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**ADVICE LABEL**

# AXOPAR 28

The discreetly revamped version of the 28 adds a new long-legged hull to this versatile and intelligently designed day boat

Words Nick Burnham Pictures Paul Wyeth

**A**s facelifts go, the one that has just been administered to the Axopar 28 must be about the most subtle in history. If you'd had it done by a Beverly Hills surgeon you'd be asking for your money back – it's a 'spot the difference' puzzle. Ironically, perhaps the most fundamental change you won't spot at all – the Mk2 version of Axopar's 28 has an entirely new hull! So popular has it been, with around 1,000 built since it launched in 2014, that the moulds were simply wearing out, so it made perfect sense to revamp the hull in line with the mould replacement. The new version is scaled up by 1.5% via 130mm of added length, 50mm of extra beam and hull sides raised by 80mm with the deck also increased in height by 40mm. Those last two numbers are perhaps the most significant as (along with a slight change to the hull form

to increase stability and fuel capacity to 300 litres), they mean that the boat is now RCD Category B (offshore) rated rather than Category C (coastal), while in the US (Axopar's biggest export market) the boat is now certified to travel between Miami and the Bahamas, for example. But the length and beam increases also help to eliminate pinch points as you move around the boat, creating a more spacious feeling. Below the waterline, the spray rails are modified, particularly towards the stern, to give the boat a less aggressive cornering style, giving more confidence to less experienced owners, as well as improving directional stability.

The deck layout remains identical, and wisely so because it just works. Out of the three boats tested, it's the only one to utilise the entire length of the hull for cockpit space. Add in the fact that it's a full 40cm wider than the Cormate T27 for example, and that equates to masses of outdoor living. It's neatly divided up – an L-shaped dinette in the bow provides a social picnicking and





Thinner windscreen mullions improve helm visibility

relaxing spot, and that wide beam creates a safe and easy stroll aft past a centre console with twin swivel seats at the helm, hiding a sink and fridge beneath them. A bench seat directly behind accommodates a further four, keeping everyone together and well protected. Back aft you have a choice of either a large flat open deck, great for water sports, or you can opt for a wet bar behind the seats or choose the Day Cruiser Aft Cabin option. The latter is the version we have on test, and it hides a surprisingly spacious double berth beneath a raised sunpad. It's not an area you'd sit and socialise in, it is just a bed, but it certainly gives the boat genuine overnight reach,

especially in conjunction with the separate heads. Accessed via a door in the front of the console, it adds another dimension to both day boating and overnighting, and crucially you can use it without disturbing your overnight companion!

The other option, and one most welcome during the June heatwave of our test, is a T-Top version. Comprising a permanent metal frame that stretches from in front of the windscreen to aft of the rear seats, it provides masses of welcome shade. Axopar has cleverly avoided the heavy look and feel of a GRP roof by skinning it with sail cloth instead. It lets plenty of light through while still shielding harmful UV, works brilliantly and it looks fantastic. Removable zips on the T-Top and windscreen rail allow infill canopies to be quickly and easily installed.



The helm seats swivel to face the rear ones



Sail cloth T-Top provides shade without adding much extra weight

Axopar has taken the facelift opportunity to upgrade other aspects of the boat at the same time, concentrating mainly on the finish. So although it's still remarkable value, it feels less like the cheap option. The heads compartment door for example, is now a double mould rather than single, meaning that it's as smoothly gel coated on the inside as it is outside, and the compartment itself, as well as being slightly larger, features a lined ceiling and bulkhead. Up on deck, changes include a helm console painted in a new anti-glare Nextel finish and thinner windscreen mullions (the old ones were rather obstructive) improving helm visibility.

**VERDICT**

A beefed-up transom means that you can now opt for twin 200hp outboard engines or it will handle Mercury's ultra-high-performance 400R 400hp outboard, but the 300hp Mercury Verado of our test boat remains the most popular choice. At the helm, sunk deeper into the hull than the surrounding deck, it's almost inaudible at tick-over as we muster just outside Lymington Yacht Haven. Those high sides combine with the full-length cockpit to make the deck work of removing fenders and lines a doddle – helpful and reassuring in equal measure since I'm solo on the boat. I take the easy option and simply stuff them all in the heads.

The helm is equally reassuring, the sunken floor and high sides making me feel ensconced and secure, very much in the boat, not on it. I wrap the kill cord around my leg anyway – foolish not to. The helm seat slides and has a chunky lift bolster, and for me, at a little over six foot, it's a perfect set-up, allowing me to sit and look through the screen or stand and look over it. The twin-stepped hull runs incredibly flat, minimal bow lift meaning visibility remains every bit as good as it was at low speed, and the hull is doing a great job of smoothing out the chop blown up by a brisk Force 5 as we scorch in convoy toward The Needles at the west end of the Isle of Wight for a photo shoot.

Clear of the shelter of the island, things get rather more serious with a rolling swell creating a rather more intense workout for the hull. Turning and burning for the camera boat in a big sea really puts the hull through its paces. Like any planing boat, get it wrong and drop off a large wave still banked over and you'll land with a thud, but keep it flying level and landings are impressively soft.



Discreet heads compartment is equally handy for storing bulky items like wakeboards

Less impressive is the amount of cavitation it suffers from, even with the outboard trimmed right down. A tight turn, or sometimes even just accelerating hard, results in 'wheelspin' as the prop loses grip. Yes, it's a powerful engine that needs to be treated with a little respect, but experience with other Axopars, including the previous 28, didn't show up such a propensity for

cavitation. In calmer water the problem largely goes away – you can simply nail the throttle from a standing start and howl toward the horizon without a hint of slip, as an impromptu drag race against the other boats proved, topping out at about 40 knots and almost keeping the lighter Cormate honest.

It's entirely possible that a change of set-up (outboard height and/or propeller) could resolve the issue, and even as is, it's a tiny fly in a very large jar of ointment given that the average owner is unlikely to take the boat out into a big rolling swell and try charging back and forth through it for a camera boat. What he or she is more likely to do is enjoy the capable long-legged hull, the intelligent design and the flexibility and safety of that full-length cockpit. It may not be the ultimate driving machine that the Cormate is or boast the cruiser accommodation of the Nimbus, but it is the most versatile and the best dayboat of the triplet here – and that's before you consider the fact that it is the most affordable by a very significant margin. **MBY**

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**THE DATA**

**SPECIFICATIONS**

- LENGTH 30ft 1in (9.18m)
- BEAM 9ft 8in (2.95m)
- WEIGHT 2,150kg
- FUEL 300 litres (66 gallons)
- WATER 45 litres
- RCD B (for 6 people\_
- PRICE FROM £76,025 inc 20% VAT (250hp Mercury Verado)
- PRICE AS TESTED £108,898 inc 20% VAT 300hp outboard

**THE DATA**

**PERFORMANCE**

TEST ENGINE: Mercury Verado 300hp outboard

	10	15	20	ECO	30	FAST	MAX
Speed	10	15	20	25	30	35	39.5
RPM	2,600	3,300	3,700	3,850	4,450	4,950	5,500
LPH	22	37	40	44	57	77.0	112
GPH	4.8	8.1	8.8	9.7	12.5	16.9	24.6
MPG	2.1	1.8	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.1	1.6
Range	128	110	134	159	146	128	98

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on real-time fuel gauges, your figures may vary considerably. All prices include UK VAT. 33% fuel, 0% water, 1 crew + minimal stores. 27 deg C air temperature, slight sea, F4 for speed trials.



The finish and fittings are improved on the new model



The double skinned lockers are sturdier too