

# Sundown

*When the sun goes down...*

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**leisure**  
**boating**

*SA's leading power boat magazine*



# Sundowner 195

There aren't many places on earth to better enjoy a smooth sundowner (perhaps a cold Pina Colada) than aboard a craft called Sundowner. We recently took Honda Marine Knysna's 19,5-ft bow rider for an appropriate sunset cruise on the pretty Knysna Lagoon – but unfortunately there weren't any cocktails present. But with lots of power, function and space aplenty, the Sundowner 195 was surely the perfect place to be.


## The ones you can trust

Whenever visiting the self-proclaimed "boating capital of South Africa", I always look forward to popping into the Honda Marine Knysna dealership. The dynamic team, led by dealer principal Dave Hoets, always has the latest and arguably most innovative range of boats lined-up – all ready for immediate evaluation.

Honda Marine Knysna may not be the biggest dealership in the country but they certainly know how to pull out all the stops. Perhaps it's because all new boats sold by them are pre-approved by Honda – in other words you can always be assured of the highest build quality with them.

Or maybe it's the fact that Hoets and his team continually get their rigging spot on with their superb range of Honda motors. Or perhaps it's Honda's two-year, unconditional engine factory guarantee. Whatever the reason, there's no denying the team's success.

The Sundowner 195 is first and foremost a Mallards Marine-made craft. This Durban-based company have been around since 1989 and they're one of the leading local manufacturers of small boats. With Mallards, you can rest assured as to the product's quality, safety and reliability.

Tjaart van der Walt, from Mallard's, said that the Sundowner has proved to be one of the most popular models in the South African marketplace. "Because of its renowned sturdiness, onboard space and reliability, we've sold in excess of 300 Sundowners since 2002 when production first started," he said. 



With a distinctive sharp-nose shape, robust body, flowing contours and a stylish black hull, the Sundowner 195 retains that sexy speedboat look.

## General impression

When I first laid eyes on the Sundowner 195 I soon discovered that she possessed many positive attributes that not only grabbed my attention but would surely appeal to the average family boater (those with plenty of offspring!), and who likes to participate in watersport activities 24/7.

She measures 19.5-ft (5.9 m) with a beam dimension of 2.38 m, which may not sound that impressive. However, with a seating capacity for 12 people and an abundance of storage space, she's certainly the biggest 19-ft bow rider in her class.

Not only does she possess a roomy interior but her exterior offers loads of sex appeal. With a distinctive sharp-nose shape, robust body, flowing contours and a stylish black hull that's accentuated by slight touches of red and silver graphics, the Sundowner 195 retains that classic, and oh-so-sexy speedboat look about her.

## Conditions for test

For us "fair weather boaters," I once again experienced an absolute stunning day out on the water. Hoet wryly suggested that I bring along

some notorious Cape weather next time around in order to really put his boats through their paces.

Even though this wasn't the harshest of conditions, it was definitely ideal boating weather. Although we were blessed with glassy waters and clear skies, I was told that the craft really does handle well in more inclement conditions.

We commenced the evaluation around mid-afternoon as the sun slowly set behind the beautiful backdrop of the Knysna Heads. With the thermometer still around 30°C, the name "Sundowner" encapsulated the surroundings splendidly.

## Launching and trailering

She's neither massive (6 m), nor is she awkwardly heavy (around 1 000 kg), meaning she's easy to tow, launch and retrieve. Veteran skipper Derek Meintjies made a "one man show" out of the whole towing and launching procedure.

Firstly, he towed the trailer and reversed it onto the slipway with his diesel-powered 4x4, which seemed to handle the load with ease. He then unhooked it from the winch and slid it off the bearers and into the water, within a matter of a few minutes.



Honda Marine's diesel 4x4 tow vehicle made light work of the craft and got her into the water within 10 minutes – a real joy to tow, launch and retrieve.

## Deck layout

The large family boater would be pleased to hear that the Sundowner 195 has a roomy interior, which is what makes this craft so special. Capable of accommodating 12 passengers, the Sundowner's spacious deck is big enough to roll out the dotted mat for and play a game of "Twister".

The Sundowner 195 is a bow rider, meaning that there is ample seating space in the bow. The bow seating here comprised an arc of cushioned benches housing twin, self-draining ice-boxes, along with a smaller compartment for ropes and the anchor.

A filler cushion converts the area into a great place to be while lounging about and catching the sun. A walk-through Perspex windscreen set in an aluminium frame separates the front area from the cockpit – this area is well-laid out, boasting loads of storage space, good legroom and plush seating.

The cream-coloured upholstery – with subtle touches of mint – is a stylish feature on the Sundowner 195, and there's no denying the comfort of the boat's accommodation.

A separate swivel skipper's seat is positioned in front of a carbon fibre dashboard that houses analogue instrumentation that monitors all vital engine functions.

The crystal clear windscreen gives the skipper a near-perfect view of his surroundings, and of course, observing those beautiful sunsets from your Sundowner.

I particularly liked the huge storage space inside the second console. These are easily accessed by removing seat backrests, while allowing the decks to be kept clear of excess watersport and safety equipment clutter.

A self-draining ski-hatch in the non-skid full wet deck not only keeps all your watersports equipment out of harms way, but it is so large you could "Even store a piano in there," said Meintjies, with a grin on his face.

A walkthrough step on both sides of the transom not only provides easy entry



The craft's spacious bow area sports a filler cushion in the centre that transforms the area into a great place to be if you want to work on that neglected tan.



A walk-through Perspex windscreen separates the front area from the cockpit – this area is well-laid out, boasting loads of storage space, good legroom and plush seating.

to and from the boat, but also prevents passengers from getting their dirty feet all over your lovely cream upholstery. This eliminates the possibility of fitting a second outboard.

With a long stretch of seating on the port side and a L-shaped bench seat on the other while curving into the stern, provided adequate seating space for all. And I could quite understand the fairer sex appreciating the extra legroom for stretching out and working on that tan.

## Performance

She is probably the most responsive boat I've tested of late. The slightest touch of the throttle saw the Sundowner 195 shoot out the blocks. No wonder she popped onto the plane within three seconds at less than 4000 revolutions.

Hoets mentioned that they normally fit the Sundowner with a 150HP 4-stroke Honda motor. But this particular example is fitted with a single 200HP Honda 4-stroke V6 motor, that boasts programmed fuel injection.

This powerful and eye-catching silver engine seems to be the perfect rig for the craft. She has a maximum rating of 225HP and a minimum of 115HP, but the Honda 200HP motor seemed perfect to me – not under- or over powered.

There were no vibrations, creaks or any adverse noise of any sort while travelling at full speed. She proved to be whisper-quiet and conversations were quite possible – even at large throttle speeds. Her top end speed clocked close to 100 km/h (GPS speed) ➤



With a long stretch of seating on the port side and an L-shaped bench seat on the other, the Sundowner provides adequate seating space for 12 people and maybe even a game of Twister.

and 62 mph (gauge speed), at about 6 100 rpm.

Throttling up/down, gear shifting and the hydraulic steering proved an absolute pleasure. Throttle response was instantaneous – while other boats will have to play catch up – once your 21-pitch stainless steel prop takes hold.

Although we established a good cruising speed of about 50 km/h at 3 000 rpm, I was much impressed with her acceleration and the way she sat solidly in the water. She's also fast enough to prompt a couple of oohs and aahs from admiring bystanders as well.

## Handling

The Sundowner 195's hull is a delta plane type, with a semi-deep V-hull up front that flattens out towards the stern, meaning that the craft pops on to the plane swiftly, is able to cut through oncoming chop with ease, and neither banks nor slides out during tight turns.

The craft's handling is remarkable and the hull has been specially designed for a smooth ride when trimmed up. While cruising at a top speed of nearly 100 km/h, and taking gradual or sharp turns, she turned nimbly without any signs of cavitation.

Overall, the Sundowner handles beautifully. Her hull is liquid-foam filled

for flotation, and of course, a soft and quieter ride. A trip on a Sundowner will give you lots to think about.

The correct trimming also allows the skipper to customise the wake behind the boat, making it most suitable to any skiers' preference. What's more, she's completely dry, even when cutting over the chop of passing boats.

## Finishing touches

The Sundowner 195 offers much attention to detail with its subtle stainless steel fittings. She has stainless steel grab handles conveniently situated in the bow area, a retractable stainless steel ladder, and a stainless steel ski pole for the benefit of skiers and wakeboarders.

Other standard features include buoyancy certificate, an 80-litre built-in fuel tank, full gauge kit, hydraulic steering, retractable cleats, spare wheel, trailer, ski bar and sun canopy.

## Conclusion

The Sundowner 195 is certainly a strong contender in the leisure boating marketplace. This solidly built, multi-tasking, spacious and responsive craft is coupled with a powerful and reliable 4-stroke motor that won't ever disappoint. And the real beauty of the Sundowner is that the good times won't ever end. This is a leisure boat that looks good and performs even better without having to seriously dent your bank account.

For more information, contact Dave on (044) 382 4090, or visit [www.hondamarineknysna.co.za](http://www.hondamarineknysna.co.za). ■



## At a glance

LOA:	19.5-ft (5.9 m)
Beam:	2.38 m
Fuel capacity:	80-litre built-in tank
RPM	Speed
3 000	50 km/h
4 000	68 km/h
5 000	86 km/h
6 000	97 km/h