



The cockpit flows into the saloon when the sturdy stainless door is slid open. The first port of call here is the portside galley. Ahead of it is the steering console, with lounge offset to starboard. The open-plan and low-set furniture mean the area is dominated by the surrounding windows. For that al fresco touch, click open the sunroof. Visibility is particularly important to the sports-cruiser skipper, and in my backyard, Sydney Harbour, it's essential if stress levels are to be kept down, which might not be the case when your partner is continually being conscripted to serve as a spotter. On this point the Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht's tall saloon windows and opening side ones are commendable. The offset port console does lack some of the visibility found in the centreline-mounted 5400 console, but there's not much in it.



When seated in the sumptuous leather of the Recaro electric seat the instrumentation is at the right angle to view the 12-inch Garmin Glass Bridge marine electronics screens shaded by the dashboard's fibreglass outside lip. Also found here is a screen for the CZone domestic system, which uses simple menus to digitally control and quickly fault-check everything.

Separate engine management is done via Volvo's Electronic Vessel Control (EVC) system, which is similar to the CZone in being a digitally switched backbone that does away with metres of wiring. A separate system, EVC prevents the 4800 being vulnerable to a single point of failure.

Engine controls sit along the left side with IPS joystick, throttles and autopilot all comfortably near your left hand. In addition, the cockpit joystick outside in the aft cockpit is ideal for close manoeuvring the Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht, as I experienced when leaving the confines of Rushcutters Bay.

Riviera 4800 options



Our review boat came loaded with extras, including AutoTrim for setting the tabs according to speed and heel angles, and Volvo's Dynamic Positioning System (DPS), the latter ideal for holding position near tight spots like a fuel berth. The overhead fibreglass gantry houses radar and aerials, with room for a satellite receiver, so you can fit the Dock Unattended system for remote system checking. Nice touches at the console also include storage for binoculars, phones and tablets, instrument covers and convenient drink holders.

Elsewhere in the Riviera 4800 Sports Yacht's saloon the uncluttered layout belies a functional space, such as the elevated lounge/dinette, which seats six easily while giving panoramic views. The walnut cabinetry contrasts stylishly with the oatmeal-coloured soft furnishings, although the younger crowd may find this a bit frumpy.

Perishables are stored in cold drawers behind the lounge – ideal for deck refreshments, especially once the window is swung open. The U-shaped galley adjoins the aft cockpit. Wisely, the twin electric Miele hotplates are at the aft window with microwave underneath. Forward is the deep single sink with chest fridge; there's a slot for a dishwasher beneath.



Operating these appliances requires running the genset (11KVA Onan) as is also the case with the AC-powered washing machine in the day head, below decks. My only real gripe is the lack of fiddles in what is an otherwise slick galley that also includes deep cupboards with Riviera's crockery.

Spills or wet feet won't cause a problem, as underfoot there is hard-wearing wood-effect laminate. Robust and grippy, I've seen this used successfully on other premium boats.

For entertainment, there's a Fusion stereo near the aft door and a pop-up flatscreen television forward. The finish throughout is superb, ranging from the 316 stainless doors to the impeccable cabinetry that showcases Riviera's in-house craftsmen.

Cabins



Two large cabins are below, with the underdeck lounge ensuring privacy between the owner's area forward and the midships VIP cabin. The wide steps and atrium effect from the overhead saloon windows create an airy yet private lounge for the kids or guests to relax. Also, it's ideal for watching the integrated flatscreen TV without glare.

Cupboards throughout the corridor and elsewhere in the 4800 mean this boat can easily cope with those holiday cruises, while underfoot is the same hard-wearing wood-effect laminate found in the saloon, carpets being reserved for the cabins.

The wide, flared bow benefits the master cabin, allowing ample walking space around the queen-size island bed. Thanks to the pod drives no thruster lurks beneath to disturb you. Instead there's plenty of storage, easily accessed via the gas-sprung cover.

Ventilation in the tropics is a need Riviera well understands, so there's a large opening skylight as well as portlights. The soft-close cabinetry moves easily, a testament to the in-house joinery team, and it's all smoothly finished with sturdy metal fixings. Other quality features include the cedar-lined wardrobes with matching grain exteriors. Practicalities also abound: hatches behind cupboards for electrical access, while the neutral-coloured headboards won't be a headache to clean. Ablutions are taken care of equally well, with a large and separate shower.

The VIP cabin uses the Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht's full 15-foot beam to create ample space for the three adult-size beds, with the portside pair electrically joinable when a double is required.

There's standing headroom on entry and abundant natural light from the rectangular portlights with their opening portholes (alarmed in case of water incursion).

The VIP bathroom is in the corridor, so it doubles as the day head, and is similarly laid-out with separate shower. The linen cupboard has a convenient bi-fold door that conceals the optional washer-dryer. The bathroom boasts a Corian floor, which makes for easy cleaning, and has portlights and skylights for ventilation. Key points, such as good shower drainage, are typical of Riviera's approach to detail, as is the electric Dometic head fitted as standard.

Volvo IPS pod drives



Traditional power boaters may groan when confronted by the forward-facing propellers of the Volvo IPS pod drives, as opposed to the rear-facing design of competitors Cummins MerCruiser Zeus and ZF Marine.

"Acceptance of them is a challenge for us," Riviera's Peter Welch told me earlier this year. But the truth is these Volvo Penta IPS engines are the market leaders and are now well proven, which matches Riviera's experience after fitting around 500 boats. The IPS contra-rotating twin propellers on each drive operate in relatively undisturbed water to maximise thrust. They are vulnerable to debris, lobster-pot lines and the like but they have inbuilt line-cutters to help.

Opening the large aft deck hatch and climbing down the ladder you'll find the twin 600hp six-cylinder Volvos (upgraded from standard 550hp) and IPS-800 gearboxes.

"A five-year warranty on all Volvo Penta systems is now standard with the 4800 Sport Yacht and every new Riviera and Belize, spanning Volvo Penta helm stations, steering and propellers, as well as the major componentry of their high performance drivelines and fuel-efficient engines," Riviera chief executive Wes Moxey said.

The engine room layout has filters conveniently on the centreline and ample walking space between the Volvos, while the Onan generator is also on the centreline aft, reducing noise. Bilge space is good, in case of water incursion, and the pod drives are accessed via dedicated hatches, with the CZone switches up high near the starboard pod. Power controls for the 24-volt electrics are here and in the cockpit, with batteries just above bilge level for stability. The smallish tankage (400l) means adding a watermaker is a good idea, but there's plenty space and the only thing lacking is a slot for the stabiliser; something the bigger 5400 offers. Usefully, sight gauges are fitted to the fuel tanks.

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On the water



Clearing the dock is the tricky part for most skippers and I'm no exception, especially with a light breeze adding windage to the mix. Like many skippers nowadays I've used a number of pod drives over the years and can state for the record that Volvo's latest IPS is as smooth as they come.

In the Riviera 4800's aft cockpit I gently pushed the joystick to clear the dock, twisting it occasionally to keep the bow parallel to the pontoon. I'd have used the high-power mode if the breeze had been stronger. Once beyond a boat length I turned the joystick in the direction I wanted my bow to go, spinning the 50ft Riv easier than a tinny. This new Volvo IPS (inboard propulsion system) allows a wide arc of 34 degrees rotation when you push the joystick fully, and this means precise slow-speed manoeuvrability.

Once clear of the pontoon we wound our way through the moorings to open water on Sydney Harbour.

Out here the southerly swell could be seen rolling in through the Heads, running at about six foot by the size of the waves crashing over the rocks, which made my wish I'd brought my surfboard. No skipper seeks out heavy weather unless he's a journo doing a sea trial, so off I sped to apprehensive looks from my companions.

At the wheel, the Recaro electric seat absorbed the bumps while a quiet roar came from the Volvos when I stirred them into action. Effortlessly getting on the plane at 16kt I glanced around for the usual armada of jet boats, marine police and low-lying kayakers – easily done through the large front windows, thanks to the clear views from astern. After gaining the feel of the 4800 by turning the wheel to cut some S-turns, I sped up to the 25kt cruising speed.

By now we were among the swells inside Sydney Heads and being thrown about. Despite the motion very few groans came from inside the hull as beefy wipers dealt easily with spray. Turning side-on to the swell showed stability to be good, which gave me confidence to run with the waves. Looking forward, the auto trim was in need of a tweak to push the bow down. This observation was noted, and Riviera says it will be addressed with a change of trim – I believe a water tank is being moved forward.



Feeling even more at home on the helm I glanced at the instruments that clearly displayed the important data. The analogue LCD readouts on the Volvo screen indicated 2500rpm and fuel consumption of 165 litres per hour as we slid over the waves at 25 knots. Ideally, an armrest on my right side would have completed the ergonomics, but I didn't dwell on that quibble as I went for the final test of a sports cruiser: breaking the 30-knot barrier.

With throttles fully down and another tweak on the tabs the gunmetal-grey hull shot forward, the Harbour Bridge growing larger as the numbers rose to 30, then 34 knots!

At that speed you pay for your fun, with the diesel tank emptying at 210 litres per hour. Still, at least you've got that speed on tap should you need it. At 25 knots, it's less than an hour to the stunning cruising grounds of Broken Bay, I realised, something the Riviera 4800 is ideally built for.

Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht sea trials

Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht Sea Trial (65 per cent fuel, three adults, light swell). Estimated range of 285 nautical miles at cruising speed of 25kt, with five per cent fuel reserve. Peak torque of D8-IPS800 reached at 1755rpm.

RPM	Speed (KTS)	FUEL BURN(L/H)
1000	7.5	17
1500	10	61
2000	16.5	112
2500	25	165
3000	34	210

HIGHS

- Sleek yet functional styling
- Sturdy and voluminous hull
- Smart systems so family-friendly
- Properly fast

LOWS

- Hull trim needs a tweak
- No fiddles in galley

RIVIERA 4800 SPORT YACHT SPECS

Riviera 4800 Sport Yacht price: \$1,134,300

OPTIONS

Upgraded 600hp engines, Onan 11kW generator, aft cockpit joystick control, WiFi and iPad CZone interface, electric blinds, high-pressure wash and grey metallic hull colour

PRICE AS TESTED

\$1,290,509

GENERAL

MATERIAL Fibreglass (balsa cored)

TYPE Monohull sports cruiser

LOA 15.23m

BEAM 4.61m

DRAFT 1.18m (incl propellers)

WEIGHT 15,725 kg (dry approx)

AIR DRAFT 3.64m

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE 5

FUEL 2000L
WATER 400L
HOLDING TANK 151L

ENGINES

MAKE/MODEL 2 Volvo D8-IPS800 600HP (on review boat) marine diesel engines
TYPE Six-cylinder turbo diesel, common-rail fuel injection marine diesel engines
DISPLACEMENT 7.7 litres
WEIGHT 1410kg each
PROPELLERS Volvo NS4 counter-rotating



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