

Short-handed Sunfast Superstar!

Yachting Life boat test editor Andi Robertson takes the helm for this test of the new SunFast 3600, declaring it his ideal mid-life crisis boat.

THE SunFast 3200 always fitted somewhere in my line up of down to earth, pragmatic dream boats. By that I mean boats which would fulfil a dream at a reasonable cost as opposed to what I'd have on my Euromillions winning private dock.

And clearly the SunFast 3200 chimed with many who were enriched with a similar mindset. Off the shelf, straight from the packet you get short handed racing and cruising, at speed.

Of course you could buy a Mini, a Figaro or a production Class 40 but that is a little more hard core, and a bigger investment in money and energy.

I dare say there are a few who would have made the step up to Class 40 after competing in the Transquadra, JOG or Petit Bateaus, or events of that ilk.

But the SunFast 3200 was a niche product and it was a relatively tightly boxed niche.

The new SunFast 3600

however, does all that the 3200 does, except it is bigger, faster and is considerably more IRC friendly, so you will go and do Scottish Series, Round the Island, Cowes Week and not get humped out of the park, but the main diet of your racing will undoubtedly be on the flourishing short handed scene.

Short handed is the growth area throughout racing in

Europe. Typically, but not exclusively, it is disillusioned big boat owners who love the challenge of offshore and coastal racing, but don't want the hassle and expense of always looking for crew. We went to the south coast of England, with Euroyachts and short handed race supremo Angus Scott, as the guests of Nigel Colley on his Fastrak X. Nigel is the English Jeanneau

importer who sailed the 3200 many thousands of miles solo and short handed. He won his class in the Round Britain and Ireland and is heading into the AZAB this summer with his recently purchased SunFast 3600.

The 3600 is a better proportioned boat and better looking boat than its smaller sister. My abiding memory is of a tight, small cockpit, whereas the 3600 has a powerful stern even if the beam is proportionately slightly less than the 3200.

Both, of course, are from the design house of Daniel Andrieu. The hull on the 3600 has a much more pronounced chine carried right in to the forwards sections. But the treatment of the stern sections actually contributes to a greater reduction in wetter surface than the 3200 which tended to drag her stern in sub 10kts.

The ballast ratio is 45% and with that and the form stability, maximising sail power should not be an issue. The race pack

offers a longer sprit on the bow, but other than the detail of the sail package and the electronics, the delivered boat is pretty much ready to go.

That in part is due to Nigel Colley's input. Having done thousands of miles on his 3200's and being a fan of the genre as well as the brand, he has done all he can to make

sure everything works as it should.

The boat is built in resin infused glass over a balsa core with an inner liner glued and laminated to the hull. The cockpit and deck layout is just as it should be. There is a good coarse and fine tune for the mainsheet, the traveller is good, and there are powerful

vang and backstay controls, all close to hand and easy to play.

We cross sheeted the headsail to the windward winch which is just at the helm's elbow. All the time it is obvious this is set for solo sailing, with plenty of power in the systems, and these systems are so smooth.

On the one hand it is a tweaker's dream, on the other

it seemed that you can set it up and make it sail to 95% without too much sweat.

The twin rudders are a delight: Big, deep and slender to minimise drag and maximise grip. There are short cockpit seats forwards, essentially what we'd call a keyhole shaped cockpit with good space for the helm, excellent security and vision without feeling too exposed.

The big coachroof maybe makes the boat look like a racy cruiser-racer, but it does afford a good degree of protection as well as interior volume.

The hardware package is all quality kit: Lewmar, Spinlock and Harken. The sail package on this test boat included a heavy Dacron J4, a J2-3 which is on hanks and reefable, jibtop, an A2 all round spinnaker and a bigger, beefier roach on the mainsail. The boat sailed beautifully and handling was a delight. Upwind we would make just on seven knots as target speed, a little less if we squeezed extra high but the boat, I'd say, does not like to be over pressed, rather to be sailed fast and find



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best height like that.

The helm is feather light but always with feel and grip. It felt pleasingly stiff, much more than I expected. That encourages you and rewards you for working hard with more of the effort transferred into boat speed rather than heel or going sideways.

And I really felt that sailing long legs would be in more comfort than you might expect. The ergonomics are good, and there is plenty of space for crewed racing.

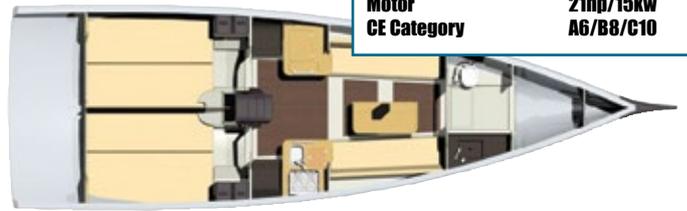
Reaching and downwind, the boat lights up nicely. We did not quite get planing, but were easily making 12-13kts in the puffs, but it felt so sweet and easily controlled, you were just projecting forwards to a long, fast reach back from the Fastnet with your best sailing bud, a bit of bromance, endless cups of tea and spray over the deck...

I love the SunFast 3600. If I was to have a mid-life crisis this would be the boat. But, like this boat itself, I am much too well balanced!



Technical Spec

Length overall	11.25m/36'10"
Hull length	10.8m/35'5"
Hull beam	3.55m/11'7"
Light displacement	4,700kg/10,362lbs
Standard keel draught	2.13m/6'11"
Fuel capacity*	75l/20gal
Water capacity	100l/26gal
Cabins	2
Motor	21hp/15kw
CE Category	A6/B8/C10



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