

Riviera 68 Sports Motor Yacht: Review

First test ever of the remarkable new 68 Sports Motor Yacht with twin 1550hp MAN V12 engines

Finally, the moment of truth. The new Riviera 68 Sport Motor Yacht is poised to head offshore. The sparkling white and silver-service 'yacht,' which towers three storeys and displaces 50-60t, has been two years' in the making. Riviera's *magnum opus*, the yard's best work to date, floats perfectly on its waterline with a commanding persona. Moments later, the twin turbo 1550hp MAN V12 engines engage and our waterborne world is transformed. As we barrel out the Gold Coast Seaway and into the blue Pacific Ocean, the imposing 68 splits the 1.5m swells without the slightest thump. Spray rolls off the bow and squirts abruptly sideways. The delivery of power is silky smooth thanks to oil-filled Seatorque shafts. With the tank-tested Frank Mulder hull on song, and the latest electrical and navigational systems taking charge with the press of a button, we savour the first-class travel aboard Riviera's best boat ever...

OVERVIEW

- A long-range adventure boat like no other

Riviera has long been known for its safe and seaworthy flybridge cruisers and luxurious sport yachts. Running a 42-footer for 13 years, we know the revered Australian brand only too well. But do we? Reset the bar. This new 68 Sport Motor Yacht redefines the Gold Coast marque and thrusts Riviera into the big league of luxury long-range motoryacht makers. This is a boat of remarkable refinement, great power and poise.

This new 68 Sport Motor Yacht is like no production boat the yard has built before and, we'd venture, nothing any production boatbuilder has created in Australia. There are hitherto new levels of everything from engineering to electronics, horsepower and high performance, and it's all come together in a most complementary way.

The launch of the 68 Sports Motor Yacht follows two years of extensive customer engagement, a full-sized walkthrough and mock-up made from craftwood, 3D modelling and detailed design, and tank testing of the impressive hull from superyacht expert Frank Mulder.

The end result is a true long-range adventure boat that draws on a vast pool of boating knowledge, with design brilliance at every turn, supported by cutting-edge engineering. With twin 1550hp V12 MAN engines and Seatorque shafts with V-drives, this is a game-changing Riviera offshore boat.

A whole new design from the keel up, the 68 Sport Motor Yacht — and its 72-foot sister ship with extended cockpit — deliver performance that raises the bar. After blasting our way offshore, this exceptionally refined Riv is remembered as much for its subdued vibration and low noise levels as the resulting, redefining experience.

A boat built for going places, and not just Store Beach or Wave Break Island, the 68 and 72 are certainly pitched at the adventure boaters. The cockpit has been sculptured to fit a game chair, you can add dive compressors and all the water toys imaginable, and every station from the foredeck to flybridge has a great depth of function from that aforesaid considered design processes.

Riviera CEO Wes Moxey says these long-range adventure boats are built for owners exploring the Australian coast, heading across to Fiji and Noumea, going around the top to the North West, and visiting Lord Howe Island.

"Hence the Sport Motor Yacht — it's a boat you can still fish out of, it offers long-range cruising, it has a luxury finish, and it's easy to spend extended time aboard.

But while people also say they want a boat big enough for their extended family, they also want one that's small enough for two people to handle.

"This 68 and 72 fall into that category," he adds, pointing to the smooth Twin Disc hydraulic docking and station holding system that adds to the refinement of the the MAN engines with underwater exhausts and not a whiff.

Meantime, the 68's purposeful lines match the boat's intent. The moulded brow around the superstructure resembles a visor on a captain's hat; the walkaround bulwarks add a shippy feel; while the big cockpit screams fish.

But it's the 2000nm range at hull speed that expands your horizons. And at sea, at speed, the boat asserts its authority with a sweet ride that wills you to go further. The 68 Sports Motor Yacht is just so inspiring we can't help but gush.

PRICE AND EQUIPMENT

- A \$4-5m Riviera optioned in long-range trim

At the time of writing, Riviera was approaching 11 confirmed builds of the 68 and 72 Sport Motor Yachts. The first 10 were all allocated, CEO Wes Moxey told us, adding that there was strong interest out to boat 15. Out of the first 10, only two were international sales. Boat #2 will have its European premier in Cannes in September 2017, then Barcelona and Genoa boat shows. There's going to be big exposure overseas. But for now there's mainly local fanfare.

Riviera is planning to build six 68/72 Sport Motor Yachts a year and could potentially ramp that up. The first 10 boats ordered comprise six of 72s and four of the 68s. There's about \$600k difference between the two models. Of course, at this level, every 68 and 72 is a special custom order and our test boat had options from aft mooring capstans to the foredeck lounge upgrade, stern thruster to teak decks and more.

The base price for 68 Sport Motor Yacht hull #11-#15 with the standard 1550hp MAN engines with V-drives, Twin Disc Quickshift gearboxes, hydraulic bow thruster integrated into the Express Joystick System, and so much more is \$3,898,000. The 72 Sport Motor Yacht has a base price of \$4,483,000.

Realistically, you're looking at \$4-\$4.5m for the 68 and \$4.5-\$5m for the 72 by the time you add extras long-range fuel tanks (extra 1500lt), teak decks, hydraulic swim platform and so on. Interestingly, only half the buyers have been interested in the Seakeeper 16 gyro option, preferring the natural motion of this sure-footed hull instead. We get that. This boat feels great.

Of course, there's a wide choice of finishes. This first 68 had high-gloss walnut, but you can select cherrywood or wenge. The boat headed to Europe has the standard satin finished walnut. Of course, there's no end to the soft furnishing and lounge finishes to suit export markets from contemporary Italy to functional NZ.

The bottom line here is that, rather than build down to a price, Riviera under owner Rodney Longhurst is motivated to build the best. The whole yard is driven and the 68 and 72 Sports Motor Yacht are the ultimate expression of his personal quest to create luxury world-class boat in Australia.

"We're delivering on our promise and we haven't cut corners. We've taken a bit longer to make the boat how we wanted to. But I look at Riviera humbly as Australia's luxury

motor yacht builder and I feel an obligation to do that.

"We will continue to excite with fabulous new product. And the performance is really great. We really want to deliver on that," Longhurst enthuses from the driver's seat at Riviera

LAYOUT AND ACCOMMODATION

- Four cabins as standard or Presidential layout

From flybridge to crew cabin, the 68 feels bigger than its 68ft 11in hull length. It's three storeys tall, yet it doesn't feel top heavy at all. In fact, it's one of the most planted big Rivs we've experienced. With functional areas from the foredeck lounges to the big cockpit, flybridge to crew cabin, you have abundant private living areas for extending trips away.

Below decks, there are four cabins as standard, plus separate aft crew quarters that double as a utility space. There area also options for a Presidential layout with a bigger owner's en suite in place of the fourth cabin. Either way, the full-beam master cabin and the forward VIP with walkaround island king and queen beds are special. The attention to detail is marked, so too the natural light and lighting plans, the ventilation, AV systems and storage.

Back up top, the forward saloon is a highlight, drawing on the ocean views from plush lounges, and a dining area that can seat up to eight people. A large TV forward of the central galley rises at the touch of a button and is comfortably viewable from both lounge and dining areas.

Mood-altering full spectrum lighting cycling through a rainbow of colours on the headliner is something special for entertaining, while a pantograph saloon side door leads to the portside walkaround for quick access when berthing and just getting around this 'ship'.

With a hopper window feeding back out to the mezzanine dining area, fully protected by side glass and a moulded flybridge overhang, you're likely to do most of your entertaining and eating outdoors. Add clears and air-con and this area becomes climate controlled (ideal for Dubai or Canada). There's a bar fronting the galley with stools and an icemaker. Certainly, you will do most of your sitting and eating on this mezzanine deck.

An external staircase descends to the crew cabin, with separate aft bathroom and

shower, and engine- room access. With a cockpit barbecue and drinks centre, you can use the boat all day long for your activities like diving and fishing or partying without you crew needing to venture into the plush interior to shower or use the head.

The 'motor yacht' aspect of the 68 extends to the wide walkaround decks backed by moulded bulwarks. With the tender off the bow, the optional foredeck seating flips down to create another social area. There's even a shade canopy option. With moulded fender lockers, the boat retains a nice clean look at all times.

Meantime, an internal timber staircase from the saloon provides direct access to the flybridge with sunroof. The bridge itself is the size of sports cruiser, with social seating, fridge and entertainment centre, a foldout double bed (taking accommodation to 10), plus an aft deck with docking station and emergency liferaft mounting.

The wide helm station is designed for up to four 22in navigation screens, while the twin Norsap helm seats are commercial grade... as is much of the boat's build and engineering. Coming back to the marina in a state of heightened excitement, the 68 Sports Motor Yacht proved a snap to crab back into the dock. The hydraulic Twin Disc joystick 'meshes' smoothly and seamlessly for proportional control with no labouring or lurching.

HULL AND ENGINEERING

- A Mulder hull with a showcase of the latest technology

Built to CE Category A certification for near-autonomous offshore cruising, the 68 Sport Motor Yacht answers the call of existing Riviera owners to go further and in greater comfort. The Australian coastline including southern Tasmania and The Kimberley is a given, but so too the South Pacific and Oceania.

To meet the CE classifications, the boat has been beefed up with serious specifications for the glass hull windows and layup. At the same time, the engineering steps up to a commercial-like level of robustness, reliability and refinement.

There's a high degree in in-built redundancy in things like the twin 27.5kW and 13.5kW generators, the AC and DC water pumps, and the Racor fuel filtration system for the twin GRP wing fuel tanks each carrying 3500lt. The boat has an integral inboard engine ventilation system with mist eliminators, oil change system, and underwater exhausts with by-pass system.

In the standing-height engine room, the twin 1550hp V12 MANs are coupled to V-

drive Seatorque shafts. The enclosed, oil-filled, self-contained shaft system uses rubber mounts to attach to the hull structure with flexible connections or universal joints to the gearboxes and engines.

The Seatorque shaft system allows for especially soft mounting of the engines and separate transmissions, reducing shaft-line noise and vibration to the point your martini won't be shaken. It's almost uncannily smooth and, as CEO Moxey says, more like an IPS boat in this department. Spot on. You can read more about the [Seatorque shaft system](#) in that link to our previous article.

"As we build more and more pod drives boat, we have also seen our customers experience their lack of noise... so quietness and smooth running were criteria in the design of this boat. The new boats also had to be great running boats. Hence the Mulder hull design," Moxey adds.

Extensively tank tested at the Wolfson Institute Unit for Marine Technology & Industrial Dynamics at the University of Southampton, England, the new 68 and 72 hull is very capable at varying speeds in a wide range of offshore conditions. We found this to be the case, with slippery performance from plane right through to 30-plus knots. There's not labouring or big transition, with the boat just shooting out horizontally. You get great cruise numbers from 17-22 knots.

The exceptional Mulder hull has a very fine entry and rolls the spray down and out, instead of turning it into a fine mist like some motor yachts. As such, the whole cockpit and rear deck remain beautifully dry. There are prop tunnels in the mould, which can be removed should pod -rive options present, and the low shaft anglers no doubt help the big boat launch without lag or undue drag.

"The MAN engines are great and the Seatorque shaft (vee) drives and Twin Disc gearboxes are the most expensive and high-tech in Australia. We're offering a five-year warranty on the package and drive train. The proof is in the pudding about how smooth and quiet this boat is... there's 60dba in bridge," Moxey enthuses.

The Riviera 68 Sports Motor Yachts also features the next generation CZone digital switching that interfaces with an iPad and offers remote diagnostics and dial-in for servicing crews. The 72, meanwhile, has the 1800hp MANs, which remain an option on the 68 if you want more than 32 knots. We're not so sure that's needed, but Americans do like big power.

ON THE WATER

- Powerful performance with an incredibly smooth ride

To watch this Frank Mulder hull carve through the water in the chopper footage shot during our test is a visual treat. We will have a video up and running showing this very thing shot during our test. But to experience this boat offshore in 1.5m seas at the helm station, while rocketing along at 28-30 knots, is something else again.

The hull is poetry in motion — graceful fluidity and tactful elegance — with a fine entry that slices the sea. The standard 1550hp V12 MAN engines deliver power in a sophisticated way. Coupled to the Seatorque shaft system in V-drive configuration means vibration levels are the lowest we've experienced on a boat this fast.

The smooth delivery of power and torque is on tap all the way from displacement speeds, where your range is 2000nm-plus, right up to 31-32 knots. Acceleration is mighty, though you don't necessarily feel it in the enclosed flying bridge, where sound levels are just mid-60dba when cruising offshore. Running downsea, I cracked 31.6 knots which, when I headed to the cockpit afterwards, was flying on a boat this big.

According to the follow-up sea trial data after the delivery from the Gold Coast to the 50th Sydney International Boat Show, the 68 really achieves its performance criteria of a wide sweet spot. Your best range is 574nm at 17.6 knots (14.07l/nm) at just 1600rpm. But you still get 523nm at 22.4 knots and 1850rpm. And at 25.2 knots and 2000rpm, the 479nm range lets you nail the Gold Coast-Sydney leg in one fast go and tank. Back at 9 knots, you're looking at 20000nm. All of this is at half load based on 90 per cent of the upgraded 9000lt tank (and with full 1000lt of water). Standard fuel is 7500lt.

Off-the-wheel agility is another highlight. While the boat was still being tuned, there were just a couple of turns lock-to-lock in the steering and so the 68 was sporting with its handling. With the EJS docking system, it's at once a big boat but not a handful. Owners will be at home in no time. Underscore that word "home."

VERDICT

- The magnum opus is the best Riviera yet

Five years after Rodney Longhurst bought the business, Riviera is driven by a quest to be the best rather than just crank-up the production numbers. From sub-50 boats in its nadir, they've now doubled production to 100 Rivs a year. Some 10 of these are circa-\$5m 68s and 72s sold off the plan.

By any measure, including ours, this is Riviera's best boat ever — its magnum opus — and a whole new calibre of luxury motor yacht. Engineered for ocean-going adventure, the big 68 has such low sound and vibration levels you are unaware you're doing 30 knots at sea.

The ocean calls and Riviera's impressive new class of Sports Motor Yacht is inspiring and willing.

"It's been a great journey with a lot of customer engagement along the way... we really set out to build a new class of boat," Moxey says, thrilled with the end result as he and the 68 sit ready to wow at the 50th Sydney International Boat Show.

HIGHS

- >> Fantastic Mulder hull slices the waves so perfectly
- >> Seatorque shafts create incredibly low vibration
- >> Only a low-60dba in the flying bridge when cruising
- >> Engineering is the best ever
- >> Great depth of design at every station
- >> By far the best Riviera ever in a whole new class

LOWS

- >> This first 68 test boat was still being tweaked with regard to props and steering so any final comments will be left to our follow-up ride
- >> A few new handrail positions were bound to be added
- >> Room to create a bit more wow with interior soft furnishings
- >> That said, we're struggling to find fault!

Specifications: Riviera 68 Sports Motor Yacht

Price as Tested: About \$4.5m loaded and with twin 1550hp MAN V12s, Twin Disc Quickshift MGX6620 Remote V Drive Transmissions, EC300 Controls with Stainless Steel Dual Levers, Express Joystick System with Hydraulic Proportional Bow Thruster, the Seatorque M4-350 Boss Enclosed Shaft System, plus additional Stainless Steel Dual Lever Stations, additional Express Joystick Stations, Express Positioning System and the Seakeeper 15 Stabiliser, plus loads more.

Priced From: \$3,898,000 with twin 1550hp MAN V12s and a very extensive inventory

LOA: 23.86m

Hull Length (ISO8666): 22.02m

Beam: 6.00m

Maximum Draft: 1.76m

Dry Weight: 47,000kg

Fuel Capacity: 7500lt std (9000lt optional)

Water: 1000lt

Holding Tank: 600lt

Sleeping: 8+2

Standard Engines: 1550hp MAN V12

Drives and Gearboxes: Twin Disc MGX 6620RV 2.42:1, Seatorque shafts and V-Drives,

Porps: Veem 39x43.5x5BLD 3mm, 105%

Top Speed: 31.6 knots on test

Generator(s): 27.5kW and 13.5kW (backup)

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See www.riviera.com.au.