

Review **Haines Hunter SP725**
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NEW ZEALAND



Super model

The new Haines Hunter SP725 is an important model for Sea Craft Miller Moyes, and it's already winning approval.

Words **John Eichelsheim** Photos **Will Calver**

At a glance ▶ loa x beam 7.25m x 2.5m ▶ cruise speed 27 knots ▶ max speed 45 knots ▶ engine Yamaha 300hp V6 four-stroke outboard
▶ price as tested \$150,000

Test conditions ▶ Hauraki Gulf, south-east 5 knots, calm.

The disastrous fire that ravaged the Sea Craft Haines Hunter factory in 2010 also destroyed the moulds for the company's 700/720 model, the 10-year-old design responsible for 40percent of sales at the time.

Eighteen months later, Lionel Sands and business partner Denis Kendall launched a

brand-new Haines Hunter model just in time for the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show where it promptly won the GRP Fishing Boat Open and supreme Boat of the Show.

The 725 is the spiritual successor to the 700/720, but it's more modern and spacious, and an even better sea boat according to Lionel. The new boats – there are 'Sports Sedan' and 'Sports Pursuit' (SS and SP) variants – use the

latest GRP laminating techniques, including vacuum bagging for some of the deck mouldings, and the SP/SS725 is only the second boat in the Haines Hunter line-up with an integrated internal liner.

But the design doesn't depart too far from Haines Hunter's proven formula. There's a 21° deadrise at the transom, a transom-mounted outboard, plenty of freeboard and a moderately



fine entry. The underwater sections are similar to the old 700, but “refined slightly,” says Lionel, as reflected in the increased waterline and beam dimensions.

The *Boating NZ* crew joined Lionel aboard his personal Haines Hunter SP725 *Sarisha* very early on a cold July morning. Our plan was to rendezvous with photographer Will Calver, who was a guest aboard Kendall’s beautifully-presented Pelin launch *Nereus*.

Versatile layout

From the outset, the amount of interior volume in this Haines is impressive. The cockpit and enclosed area underneath the hardtop makes the most of the boat’s 2.5m external beam, and it’s beamy at the waterline too which maximises space inside the boat. The partial cockpit liner allows ample toe-room, wide cockpit side pockets and full-length teak rod racks. Teak coamings add a bit of warmth, complementing teak trim used in the galley and heads, including the door.

The 725’s hardtop is visually similar to the

Haines 660 hardtop. The three-pane windscreen (with a single wiper) and sliding side windows are similar to other Haines’ models, and it has a generous glass area with excellent visibility.

The hardtop’s moulded ceiling is more than high enough for Lionel’s two-metre tall frame to fit under. It is equipped with a useful transverse handrail, a seven-position, foldaway rocket launcher along the trailing edge, and drop-covers that fully enclose the cockpit for storage or overnight stays.

The 725’s hardtop ceiling also houses the VHF radio, stereo head-unit, speakers and a cockpit light, and there’s a floodlight on the rocket launcher as well. Padded and stitched black vinyl side panels and contrasting upholstery add a bit of class to the boat’s interior.

King and queen seats offer deep-cushioned upholstered comfort and excellent lateral support. There’s a large fridge/freezer in the seat base to port – it’s also an option to starboard – but otherwise under-seat space is dedicated to dry storage. There’s also room for another fridge under the gas

hob in the galley.

Corner seats across the transom can be removed or stowed elsewhere in the boat, opening up the cockpit, and their bases serve as catch or storage bins. The seat backs hinge upwards to reveal well-protected twin batteries, switches and fuel filter. The cockpit drains to a bilge pump in the sump and there’s ample space under the transom wall.

The latest Yamaha multi-function electronic display fits neatly under the eyebrow of the modern dashboard’s upper console, while a Lowrance HDS 10 takes up most of the panel below with rows of switches to either side. Trim tab and capstan controls flank the wood-rimmed wheel, and Yamaha’s electronic throttle and shift control completes a practical and attractive helm station.

Fishing, family and more

In most respects, the SP725 is well-appointed for fishing. There are four angled through-coaming rod holders with another four across the transom, two of which take the removable moulded



bait station. The central transom cut-out gives access to the swim platforms, livebait tank and a stainless dive ladder on the port side. Between the seats is an under-floor locker, forward of the 250-litre fuel tank.

High coamings, generous freeboard and the ability to back up without taking water over the transom recommend the 725 for game fishing. However, if you prefer your fun in the water there's plenty of room for water toys: a ski pole is available as a factory option, and the side pockets and seat bases will stow dive bottles.

The six-position rocket launcher is angled too far aft. It's a minor point, but on occasions rods in the rocket launcher got in the way while we were fishing, although this is less of a problem once the aft seats are removed.

Sarisha is well equipped for overnight stays. Her lined fore-cabin is spacious and provides an extra-large double berth with the infill. Side pockets offer useful stowage, and there's plenty of seated headroom with enough natural light to relegate the mix of quartz-halogen and LED lights to night-only use.

The SP is fitted with an enclosed head. It will automatically earn brownie points with the fairer sex thanks to its privacy and the fact that there's no need to sleep over the loo!

The basic galley features a two-burner gas hob under the hinged counter top/lid, plate and cup racks and a good-sized locker with cutlery drawer underneath – all that is required for a night or two away. The sink is moulded into the transom on the starboard side.

Under way

We got the opportunity to assess the boat's handling while shooting photos in the dawn light. We spent a considerable amount of time holding our position in *Nereus'* wake while travelling at 25 knots.

A 40-foot launch produces a considerable wake so staying on track and holding the boat on the crest of the main pressure wave was no easy task.

The Haines SP725 is amazingly forgiving, tracking straight and shrugging off the worst re-entries that falling off a wake's standing wave can provoke. The hull appears to have no handling vices.

Out of the wake, application of a little trim tab here and there ensured perfectly level progress, and while there was plenty of engine trim available, the boat seemed happiest to cruise with the trim gauge reading halfway.

The hull feels equally unflappable at speed. With Yamaha's brilliant 300hp V6 pushing it along at a maximum of 45 knots, it rides clean and flat with no suggestion of nervousness, spray peeling away just aft of amidships. With the motor trimmed well out, the boat carves through exhilarating high-speed turns with little or no propeller ventilation. The motor needs to be tucked in a bit for really tight turns, but unlike some hardtops the 725 doesn't heel over excessively.

Wake riding aside, weather conditions didn't present us with sea conditions to challenge such a capable hull, but the boat certainly feels solid, well-mannered and appears to be dry. I have no

Performance data

Speed and noise as tested

Lowrance HDS10/Yamaha digital display; noise level, helm

RPM	speed (knots)	fuel (lph)	Noise (dB)
600rpm (idle)	3.3	2.4	62
1000	5.2	5.0	69
1500	6.9	8.4	70
2000	9.4	13.5	74
2500	12.5	18.0	76
3000	21.2	24.2	82
3500	27.2	30.2	87
4000	31.4	40.7	83
4500	35.3	57.7	86
5000	38.9	70.3	91
5500	42.5	88.0	94
5700	45.0	95.0	94

doubt it will be a safe, comfortable and willing performer that won't pose any nasty surprises when the weather gets up.

The 300hp Yamaha provides plenty of urge. It's a big block motor that doesn't lack for torque. Under acceleration the SP725 reaches planing speed at a bit over 2000rpm – 10 to 11 knots – but the transition is imperceptible. There's no bow up attitude, nor any 'climbing over the hump', just a level attitude and smooth, linear acceleration.

The SP725 is carried on a premium, twin-axle, galvanised steel DMW trailer with over-ride hydraulic brakes. All up, towing weight is 2480kg with 100 litres of fuel. That's 20kg under the threshold for an electronically-activated braking system, which is a sensible option, especially if new owners are going to tow the rig with a lighter vehicle. ■

Haines Hunter SP725

technical



PROS

- styling unmistakably Haines Hunter, which will appeal to many
- well-built
- bluewater-capable with safe and predictable handling
- roomy interior ■ overnight-capable
- enclosed plumbed toilet

CONS

- relatively conservative styling but in keeping with other Haines models
- angled rocket launcher ■ requires a dedicated tow vehicle

OUR VERDICT

The new Haines Hunter SP725 is a worthy successor to the late Haines Hunter 700/720. It's bigger, more modern, and a fine performer with a 300hp engine, but would still go well with less horsepower.

It exhibits predictable handling, offers a versatile hardtop layout ideal for fishers/divers and family boaters, plus it's roomy, solid and well-built.

There's no such thing as an all-rounder, but this comes close.

 Go to www.facebook.com/boatingnz for more pics

Haines Hunter SP725

► loa 7.25m plus bowsprit ► beam 2.5m ► draft approx 0.4m at rest ► weight approx 2480kg (on trailer, 100 litres of fuel) ► engine Yamaha 300hp V6 4-stroke outboard, 19-inch pitch stainless steel propeller ► deadrise variable to 21° at transom ► fuel 250 litre stainless steel underfloor tank ► cruising 27kts ► max speed 45kts ► price as reviewed \$150,000 ► packages from \$128,000 ► designer Denis Kendall/Lionel Sands/Sea Craft ► builder Sea Craft Boats ► enquiries Sea Craft Boats 09 579 9661 email sales@haineshunter.co.nz or lionel@seacraft.co.nz www.mmsc.co.nz