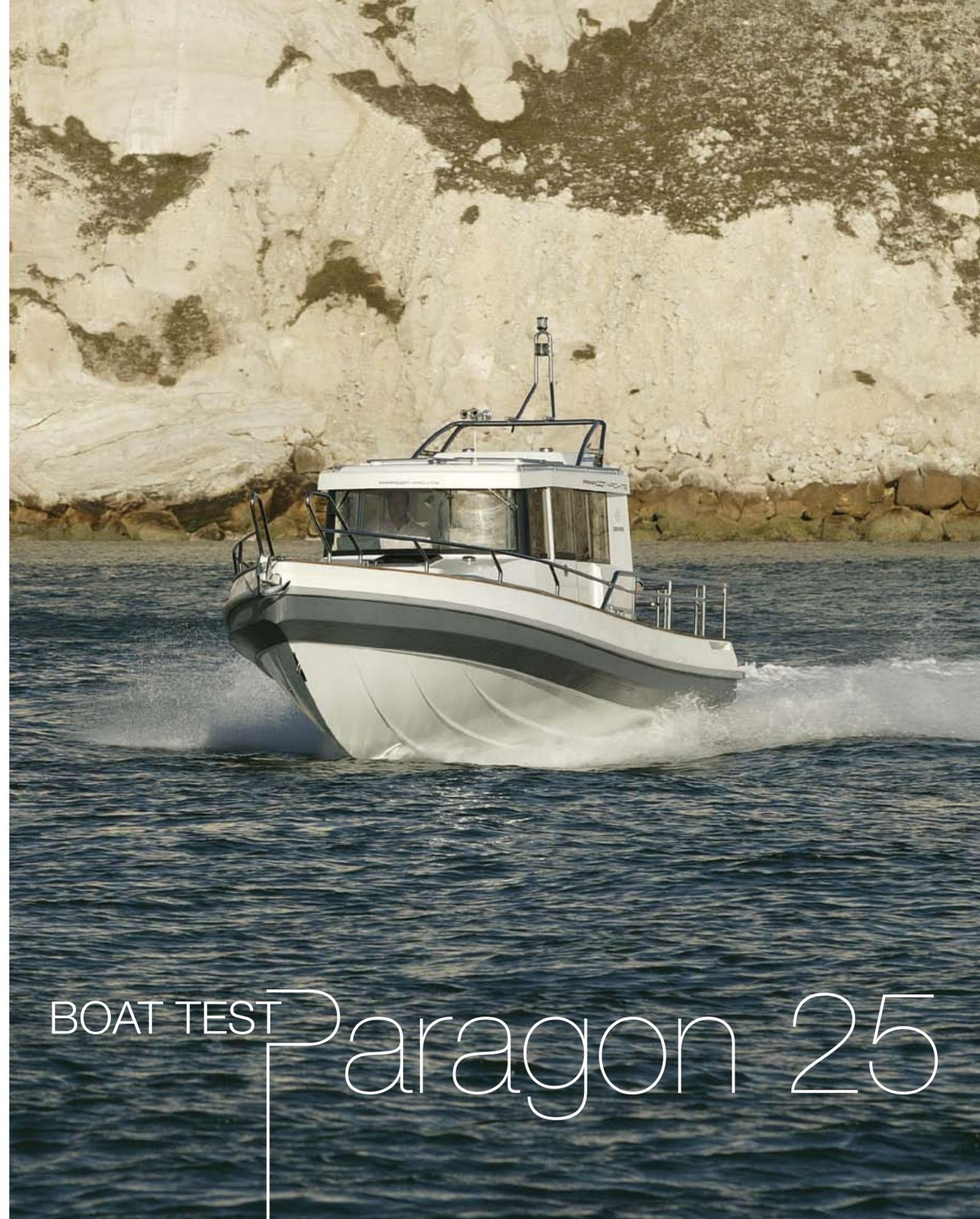
Paragon Yachts Oy was founded a couple of years ago in Finland by Sakari Mattila (who had also previously set up Aquador Boats before selling the company to Bella-Boats Oy in the autumn of 2000). And his Paragon 25 got off to a spectacular start, winning the prestigious Motor Boat of the Show Award at the 2008 Helsinki Boat Show. Conceived as a leisure interpretation of the rugged search and rescue boats used around northern Europe's coastlines in all weathers, the Paragon 25 was an instant hit. So much so that the long established Swedish company Nimbus Yachts has recently made Mattila an offer he could not refuse: and now owns the company. Which means that Paragon's new models will now benefit from the high tech

development and tooling facilities to be found under Nimbus' roof; starting off with the bigger Paragon 31 due out in 2009.

There's no doubt about it; the Paragon 25 is a striking looking boat. It stood out from the crowd as I approached it along the pontoon at Lymington Yacht Haven. The superstructure – in the Targa mould but somehow more stylish – sits well on the 26'7" hull. And the hull itself has a slight and subtle 'whale back' sheer, which gives extra freeboard forward and sufficient volume to accommodate the forecabin down below. But the most obvious feature is the Paragon's RIB style collar that sits immediately beneath the substantial wrap-around rubbing strake. This is made from a closed cell compound called Nomalen that is covered in Hypalon ORCA material. So the collar can never be punctured. In extremis, it will protect the boat in the event of a collision and contribute 1,000 kg worth of buoyancy. But its main job is to provide a soft ride and extra sound insulation when the potent 26 degree deadrise hull is speeding into heavy seas.

In keeping with its intended role as a safe all-weather performer, the Paragon has wide and secure 'walk around' side decks and sizeable fore and aft decks. Clever sliding rails and opening side gates aft make boarding easy. And the finely executed teak decking gives this whole expanse of deck a classy look. What's more, a deep teak capped bulwark running round the boat means feet can not slip over the side and substantial stainless steel grabrails give one plenty to hang on to. In addition, carefully positioned hand rails on top of and on each side of the deck saloon mean that there's always something to grab. A lot of thought has gone into making the Paragon 25 an easy and comfortable boat to move around on, and it shows.

Access to the deck saloon is via a glazed door aft and sliding side doors on each side of the boat further forward. And – given that the overall hull length is just over 26' – there's a surprising amount of space. What's more this space is very adaptable; depending on whether you are at sea or relaxing in harbour. The forward facing helmsman's and crew seats can both swivel inboard to create ample 'social' seating around the dining →



BOAT TEST Paragon 25

Left to Right:

The fridge lives beneath the helmsman's seat (that swivels)

The small cooker flips up from its stowage in the sink

Twin opening ports each side give plenty of light and ventilation

There's plenty of space for entertaining and dining in the deck saloon with the table lowered into position.



table. And the table itself slides up (on a central pillar that doubles up as a grab rail) so that it stows flush with the underside of the roof when the boat is at sea. It's all clever and very functional. What's more the finish is to a high standard with neat mahogany joinery, up market Alcantara upholstery and well-executed side and roof linings. And there's also a sizeable fridge (under the helmsman's seat) and plenty of stowage in drawers and lockers beneath the saloon settees.

Then there's a simple single burner stove that hinges out when needed and lives hidden in the stainless steel sink when not. It's enough for a brew up or a simple breakfast, if not for a three course meal.

The overall ambience in the deck saloon is bright and airy, with loads of natural light flooding in through the side windows and twin overhead hatches (which slide open to give an 'al fresco' feel on a sunny day and enable the taller helmsman to pop his head out into the open). But what's really clever is the way the designers have provided so much usable space without spoiling the boat's look. Then – down a couple of steps – you find a twin berth forecabin which also has room for a concealed marine w.c. (connected to a holding tank on the test boat). As on the rest of the Paragon, the finish is high quality and there's ample light and ventilation coming from four opening side ports and an overhead escape hatch.

Offshore Powerboats' MD Chris Harridge cast off and we trundled down the river towards the open Solent. He explained that the test

boat was fitted with an optional bow thruster, because he reckoned many owners moving down from larger boats would feel comfortable with this. But I would hardly rate it as a necessity; especially given the Paragon's excellent integral bumper car protection offered by its collar. The boat comes with a choice of three different Volvo Penta D4 engines. The 225hp model provides a maximum speed of 32 knots, the 260 manages 35 knots and the 300 (as fitted to the test boat) pushes this up to 37 knots. All three come with 'fly by wire' controls.

With the beefy Volvo situated under the aft deck in its well-insulated compartment, noise levels are low. 1000 rpm brought up the legal river speed of 6 knots, 1500 rpm pushed this to 7.7 knots and she was up and planing at 12 knots with just 2000 rpm on the tacho. Harridge explained that the optimum cruising speed (23.3 knots) was achieved with 2,600 rpm; at which level fuel consumption was cut by 50% compared to the amount used at 3,500 rpm (which brings up the flat out speed of 37 knots).

The engine installation also looks very neat. There's plenty of access for routine maintenance and I particularly liked the aluminium tread panels to either side of the engine. As elsewhere in the boat, it is evident that the builder has spared no cost and cut no corners in an effort to offer an up-market product that will perform (and please) in a wide variety of sea conditions.

And driving this boat is a delightful experience. I think people can →



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Despite being a relatively new model, the Paragon 25 is obviously winning friends fast.”

lose track of the fact that a sports cruiser should bring good old-fashioned fun back into the boating equation. And driving the Paragon 25 is a lot of fun. The helmsman's seat is well positioned, with plenty of fresh air available if you open the side door or overhead hatch. The view along the sweeping foredeck through the windscreen (which is made from laminated glass with concealed integral heating filaments – a nice extra touch) is excellent – a bit like looking along the bonnet of a classic GT limmo. And – thanks to the deep V hull and moderate beam of 2.90m – the Paragon's handling lives up to the boat's name. She accelerates smoothly and easily, runs on rails and can be chucked into full lock turns at high speed with impunity. True, the sea conditions were benign when I tested the boat, but she made light work of cutting through her own wake.

Despite being a relatively new model, the Paragon 25 is obviously winning friends fast. The test boat was number 32 off the line. Harridge is wisely offering her with an unusually comprehensive specification – such items as holding tank, fridge, automatic trim tab control, triple windscreen wipers, Raymarine C120 chartplotter with GPS, Alcantara upholstery, antifouling, delivery and commissioning are all included in the price. The standard boat with the Volvo D4 225/DHP comes in at £132,177, while the biggest engine



option (the D4 300/DHP) adds a further £7,414. And for this you get a boat that will perform happily as a coastal potterer one day then thrash across Channel in adverse weather conditions the next. But the Paragon

25 is not just a versatile boat – she is an accomplished and dramatic looking sports cruiser that will give her owners great pleasure and pride of ownership and turn heads wherever she goes.

LOA	8.1m
Beam	2.9m
Draught	1.05m
Weight	2990kg
Fuel	320 litres
Water	40 litres

Standard boat Price and engine options

With Volvo Penta D4 225/DHP	£132,177 inc VAT
With Volvo Penta D4 260/DHP	£134,989
With Volvo Penta D4 300/DHP	£139,591

Builders: Proton Yachts (part of Nimbus Boats AB)

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Top:

The big Volvo lives in a well insulated engine room under the aft deck

Bottom:

The helmsman has excellent all round visibility, with a sliding side door and sliding hatch above him.