

# MOTOR BOAT & YACHTING

## AXOPAR 37

FIRST DRIVE OF THE ALL-NEW 'GULLWING' GENERATION

*'The original was an absolute joy to drive but this new version is even smoother'*



**PLUS**

## BRABUS SHADOW 900

*'I have never driven a boat capable of such savage performance  
that is so easy to drive'*

JACK HAINES, MBY CHIEF BOAT TESTER



# AXOPAR 37

*The latest version of the award-winning Axopar 37 is here and we managed to grab an early drive of the prototype before the lockdown restrictions kicked in*

Words Jack Haines











**ABOVE:** The wheelhouse of the Cross-Cabin (XC) version provides year-round comfort  
**BELOW:** Open the oversized side doors and canvas roof and there is still a strong connection to the elements



here had to have been some head scratching when the Axopar team decided to create the 37 2.0. To say the original was successful is quite the understatement; it sold in its thousands, scooped up armfuls of awards and delighted pretty much every journo who had a go behind the wheel.

How on earth do you improve on that? By talking to the people who already have one, of course. It was discussions with existing owners and the global dealer network that had a major influence on the genesis of the 37; these

focussed on two key points. One was that access to the lower deck could be improved and the levels of natural light boosted to make it a more pleasant place to sit, and the other, as co-founder Jan-Erik Viitala points out, was that owners use their boats to supplement other hobbies. "We have found more and more that owners are using their boats to help them enjoy other forms of adventure," he explains, "It might be paddle boarding or diving but it could also be land-based activities such as mountain biking or skiing, for example."

The need to cater for these desires brought about the two most significant changes to the design of the boat, aside from the hull. The first and most obvious addition, designed to solve the issues with access and natural light in the cabin, are the gull wing doors. As a piece of pontoon theatre it doesn't get much better but aside from looking cool the doors make a genuine difference to the usability of the cabin. You can access the interior from three separate doors (the two gull wings and the companionway through the dashboard) and when open you get the benefit of both natural light and ventilation. I'm not sure they will mean



RIGHT: A shot from inside the optional separate bathroom shows the door into the main cabin and the companionway hatch up on to deck  
 BELOW: The opaque bulkhead is used to create the bathroom while still letting in some natural light



BELOW: Without the bathroom option the lower deck has an open-plan arrangement with a sea toilet concealed beneath the L-shaped bench to starboard



guests choose to sit down here as opposed to on deck during the day, as Axopar claims, but their presence certainly makes far more of the cabin than on the original 37. Their long term durability is key, however, and given that they will take a real pounding when the boat is running at speed, everything from the doors to the latches, hinges and gas struts need to be extremely robust to ensure they don't pop open at sea. Axopar already plans to improve on the engineering of the prototype models we were allowed to get our hands on at a group sea trial event in Helsinki.

### ADVENTURE VESSEL

A clever side effect of the gull wing addresses another issue owners had with the previous model, the lack of a separate bathroom. There is now the option of a separate toilet compartment, created by adding a bulkhead and door at the aft end of the lower deck as well as an entrance at deck level via the companionway hatch at the helm.

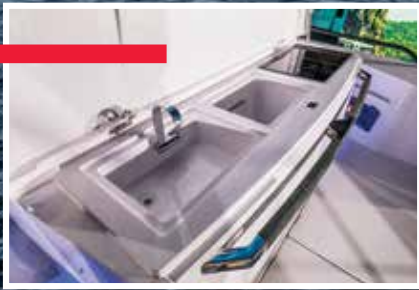
There are 37s as far south as Florida and as far north as Svalbard as well as almost everywhere in between – thanks to its chameleon-like ability to adapt to different environments. The versatility of the 37's deck is one of its most attractive features, even if you have to make the choice between sunbathing space or a wet bar. But the new model adds a new configuration into the mix, which plays to the notion of the boat being a tool for indulging in other activities. On the Spyder (open) and Sun-Top variants there is now a multi-storage module option that incorporates a deck locker in the cockpit specifically designed to carry watersports equipment such as stand up paddleboards, waterskis and folding bikes. Team this with the optional roof rack on the Sun-Top and Cross Cabin for carrying yet more boards or fixed frame bikes and you have quite the adventure machine.

The boats available for us to drive on a dank day in Helsinki late last year were the Sun-Top and Cross Cabin (XC) versions of the new the 37. In the depths of the Finnish winter the enclosed XC was unsurprisingly popular, its purposeful wheelhouse and well protected decks making it the ideal tool for the sort of water-based commuting they think nothing off in these northern climes. It was packing a pair of 350hp Mercury outboards on its transom, the Sun-Top with less bulk had twin 300s.



The gull-wing doors boost natural light and ventilation when at rest





One of the options on the aft deck is a generous outdoor galley



Axopar's relationship with Mercury is a close one and it's the combination of the work the yard has done on the hull shape and this latest range of outboards that creates some startling fuel efficiency improvements. We will dig into these in far greater detail when we test the boat more thoroughly later in the year but the headline is a 30% increase in fuel efficiency between 20 and 40 knots and a real world cruising range increase of 75 miles compared to its predecessor. These impressive results are testament to the quality of the hydrodynamic modeling and CFD simulations undertaken by Axopar's design partners Aivan, who through discreet adjustments to the hull form have made these improvements on a hull that shares the exact same dimensions and weight as the original 37.

### SMOOTH OPERATOR

How does it feel on the water? Effortless describes it best. The original was an absolute joy to drive but this new version is even smoother, even quieter and even easier to drive at high speed. Modern outboard technology takes much of the thinking out of driving the boat; with auto trim and rev matching in hard turns, all the helmsman has to focus on is setting the speed and steering. The sensation is most detached on the Cross Cabin, where you are even more insulated from the outside world and engine noise – not that there is much from the creamy V8s. The new oversized side doors and canvas sunroof allow you to open the wheelhouse if the weather suits but in Helsinki it was more of

a doors closed, heating on type of day and a perfect demonstration of this version's true year-round capabilities.

The Sun-Top is a different kettle of (cured) fish and for my money the one that will cover most bases for the majority of people. I tested the original 37 in Sun-Top guise, skipping over the white-peaked crests of a Mallorcan afternoon. Things were a damn sight more bracing this time around but the hull coped equally well and, thanks to having a few less kilograms than the Cross Cabin, this latest Sun-Top proved just as potent even with 100hp less. The sensation differs between these two styles of boat but they share a hull that is lightning-quick to plane, soft riding and loaded with grip in hard turns. Cruising at 40 knots feels perfectly civilised, even when there are a few lumps and bumps around.

With only a short drive thus far and a full test to come we must be cautious with praise but it seems Axopar has done a fine job of evolving such a successful platform. The 37 is now more versatile and capable than ever with an increased cruising range and more than enough performance to keep 95% of customers happy. If you're in the remaining 5%, please keep reading...

### AT A GLANCE

LOA 37ft 9in (11.5m) BEAM 9ft 8in (3.35m)  
 DISPLACEMENT 3.6 tonnes (Sun-Top)  
 DRAFT 2ft 8in (0.85m) FUEL CAPACITY 730  
 litres ENGINES Twin 225-350hp outboards  
 TOP SPEED 50 knots PRICE from €88,500 ex  
 VAT, ex engine CONTACT [www.axopar.fi](http://www.axopar.fi)



**HELM**  
 The driving position is excellent and the dash clear and sensibly laid out



The 65-knot 900 is the fastest boat BRABUS Marine has ever made



## BRABUS SHADOW 900

If 50 knots is a bit pedestrian for your taste and you would rather consider this as a realistic cruising speed than its top whack, then the BRABUS Shadow 900 will be more to your liking. It may share the same hull and layout options as

the standard Axopar 37 but that's where the similarities stop. The BRABUS is laden with things that aren't available on the Axopar from its carbon-fibre trim to high-end upholstery and an uprated AV system. Oh yes, it also has a pair of

supercharged Mercury V8s, hitting 450hp each. That's 200hp more than the top spec Axopar.

I want to report that the performance is so ferocious that your neck snaps back and both eyelids are pulled back over your head but, in truth, it's the ease with which it thunders to 50 knots that is most amazing.

We pass 60 knots like it's nothing and when we do top out at 65 knots, Jan-Erik Viitala suggests I take my hands off the wheel. I do, and the boat remains arrow-straight and tracks like a missile.

I have never driven a boat capable of such savage performance that is so easy to drive. Think of it like the BRABUS 900 road car (based on the Mercedes-AMG S 65) with which it shares its name: brutal performance delivered with unshakeable refinement.



Mercury's stonking 450hp outboards are key to that performance

### AT A GLANCE

LOA 37ft 9in (11.5m) BEAM 9ft 8in (3.35m) DISPLACEMENT 4.1 tonnes (ex engines) DRAFT 2ft 8in (0.85m) FUEL CAPACITY 730 litres ENGINES Twin Mercury 450R TOP SPEED 65 knots PRICE FROM €408,500 ex VAT CONTACT [www.brabusmarinelondongroup.com](http://www.brabusmarinelondongroup.com)

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