

Robb Report

FOR THE LUXURY LIFESTYLE™

Great Machines: Boats - Windy 25 Mirage

Some 500 years before Columbus sailed the ocean blue, Leif Eriksson proved that Norwegians know a thing or two about boats. If the Viking's discovery of America wasn't enough to establish their nautical prowess, the Windy 25 Mirage should settle the matter. The craft's Norwegian builders contend that the Mirage is the world's best-handling boat—an irresistible challenge to anyone who relishes the thrill of wind, waves, and water.

Easing the Mirage out of England's Lymington River, I already knew I was behind the helm of something special. Maybe it was the rock-solid stainless steel handrail running the length of the sportboat's wraparound screen, an elegant yet practical detail promising serious speed. Perhaps it was the way the Mirage hunkered down in the water, her bow standing slightly proud as she ambled toward the open sea. Or maybe it was the mellifluous purring of her Volvo 5.7 GXi DP inboard engine, a 320-hp powerplant known for more than merely adequate propulsion.



Entering the Solent channel, I stood up and pushed the throttle forward. The initial lurch was followed by a sudden shove. Once the Mirage came on plane, at about 12 knots, it felt as if a giant hand had shoved us backward. Of course, the opposite was true: Within seconds we were flying straight into a three-foot head sea at 44 knots. And I do mean flying. The Mirage was launching off the waves into the air like an ecstatic dolphin. Landings were relatively smooth and

comfortable. When the hull regained contact with the water, she responded to the helm with balletic agility.

A particularly impressive journey into the firmament lifted me off my feet and deposited me straight into the chair. A gas shock absorber mounted in the seat's supporting pillar cushioned my fall—yet another example of Norwegian common sense. Thus educated, I found that my subsequent flights from the chair were much more comfortable. And fun.

Of course, most sportboats can take wing. Some will even land without shaking the boat to pieces or rattling the fillings in your teeth. To test the Mirage's handling abilities in less straightforward circumstances, I throttled back and turned her slightly to port. The chop hit us at a three-quarter angle, with no appreciable loss of control or comfort. So I put the hammer back down, and the Mirage delivered nothing but more speed and sideways spray.

A windy 25 Mirage looks docile enough when maneuvering in a harbor—open up the throttle, though, and it will fly across the water's surface.



Emboldened, I turned the wheel hard over. The Mirage dug into the sea with ferocious tenacity, generating more lateral g's than a Porsche C4 blasting around a racetrack. Like the car, the Windy offered all its performance with a huge safety margin. I simply could not find a way to upset her. Trim tabs? No need. Even an excursion into the confused wake of another sportboat could not unsettle her

equilibrium. I have never piloted a boat as effortlessly capable as the Windy 25 Mirage.

As for creature comforts, the boat provides excellent outdoor seating, sprawling room, dining for six, and a small cubby for emergency napping. There is a decent head and a small sink, but the Mirage is clearly a day boat—albeit one built to go like hell in all but the most extreme seas. Which, I assure you, it does.

According to the boat's architect, the Mirage's superlative sea keeping comes from a combination of elements. "She's got low weight, excellent strength, and perfect balance, with the fuel tank mounted right in the middle. I've also given her a flat panel in the bottom and a unique curvature to her deep-V hull." That said, Hans Jørgen Johnsen admits his gut instincts heavily influenced the boat's final design. "Whenever I make a drawing of a new boat, well, you could say I guess a little."



Good guess. But not all that surprising a result—given Johnsen's roots. "Norwegians have always built their boats to handle rough seas. Otherwise, they'd never use them. And if a boat can go really fast in heavy seas, that's even better!"

Windy begins selling its full range in the United States later this year. Meanwhile, look out America: The Vikings are back.

Windy 25 Miracle

- MODEL: 25 Mirage
- LENGTH O.A.: 7.68 m (25 ft 2 in)
- LENGTH HULL: 7.29 m (23 ft 11 in)
- LENGTH WATERLINE: 6.25 m
- MAX. BEAM: 2.5 m (8 ft 2 in)
- DISPLACEMENT FULL LOAD: 2,270 kg (5,004 lb)
- DRAUGHT: 0.8 m (2 ft 8 in)
- FUEL CAPACITY: 300 l (80 gal)
- WATER CAPACITY: 70 l (20 gal)
- INSTALLABLE POWER: 170 to 420 hp
- MAX. SPEED: 50 knots
- BERTHS: 2
- APPROVED TO CARRY: 7
- CE DESIGN CATEGORY: B