

TEST CROWNLINE 210 LX

Good made better

by James Corns

Crownline has created the new 210 LX by making subtle changes to its already-delightful 208 LX

Last year, Crownline's 208 LX was hailed as being part of the "next generation" of the company's sportboat line. The boat was a success in virtually every way, but Crownline has endeavored to make the boat even better, so the company's designers have made a few tweaks to the boat and decided to rename it the 210. We heartily approve of the changes -- and we think you will, too.

In past boat reports, you've heard us drone on and on about how excellent the fit and finish on a Crownline boat always is, so we'll spare you many of the details. Let's just leave it at the fact that you'll be hard-pressed to find a single thing to complain about in that department.

The hull is unchanged from last year, so those of you who had the opportunity to test ride the boat last year won't notice much of a difference. Most of the changes are aesthetic -- with the most notable change being the windshield, which has been made a bit sleeker and seems to have received a slight upgrade in construction materials.

A few dozen times around the lake

We tested the 210 LX on California's Lake Puddingstone (or Puddingstone Lake, depending on whom you ask) during an absolutely beautiful day on the water. Such a fine day was not to go unnoticed by our fellow boaters, though, so the lake was much busier than we usually see it.

Nevertheless, the lake was far from crowded. We had plenty of room to have our way with the boat, and the occasional wake kicked up by passersby helped us gauge the 210's reaction to rougher waters.

We had two adults aboard for the test, and the fuel tank was exactly half full. In addition, we had the Bimini top up, so that might have slowed us down just a tad, but not significantly.

Our test boat was powered by a 260 hp 5.0L MerCruiser MPI Alpha 1 stern drive. This felt like an appropriate amount of power for the boat. We might suggest a slightly more powerful engine, if you think you'll need it, but the 5.0 MPI was acceptable. The boat is rated for as much as 320 hp, so watersports lovers and speed freaks can find contentment somewhere among the engine packages.

As we took the wheel, we were amazed by how this boat drives. The response is so immediate that it's just like you're at the wheel of a car. The boat's 21-degree deadrise helps it cut across corners without even breaking a sweat. The 210 isn't too excited about making super-sharp turns unless it is properly trimmed, though, so you'll have to get a feel for that.

With some boat-engine combinations, you have to turn the steering wheel several inches to one side or another before you see any actual change in direction, but with the 210, that slightest turn of the wheel shows a change. We loved that. It made for a very satisfying ride.

When we hit the occasional hard wave, there was a hint of shuddering, but it was almost nonexistent. The boat is only a 20-footer, so it's not equipped to deal with huge waves -- but it's highly doubtful that anyone buying this boat is planning to take it out on the open ocean, so that shouldn't be a problem.

Visibility was good. The bow does come up a bit before hitting plane, but we could still see over the edge of the boat. We didn't need to make use of the seat's bolster, but shorter skippers might.

Our top speed that day on the water was 48.8 mph. The tachometer showed an rpm of 5,200 at wide-open throttle, but the 5.0 MPI shouldn't be pushed to more than 5,000 rpm, so some prop adjustment was in order. The boat went to plane at just over 2,500 rpm, and settled in at a nice cruising speed of 26.7 mph at 3,000 rpm.

They thought of everything

Although the 210 looks like a simple bowrider at first sight, Crownline has done an excellent job of thinking through every part of the boat. For instance, the self-bailing anchor locker at the very tip of the bow not only includes a liner, but also a telescoping ladder that makes it possible to board the boat from the front.

Another one of our favorite parts of the boat is the engine compartment, which is wide open and easy to get to. Moreover, mechanics will really love this boat, because the entire front side of the engine compartment folds completely forward, for unparalleled access. The stern settee flips forward to make this possible -- and it's a terrific idea that is well executed.

The stowage space under that rear settee is generous, and getting to the stowage areas is done in an interesting way: You slide the settee cushion slightly forward and then it hinges up for access. The port side of the settee has a built-in 25-quart removable Igloo cooler.

A large sunpad lies atop the engine compartment. A small swim step is incorporated into the back of the boat, and it includes a built-in telescoping ladder.

The newly designed bucket seats at the helm and passenger consoles are attractive and contemporary. They're another change from the 208.

The helm console is decorated with a full set of instrumentation, with stainless steel, beveled Faria gauges that include a lifetime warranty. Faux burl wood accents are in abundance and give the console some sophistication.

The passenger console has a locking glove box and two cup holders. In fact, two-tier cup holders are conveniently located throughout the boat, and they all have overboard drainage. Now that's attention to detail.

An in-deck finished lockable ski and wakeboard locker with hinged lids, a drainage channel and a removable rubber pad is located at the center of the cockpit. Diamond skid-resistant surfacing runs throughout the deck, and snap-in carpeting is standard.

A V-shaped bow settee is located up front, and a small cooler is built in under the settee's center cushion. Stowage takes up the space under the rest of the settee.

When you turn the wheel of the Crownline 210 LX, the boat turns exactly as you expect it to. When you look underneath the fiberglass finish, you find immaculately finished spaces in areas that often go unseen. We go into a boat test with high expectations, and the 210 did not disappoint.

Focus on Crownline 210 LX

Builder

Crownline Boats Inc., 11884 Country Club Road, West Frankfort, IL 62896; (618) 937-6426

Specifications

Length: 20 ft., 4 in.

Beam: 8 ft., 6 in.

Weight: 3,700-3,900 lbs.

Fuel capacity: 45 gal.

Maximum power: 320 hp

Base price: \$ n/a

Engine Packages Available

(test engine in italics)

MerCruiser 4.3L MPI Alpha/220 hp
MerCruiser 4.3L MPI Bravo 3/220 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L Alpha/220 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L Bravo 1/220 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L Bravo 3/220 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L MPI Alpha/260 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L MPI Bravo 1/260 hp
MerCruiser 5.0L MPI Bravo 3/260 hp
MerCruiser 5.7L Alpha/250 hp
MerCruiser 5.7L Bravo 1/250 hp
MerCruiser 5.7L Bravo 3/250 hp
MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI Alpha/300 hp
MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI Bravo 1/300 hp
MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI Bravo 3/300 hp
Volvo Penta 4.3 GXI DuoProp/225 hp
Volvo Penta 5.0 GL/220 hp
Volvo Penta 5.0 GL DuoProp/220 hp
Volvo Penta 5.0 GXI/270 hp
Volvo Penta 5.0 GXI DuoProp/270 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GL/260 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GL DuoProp/260 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GI/280 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GI DuoProp/280 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GXI/320 hp
Volvo Penta 5.7 GXI DuoProp/320 hp

For a complete list of test engine specs and available engine packages, visit goboatingamerica.com.

Standard Features

Anchor locker w/through-bolted tie off, 12v receptacle, automatic bilge pump w/manual override, bow cooler w/drain, six cleats, courtesy lights, lockable glove box, in-floor ski/wakeboard locker, ski tow eye, two-tier drink holderS.

Optional Features

Sport Package (w/depth sounder, stainless steel rub rail, remote control for courtesy lights, woodgrain dash and wheel insert), Premium Package (w/Sport Package, plus a forward boarding ladder and extended swim platform), Bimini side curtains, Sony six-disc changer, compass, docking lights, transom trim switch, bow canvas, wakeboard tower, woodgrain kit.

Top speed: 48.8 mph
RPM @ top speed: 5,200
Cruising speed: 26.7 mph
RPM @ cruising speed: 3,000
MPG @ cruise: n/a
GPH @ cruise: n/a
Range @ cruise: n/a miles

Test Engine Specs

MerCruiser 5.0 MPI stern drive
Horsepower: 260
Cylinders: V-8
Displacement: 305 c.i.d.
Bore x stroke: 3.74 x 3.48 in.
Gear ratio: 1.62:1
Compression ratio: 9.4:1
Max. engine speed: 4,600-5,000 rpm
Fuel system: MPI
Weight: 952 lbs.

CROWNLINE 250 CR

Attack cruiser

By Steve Quinlan
2004-01-01

Crownline gets aggressive with a new 25-foot cruiser that combines unique styling and innovative features

Ask a boater what type of craft typifies the Crownline brand, and he is likely to answer runabout. Indeed, while Crownline also offers deck boats and cruisers, it has been increasing sales of four stylish runabouts - the 202, 225, 266 and 270- that have put the brand on the map since it began in 1991. Yet, Crownlines runabout reputation may soon be expanding to other types of boatS. Thats because the company is now attacking the cruiser market with a totally new mid-cabin model for 2004 - the 250 CR.

We were anxious to put this 25-foot cruiser through its paces, so we set up an exclusive test on Floridas Tampa Bay through Kevin Riem, Crownlines vice president and general manager. We also asked Riem for his perspective on the market strategy for the 250 CR.

"The goal," he says, "is to maintain a high level of style without compromising livability. To do that, we looked at the best of the best of our competition, and paid very close attention to the detail."

FORM AND FUNCTION

One of the first elements we noticed about the 250 CR is how well the bow rails and curved, tinted walk-through safety glass windshield accentuate the shape of the boat... or vice versa.

Also complementing the line is a new wraparound swim platform. On the practical side, this feature makes it easier to step into and out of the boat when docked, whether port-to or starboard-to.

Once aboard, we went through the 250 with a fine-toothed comb, comparing each and every one of her features with those of her toughest competitors 25-foot cruiserS.

The color-matched, standard full cockpit enclosure is first-rate. It includes quick-disconnect hardware, stainless steel tubing, a clear front Bimini connector, side and aft curtains, an embroidered boot and trailering legS. Though the quick-disconnect hardware is not exclusive, most of Crownlines upper-end competition is still using the removable-pin-style stanchionS.

Our eyes were quickly drawn to the helm, which features full instrumentation with stainless-bezeled Faria gauges that come with lifetime warrantieS. This cruiser also features a full cockpit fiberglass liner and Berber snap-in cockpit carpeting.

The engine hatch is operated by an electric actuator, and the engine bay is lighted. Atop the engine hatch is an innovative aft bench/sunpad. The padded backrest has two locking positionS. It can be angled aft to serve passengers facing forward, or folded flat (all the way forward) to create an island-style, 6-foot-long sunpad.

We tried both positions, and found each superbly comfortable. However, once in the sunpad mode, the port walkway to the swim platform is blocked. Riem tells us this is intentional a safety element that serves as a "baby gate" for owners with small children and petS. By the way, there is an actual gate to the swim platform that locks open or closed.

If you wonder why the backrest does not angle forward so you can face aft, this too is a safety element a means of discouraging people from sitting on the sunpad while the boat is underway.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

In terms of livability, the 250 CR is first-rate. For example, theres a cockpit wet bar to port with a sink, pivoting faucet (supplied by a 25-gallon freshwater tank), stainless grabrail and cooler storage in a recess below. The ice chest secures nicely in its cove with notches that fit the contours of the handles on the cooler.

For dining and entertaining, a removable snack table can be positioned in the middle of the cockpit. It can be used by passengers seated in the aft bench and the port settee. To complete the social setting, the double-wide helm seat can be pivoted to face the center or aft. Putting two passengers on the starboard seat also helps solve an age-old problem with cruisers their tendency to list to port at rest when too many crewmembers are seated to starboard and none to port. The pivoting helm seat helps balance the load while socializing.

However, the helm seat is also extremely functional in its primary role facing forward to serve as a captains chair. Two people can cozy up, even while the boat is underway. To help see better over the windshield and domed bow deck, there is a flip-up bolster that stretches across both the pilot and co-pilot seatS.

At the companionway to the 250 CRs inner sanctum is a hinged, plastic grating that not only levels the first step into the cabin, but also allows water to drain overboard. In most cruisers this size, theres either a cupped step thats barely large enough for a small foot if turned sideways or no step at all. This boat also has a second step inside the threshold. The hinged lid of the step hides a small wastebasket.

FIRST-CLASS CABIN

Once inside, we couldnt help admiring the galley venting, which was absent from all competitors modelS. Next, we took into consideration what all wed pack in terms of galley items if we were planning a weekend trip. The hardwood cabinets above the galley accommodate cereal boxes, canned goods, spices and other dry goods all of the things youd want at eye level. Below the sink and stove was room enough for a few pots and panS.

We were impressed by the nicely beveled edges throughout the cabin; there are no rough places to scrape or snag.

The microwave and fridge are standard on the 250CR, but theres nothing standard about the faucet, nor the handles, hardware and fastenerS. All are a cut above much of the competition. The faucet is very modern and clean-looking. It has a high arch, which affords plenty of room for washing vegetables, dishes or your handS. Just aft of the galley is the control panel for the 12-volt accessories as well as the optional AC shore-power system.

The padded headliner is very neatly finished and runs all the way back to the companionway, which is the most likely area youd bump your head when either leaving the cabin or entering the mid-cabin berth. On the minus side, mid-cabin space, as well as accessibility, is restricted by a bulkhead. This is common on other cruisers of this size, but restrictive nonetheless.

The head, on the other hand, offers plenty of room and sports a smart layout. The mirror faces the toilet. The faucet doubles as a shower head, and the entry has a generous lip to keep water out of the main cabin.

The V-berth is fairly standard, with roomy side trays for stowing rolled-up charts, jackets, hats and other knickknackS. It converts to a dinette, and the table pivots to make it easy for the crew to get in and out of the seatS. Finally, there is copious storage under the V-berth seatS.

DIMENSIONAL THINKING

According to Riem, the 250 CR employs the concept of minimum dimensions, which means providing more than adequate room or size to maximize functionality and comfort. For example, cabin headroom is 6 feet, and the V-berth is 6 feet, 2 inches long. If youre average to short in stature, you might not even notice, but if youre on the tall side, youll really appreciate Crownlines approach.

The 250 CR not only feels big, but it runs big. On Tampa Bay, unpredictable weather and water conditions are about the only constantS. On test day, it was a bit choppy, which we prefer for a thorough performance evaluation.

We tested the 250 CR with a crew of two and a full tank of fuel (75 gallons). Power came in the form of a 280 hp Volvo Penta 5.7L Gi/DP. It took about 11 seconds to go from 0 to 30 mph, yet most of that time was spent reaching 20. Twenty to 30 mph was so quick that if wed have blinked, wed have missed it. Once the boat had planed, the Volvo DuoProp dug in and launched our cruiser forward like an arrow.

Lenco electric trim tabs come as standard equipment on the 250 CR, which we consider a nice touch on a cruiser this size. They gave us a dry, smooth ride when we ran through heavy chop uphill, allowing us to tuck in the bow.

Top speed was 41 mph with the engine turning 5000 rpm with the standard through-hub below-water exhaust. And it was pretty smooth: Its not often that I can read my own handwriting when recording fuel and speed numbers at 40 mph. She was also surefooted in turnS. We dropped the bow at 30 mph and turned her hard. The turning diameter was, in my approximation, 80 feet. And dry" At no time during our testing did we get spray on the windshield, even when conducting our cornering maneuverS.

The 250 CR purrs like a pussycat at idle, but roars like a lion when you put the hammer down. With the flip of a switch, an optional Corsa Captains Call system turns the below-water exhaust into an above-water system. Kind of makes you feel like youre behind the wheel of a mean machine. And thats why we call the 250 CR an attack cruiser.

Base Price

(w/o trailer & 220 hp

5.0L MerCruiser/ Bravo 3) \$63,525

Price as Tested \$68,317

Length 24 8

Beam 8 6

Weight (w/ engine) 6600 lbs.

Fuel Capacity 75 galS.

Max. Horsepower 375

NOTABLE STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Electric engine hatch, custom cherry wood cabinets, microwave oven, AC/DC reefer, snap-in carpet, full canvas enclosure, trim tabs

NOTABLE OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Armorcote hull band, trim tab indicators, Sony six-disk changer, 26-gal. grey-water system, air conditioner

Base Price

(w/o trailer & 220 hp

5.0L MerCruiser/ Bravo 3) \$63,525

Price as Tested \$68,317

Length 24' 8"

Beam 8' 6"

Weight (w/ engine) 6600 lbs.

Fuel Capacity 75 gals.

Max. Horsepower 375

NOTABLE STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Electric engine hatch, custom cherry wood cabinets, microwave oven, AC/DC reefer, snap-in carpet, full canvas enclosure, trim tabs

NOTABLE OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Armorcote hull band, trim tab indicators, Sony six-disk changer, 26-gal. grey-water system, air conditioner

ENGINE AS TESTED

Make Volvo Penta 5.7L Gi/DP

Horsepower 280

Number of Cylinders V-8

Displacement 5.7L/350 cid

Weight (including outdrive) 1031 lbs.

Gear Ratio 1.95:1

WOT RPM Range 4600-5000

Props F-3 stainless prop set