

SPACE SHIP

Riviera creates a new space ship,
without alienating its fan base.
DAVID LOCKWOOD blasts off





“PREDICABLY, 53 BUYERS ARE STEPPING OUT OF 47S AND 51S BUT ALSO SWITCHING BACK TO THE BRAND THEY LOVE BEST, SAYS RIVIERA

The commanding flybridge helm (above) is offset to port, so you gain another lounge alongside the twin Pompanette seats.

It's the sheer scale, the class-leading volume, and the enormity of it that strikes you first. You gawk at the exceptional freeboard, the flying bridge hovering in the clouds, if not the great, big cockpit that beckons serious play. But wherever you look on Riviera's new 53 Enclosed Flybridge you'll find supersizing. The gargantuan cruiser has now gained the affectionate title of space ship. Besides the obvious inference is a subtext.

Some two years in the making, the 53 Enclosed Flybridge takes our iconic boatbuilder to an exciting new realm. The hull is different from your average shaftdriven Riviera — it's fully resin infused for starters — the roomy interior layout is nigh faultless, while the generous accommodation plan breaks altogether new ground. Then comes the fit and finish in keeping with a near-\$2 million luxury cruiser.

Rather than playing it safe, the yard has created a new benchmark to thrust it into the pleasureboating future. You get more of everything but fuel consumption, spray and noise. But don't just take our word for it. We're told 13 of the new 53s had been sold at the time of writing.

After the Sydney International Boat Show, it's feasible that 20 of these big-hit 53s will have been snapped up in these otherwise trying times.

Predicably, 53 buyers are stepping out of 47s and 51s but also switching back to the brand they love best, says Riviera. The other big change this year is the increasing demand for 50-plus footers. Weigh-up what you get on this 53 and you'll find it more in keeping with a 60.

Believing in the tenet "bigger is better", the 53 Enclosed Flybridge #1 was displayed alongside the reworked Riviera 61 Series II, whose hull is designed by Dutch superyacht buff Frank Mulder. Although 1.4m shorter overall and 0.27m narrower in the beam, the 53 was the overwhelming centre of attention. Compared with a 51, it's a good 0.4m wider and longer, yet it feels even bigger.

The bow is considerably higher than the 61 with more flare in the topsides. The cockpit appears deeper, too, while the flying bridge looks down from the stratosphere. Yet for all this, the boat was surefooted even with the thronging boat-show crowd aboard. And due to its impressive volume and clever design, a crowd can lose

themselves aboard.

The boat's accommodating nature stems from the creation of various living stations. You can hang out in the cockpit, on the mezzanine seating, at the aft galley, on saloon lounges, up top in the flybridge lounge, or sip a cocktail on the bow. And that's before you step down into the boat's three cabins and full-beam stateroom with headroom.

TRI-PODS

If that's not enough, Riviera also throws in an extra engine. Following the new 43 and retrofitted pod-driven 51 released last year, the 53 is the third pod-driven boat in Riv's flybridge range. It's powered by triple Volvo Penta IPS600s each generating 435hp at 3500rpm, for a top speed of 29 to 30kts, according to Riviera's official data.

Fly-by-wire technology and computer brains control the triple engines, but just the two outboard ones are used for low-speed manoeuvring. The third centre engines kicks in as you advance the throttles to planing speed. Of course, there is a joystick to assist with docking. We presume those two outboard IPS drives will be able to effectively counter the windage on



The gang can spread out in the flybridge on a big C-shaped lounge (above), its table dropping to make a double bed. The opposing internal staircase leads below to the saloon (left) where a TV (below inset) rises from the port window sill.



this big 53.

Volvo Penta's compact 5.5lt six-cylinder diesels are mounted abreast in what would otherwise be the boat's lazarette. Riviera has gone to some effort to keep the water out, using a double seal and deep gutter around the electric-lift cockpit sole. We trust this will ensure the engines remain dry even when the boat's cockpit is used for serious gamefishing. A new dorade

engine vent and Delta T fans assist ventilation.

Thankfully there's an internal servicing hatch under the aft-galley floor should you need to enter the engineroom at sea. It leads into the adjoining engineering space ahead of the engines that can be optioned as crew quarters (read European market). As it was, there were a few machinery items such as the generator, air-con units, battery

charger and so on dotted about the place. Such was the remaining room — and near full headroom — that all manner of custom storage options spring to mind: fishing rod and dive racks, separate deep freezer, folding bike racks, kayak storage... hey, one Riviera owner had a wine cellar and gym down in here.

As expected, servicing space around the little Volvo Pentas is truly abundant. The six-cylinder engines



“ THIS HIGH-RUNNING ATTITUDE TEAMED WITH THE HIGH FREEBOARD AND FLARED TOPSIDES MEAN SPRAY WAS NOTICEABLE BY ITS ABSENCE

contain their own strainers with clear inspection bowls, oil dipsticks are at hand, but any issues with fluid and coolant levels are relayed to the electronic control module on the dash. The boat also has a BEP CAN-bus switching system that includes preset modes such as night entertaining, day cruising, at dock, and so on. Flick a switch and you enter the relevant mode.

That said, there's no excuse for not getting to know what's under the floor on the 53 since, at the press of a button, the engines and engineering are so easily accessible. The single 3500lt fuel tank is forward, roughly on the fulcrum for the least effect on trim, with a sight gauge and twin Racor fuel filters per engine. We also noted twin blackwater tanks for greater holidaying ability, a separate grey-water tank for the showers up front, and low-maintenance batteries. The generator has its own start battery, too, something not always a given.

LAYOUT OPTIONS

Hull #1 tested here had a forward helm station for cruising, with an IPS controller in the cockpit. But there is the option of a rear helm for those who prefer it, most likely gamefishers. Either way, the design team is to be commended for creating upper and lower windscreens with minimal mullions to steal the views. Big wipers are on hand, too.



The aft galley (above) with opening cockpit awning window doesn't compromise on saloon lounges (top), in fact we find it a layout that's difficult to improve on.

While there is a hydraulic option, the deep optional boarding platform is akin to a waterfront balcony where you can unfurl a towel or two. Open-ended hawsepipes in the transom corners keep the decks clean while making docking safe for crew. The cleats are, yep, oversized.

Mounted centrally in the transom is one of the biggest (optional) outdoor amenities centres we've seen. Lift the lid and you'll find a side-by-side Kenyon 240V hot plate and griddle, sink with hot and cold water, top-loading garbage bin, all traced by solid counters suitable for food prep. Oh, and there's a utensil holder so you can flip the

steaks, plus drawers for storage, and LED decklights shining on the hot plate, too.

If not underfloor then you'll find handy storage in the sidepockets with drains. Toe-kicks and high freeboard let you lean outboard with confidence. A dot-pattern non-skid runs from the gunwales to the bow, where a high rail with intermediate wire stretches well aft. There's only one tight spot near the start of the siderail, otherwise it's a straight and safe run forward.

Riviera uses a recessed Muir windlass and there are fresh- and salt-water taps in the chain locker. The foredeck needs a tender and





There's no compromise in the third-cabin (top left), its twin bunks are adult length. Riviera has employed a new model for its bathrooms (top and below left). At the foot of the staircase (left) with wetbar underneath is the wall-mounted touchscreen ship-systems monitor and control panel (inset above).

THE LUXE FACTOR REACHES HITHERTO NEW HEIGHTS IN THE OWNER'S FULL-BEAM STATEROOM BACK AFT AND DOWN A FEW STEPS — IT'S A TWO-LEVEL ACCOMMODATION PLAN — THAT SIGNIFIES THE BOAT'S HUGE VOLUME

The Riviera 53's huge owners suite (above) includes luxury features like a vanity table with flip-up mirror. Guests are treated to queen bed in the bow (below).

our test boat had a 350kg Davco davit mounted in readiness. The square Bomar deck hatches include shade and insect screens, while the opening portlights in the full-beam stateroom are alarmed so you can't drive away with them open. These are the details that Riv' gets right.

Incidentally, the boat has just one 15amp shorepower lead and three-phase power. So if you haven't got three-phase at your berth, you'll need to run the generator to avail yourself of the boat's air-con while running other big-load appliances like the barbie. At the anchorage, a standard 1200W inverter (we'd specify a 3000W model) and 24V fridges let you stay aboard and watch TV without needing the generator.

LIVING ABOARD

The aft-facing mezzanine seating under the cockpit awning is hot property, but we'd probably custom-



MOUNTED CENTRALLY IN THE TRANSOM IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST (OPTIONAL) OUTDOOR AMENITIES CENTRES WE'VE SEEN

order a small table so you can do lunch here as well. If not via the barbie then food orders will be served through the awning window at the galley. But where some aft galley's lead to compromises in the saloon lounges, this one's a model. In fact, we struggle to see how the layout can be improved upon. It's almost as though they really did spend a couple of years designing.

The U-shaped galley comes loaded with European appliances including induction cooktop, combi oven, (optional) dishwasher, big sink, and fridge and freezer drawers. Two fridge drawers are also a feature of the wetbar, with icemaker under the stairwell. All counters are Corian with small fiddles, the joinery is signature high-gloss cherrywood, while the LED lighting seemed to do a reasonable job on a dull day. Hardwearing Amtico flooring is a good choice for these work areas.

In the forward saloon, the opposing high-backed lounges are wonderfully comfortable. You can seat 12 here, up to eight around the dinette, with everyone enjoying circumambient views when not watching the popup TV. The lounges are also long enough to serve as daybeds for dosing owners.

A couple of drawers add to the boat's storage capacity, which includes a hold on the lower dash perfect for games and a cupboard for the Bose. But I'm not so sure why boatbuilders are favouring the cube-style Bose speakers, there are some great flush mounts these days.

ROOMS WITH A VIEW

The 53 has a three-cabin and two-bathroom accommodation plan. Dressed in metallic-gold bedding, the third cabin doesn't compromise. Its bunks are adult-length, there are hanging lockers and more drawers than you'd normally expect, ledges for personal effects, and a separate (optional) television and air-con controller.

[HIGHS]

- › Massive internal volume akin to a 60-something-footer
- › Great design with lots of well-executed stations
- › Near faultless interior layout
- › Big flybridge is a virtual penthouse
- › Full-beam stateroom with panorama windows
- › Aft galley and mezzanine seating boost living space
- › Great finish that more than ably reflects the price tag
- › Deep cockpit for outdoor pursuits from cruising to fishing to entertaining
- › Efficient cruising at 155 to 200lt/h at 20 to 25kts
- › Riviera brand power is exceedingly strong and the boats are well supported
- › Resale value or demand is always there for second-hand Riviervas

[LOWS]

- › Longevity of the IPS engines and pod drives remain an unknown
- › Not as much load-carrying torque as conventional shafts
- › Triple-engine servicing costs
- › Riviera is still in receivership, though trading relatively strongly



The cockpit's *piece de resistance* is the centrally-mounted transom entertainment centre (above), with hot plate and griddle, sink with hot and cold water, top-loading garbage bin and utensil holder.

Guests are treated to a queen-sized island bed in the bow, his-and-her hanging lockers and GPOs, while a mirrored bedhead, fabric feature panels, and ducted air-con under timber trims create a clean feel. Smart bedding and separate AV gear dressed the VIP.

Riviera has a new bathroom model on the 53 with designer touches such as backlit faux marble splashback, mini mixers and pencil shower rose, oversized shower, teak accents, porcelain sink, and the latest Vacuflush heads. There's also natural ventilation, while the extractor fan is finally acceptably quiet. The vanity has been up-sized.

The luxe factor reaches hitherto new heights in the owner's full-beam stateroom back aft and down

a few steps — it's a two-level accommodation plan — that signifies the boat's huge volume. There's headroom around the king-sized bed, panorama windows with optional opening portlights for natural cross-flow ventilation, a nest of drawers and a cedar-lined walk-in wardrobe with special shoe-rack.

You also get a two-seater lounge to port, a big-screen TV fitted flush into the joinery, and a bookcase. Generator noise is barely audible and with a great, big aft en suite with five-star shower, owners really can live aboard the 53. A washer/dryer and linen press in the companionway add to your self-sufficiency, providing you add optional watermaker. But for a few bits of gear like this, the 53 ticks the boxes coveted by 95 per



cent of Riviera owners.

PENTHOUSE LIVING

Accessed via an internal staircase, with a hatch that adds to the safety factor when underway, the flybridge travels in rarefied air. It's yet another station where you can entertain, send the kids, or kick back while cruising. The lounge that wraps around a dinette can seat eight facing an as-yet-fitted television. It also converts into a double-sized skipper's or nipper's bed.

A fridge and sink are handy amenities when cruising, or dial-up lunch via the boat's integrated intercom. The aft end of the lounge has a reversible backrest to create an aft-facing seat if you prefer to watch the wake or vanishing landscape.

The view from the leather Pompanette co-pilot seat is stirring, but due to the offset helm you also gain another lounge alongside. This means four can cruise together, spot the ocean life, and enjoy the ride. Abundant grabrails let you move about safely underway, while a sunroof and opening windows and rear clears keeps you connected with the real world.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Power-to-weight ratio is key to the 53's performance. Tipping the scales at just 22,300kg, the 53 is

no heavyweight. Of this, 2700kg is attributed to the triple IPS600 engines. These are some 1000kg lighter than, say, twin 825hp MTU Series 60 arrangement that might otherwise suit this boat. And that's not including shafts, props and rudders.

Although there is 300hp less than a pair of MTUs, the 1000kg-plus saved in engine and running gear weight, not to mention drag, makes the 53 an agile boat. It's not a fast boat, mind you, but it does exhibit snappy acceleration. As the official sea-trial data hereabouts reveals, there's a handy 450nm range anywhere from 15 to 25kts. So the sea state rather than fuel use will dictate how fast you travel.

With three-quarters fuel and five aboard, we saw 27 to 28kts top speed on the day. For those who covet more speed, read the American market, there are twin IPS1200s or Zeus 4000 pod drives available that, claims Riviera, give a 35kts top end and 25 to 28kts cruise. These may be the best engine options if you want to load up the boat with gear and live aboard.

It's also our considered view the 53 is the driest Riviera in the fleet. Designed in accord with Volvo Penta, the beamy hull rides high on the water, a trait we're seeing with all IPS-powered boats. This high-running attitude teamed with the



Cockpit's mezzanine seating gets weather protection from the flybridge overhang (top). Adjacent the aft-facing lounge is a moulded freezer unit (above), incorporating sink and mixer tap, and a handy wraparound rail.



The triple IPS600s (above right) are big and impressive, and give the Riviera 53 a high-bow attitude underway (top), but cut 1000kg of the weight from equivalent engines in shaftdrive mode. Crew will be secure berthing the 53 with open-ended hawsepipes and oversize cleats in the transom corners (above).

high freeboard and flared topsides mean spray was noticeable by its absence.

Riviera assures us the boat remains dry even in adverse weather. For a boat long famous for its generous accommodation, that's a real achievement. But in heavy weather, running on your flat aft sections isn't so smart. You might need to call on trim tabs if the weight of an aftermarket tender on the bow doesn't help glue it to the water. You want that forefoot working.

Another thing we didn't miss is running noise. Whether in the flybridge or saloon, the aft-mounted engines are amazingly quiet when

cruising. We tested another 53 with shafts on the same day and the difference was noticeable. Polite conversation is 60dB, while the 53 generates 68dB at cruise, we're told.

What's more, with an underwater exhaust/splitter on the generator, the boat remains quiet at rest with pretty much everything running. And then, with a crowd aboard, that's when the 53 really does earn its space ship title. Indeed, the sky is no longer the limit. The 53 delivers more of just about everything at water level. And with a safe range of 450nm, you can discover new ports and friendly life forms. Blast off! 🚀

Facts & figures

RIVIERA 53 ENCLOSED FLYBRIDGE

BEHIND THE WHEEL

The 53 is an intuitive boat to command. That's due to the Volvo Penta IPS system, with joystick and throttles, the great views of the ocean road ahead, and comfortable cruise speeds in the low-to-mid 20kts. Such is the easy fit that we forecast the 53 will win over many existing Riviera owners. It's a great recreational boat that's far enough advanced to finally offer a bona fide reason to upgrade.

PRICE AS TESTED

Approx **\$1,928,728** w/ triple Volvo Penta IPS600s, and options

SEA TRIALS

Triple 435hp Volvo Penta IPS600 electronic turbo-diesels, full fuel and water, 11 crew

RPM	SPEED	FUEL BURN	RANGE
1000	7.4kts	9lt/h	2960nm
1500	9.5kts	33lt/h	1041nm
2000	10.9kts	69lt/h	579nm
2500	14.9kts	114lt/h	471nm
2900	20.2kts	156lt/h	470nm
3100	22.7kts	174lt/h	468nm
3300	25.4kts	201lt/h	453nm
3600	30kts	252lt/h	430nm

* Official sea-trial data supplied by Riviera. Range calculated on 90 per cent fuel. Fuel Burn figures are for all engines combined.

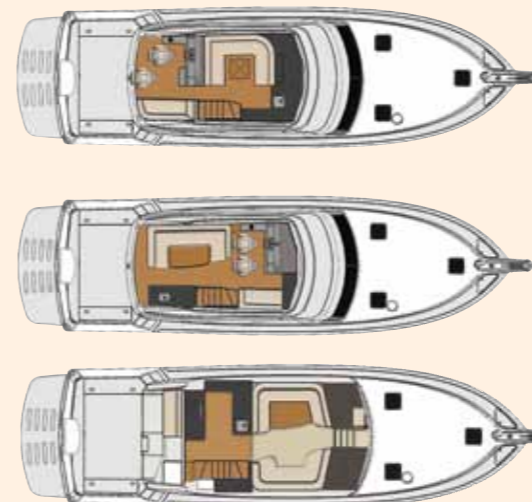
OPTIONS FITTED

More than \$170,000 in options: forward helm, cockpit joystick, Davco davit, teak-laid cockpit, transom barbecue, large swimplatform, cabin AVs, dinette double berth, dishwasher, opening stateroom portlights, painted hull, awning, upholstery upgrade, carpet upgrade, galleyware kit, Raymarine electronics, and more

PRICED FROM

Approx **\$1,754,600**

LAYOUT



GENERAL

MATERIAL: Infused GRP hull w/ cored decks and superstructure
TYPE: Hard chine planing hull
LENGTH OVERALL: 18.2m
HULL LENGTH: 17.2m
BEAM: 5.13m
DRAFT: 1.25m (max)
DEADRISE: n/a
WEIGHT: Approx 22,300kg (dry w/ standard engines)

CAPACITIES

BERTHS: 6+2+2
FUEL: 3500lt
WATER: 750lt
HOLDING TANKS: 273lt
GREYWATER: 250lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: Volvo Penta IPS600s
TYPE: Six-cylinder electronic turbo-diesel w/ common rail injection
RATED HP: 435 at 3500rpm
DISPLACEMENT: 5.5lt
WEIGHT: Approx 901kg (each; dry)
GEARBOXES (MAKE/RATIO): IPS1 / 1.82:1
PROPS: Volvo Duoprop T2

SUPPLIED BY

The Riviera Group,
 50 Waterway Drive,
 Coomera, Qld, 4209
 Phone: (07) 5502 5555
 Fax: (07) 5502 5599
 Website: www.riviera.com.au

tradeboat SAYS...

The most exciting Riviera in years, the 53 breaks the well-worn mould, adopts the latest pod-driven engineering, and makes full use of the accommodation gains. Two years in the making shows via a great depth of thinking. Rather than grow organically, the 53 represents a new future for Riv'.

