

VIEW *from the* TOP

We cruise the new Sabre 40 Flybridge with Zeus pod drives through the San Juan Islands to Victoria, British Columbia.

BY PETER A. JANSSEN

FITTING IN. *The Sabre 40 Flybridge is right at home off Jones Island in the San Juans.*



I've always been partial to flybridge boats that also have a lower station. For openers, the view from up top is incomparable; you simply can see more from up there — more debris in the water, more fish, more landfalls, more of everything. Once you're tied up or at anchor, the bridge becomes another big social area, a wonderful spot to take in a sunset, share a drink with friends or, as has happened more than once or twice, to simply curl up with a good book or take a nap.

The lower station, meanwhile, means you can have almost weatherproof boating. It can be pouring rain or blowing like stink outside and you can be warm and comfortable driving the boat inside, safely making your way home or to your next destination. A boat that offers both stations, it seems to me, is hard to beat.

This certainly was evident to me a few weeks ago when I was driving hull number one of the Sabre 40



Flybridge down Haro Strait in the San Juan Islands, heading to Victoria, British Columbia. On board with me were Bentley Collins, the sales and marketing vice president of Sabre Yachts, and Matt Ouilette from Bellingham Yacht Sales in Washington, the local Sabre



SITTING PRETTY. Twin Stidd chairs at the helm station (top). Peter Janssen climbs on board (above). A seal at Friday Harbor (bottom left).

dealer. We were all on the bridge, catching some sunshine in between the clouds and occasional drizzle (a typical Pacific Northwest day) when Collins yelled, "Whales." Sure enough, 100 yards or so off our port side two whales, going our way, were gracefully surfacing, sounding, reappearing and then replaying the entire scene again and again. The enormous animals were a beautiful sight and we watched, transfixed, until they finally disappeared underwater. I'm sure we would have missed them entirely if we hadn't been up on the bridge in the first place.

Our trip started earlier that morning in Bellingham; Collins flew in from the Sabre factory in South Casco, Maine, and I had arrived from New York. He and I tested the first Sabre 40 Sedan (without a flybridge but with Zeus pod drives) in Portland, Maine, about 18 months ago. Since then, the boat — a refined combination of traditional Down East lines, sophisticated

BILLY BLACK (TOP); BENTLEY COLLINS (2)



resin-infused construction and state-of-the-art Zeus pod drives — has become one of Sabre's most successful models. Now it was time to experience the flybridge version. The idea was that we'd spend two days cruising the San Juans (some of the most beautiful cruising grounds in the world) with an overnight in Victoria, the stately, flower-bedecked provincial capital on the southern tip of Vancouver Island.

As I helped with the lines, I mentally thanked Sabre for building wide side decks and putting double stainless side railings and handholds everywhere; this is definitely a safe boat. We were soon heading down Bellingham Bay with Mount Baker, freshly covered with snow from the

night before, receding in the distance. We took Hale Passage inside Lummi Island, cruising just north of the horseshoe-shaped Orcas Island to the protected bay in the middle of Sucia Island. The island, which is a state park, often draws hundreds of boats in the summer; on this late spring day there was exactly one.

Ouilette nosed the Sabre along the shore into little rocky coves and cuts, pirouetting the boat effortlessly with the Zeus joystick. After watching an eagle, we cruised for half an hour over to Jones Island, which is also a state park with a floating dock and hiking trails where we stretched our legs.

In the morning weather, we'd been driving from below, running about 24 knots at 2,500 rpm into a 15-knot head wind. The Sabre comes with two blue, matching, adjustable Ultraleather Stidd chairs, one directly at the helm and another immediately to its port, so two people can sit comfortably abreast. The view from the helm is excellent, with large windows all around, including one in the side door next to the helm, which affords easy access to the deck for docking or anchoring. The salon itself is warm and inviting with lots of cherry wood, a large L-shaped settee to port and another comfortable barrel chair to starboard aft of a large combination electrical cabinet and entertainment center.



ILLUSTRATION BY BRENDA WEAVER; PETER JANSSEN

AWAY FROM IT ALL. The Sabre at the dock at Jones Island, one of the state parks in the San Juans, with a small beach and lots of hiking trails.



LOTS OF LIGHT. The salon is warm and bright with large side windows.

As we left Jones Island in the warmer weather, we headed up to the bridge by way of a ladder with cherry wood steps and oversize stainless-steel grab rails. The bridge has two more Stidd chairs with a footrest cut-out under the dash for increased comfort. The bridge also includes an L-shaped settee and its facing cherry table, along with a built-in fridge. We relaxed while cruising around the top of San Juan Island and past Roche Harbor resort, watching the

depth sounder register a precipitous drop to 771 feet under the hull.

The Sabre 40 has a modified V-hull shape with a 23-degree deadrise amidships, tapering back to 16 degrees at the transom. The engines on this boat are twin Cummins QSB5.9M 425 hp diesels — an upgrade from the standard Cummins 380 hp engines — coupled to Zeus 3500 pod drives with aft-facing propellers. The Zeus pods allow fingertip joystick maneuvering at low speeds around a dock and produce excellent handling at speed while consuming less fuel than standard shaft and prop drives. They also emit less exhaust and less noise while taking up less room inside the boat. In a collision, they are built to shear free of the hull so there is not the potentially fatal danger of driving a hole into the boat.

After our encounter with the whales, we cruised down Haro Strait to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and



A BIT OF ENGLAND. The Fairmont Empress is at the head of the harbor in Victoria (above); the provincial parliament is off to the right (below).

SABRE 40 FB

SPECIFICATIONS

- LOA:** 40'10"
- Beam:** 14'
- Draft:** 3'4"
- Disp.:** 26,000 lbs.
- Transom Deadrise:** 16 degrees
- Fuel:** 380 gals.
- Water:** 140 gals.
- Contact:** Sabre Yachts, sabreyachts.com
- Base Price:** \$645,000
- Price (as tested):** \$725,000

PERFORMANCE

TEST POWER: (2) Cummins QSB5.9M 425 hp diesel engines and Zeus 3500 pod drives with aft-facing propellers. Speeds measured by GPS in two-way average in calm conditions off Friday Harbor, Washington, with three people on board plus half fuel and half water. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	D-BA
600	4.5	1.5	66
1,000	7.9	3.9	67
1,500	10.2	10.1	74
2,000	17.7	19.1	76
2,500	25.0	28.1	79
3,000	31.8	45.6	79

PROS:

- Traditional Down East looks combined with Zeus pod drive performance, joystick docking and fingertip maneuvering.
- Easy running, all-weather cruising boat with both upper and lower helm stations.
- Excellent visibility all around.
- Side door next to the helm for easy access to side deck for docking or anchoring.

CONS:

- Electrical cabinet/entertainment center takes up a lot of space on the starboard side of the salon, leaving room for just one chair.



INSIDE: ① User-friendly master stateroom with lots of room and storage. ② Guest cabin, which also can be an office or dinette area. ③ Door next to helm for easy deck access. ④ Wide, secure side decks with high stainless railings. ⑤ Large cockpit with lots of seating areas.



INVITING. The open galley is a social area.

BILLY BLACK (2)

turned right into Victoria, our destination for the night. After you clear the breakwater off your starboard side, make a dogleg right at Shoal Point to enter the inner harbor. You are now in a charming, although bustling, Canadian port. Boats less than 65 feet have to stay along the south shore traffic lanes because the middle of the fairway is a major seaplane landing area. Indeed, at times it seems they are landing or taking off back to back, almost next to you. Then there are the cruise liners and the commercial ferries, not to mention the colorful local water taxis, plying the harbor.

A little bit of England, with lots of Tudor-style buildings, parks, flower gardens and monuments, Victoria started out as a Hudson Bay Co. trading post in 1843. As you enter the harbor today, the Parliament buildings are off to the right, looking as if they had just been transplanted from London, and the majestic Fairmont Empress hotel is straight ahead, behind the docks. We cleared Canadian customs easily and settled in.

The Sabre has a comfortable galley one step down from the salon on the port side with generous Corian counter space and everything you need for a major cruise, including a large dry goods storage space under the teak and holly sole. Opposite is a guest cabin behind sliding pocket doors with what Collins called "a honeymoon double bed" that also can be set up as an office/den or a large convertible dinette. The master stateroom in the bow has a queen berth set low for easy access, lots of drawers and cabinets, a cedar-lined

JOHN LUND (2)



For more photos of the Sabre 40 FB, go to motorboating.com.



hanging locker and a warm cherry finish on the hull sides. The master has a separate door to the head, which has a freshwater flush toilet and a good-size, separate circular shower with a fiberglass seat.

The next day we ran into 3- to 5-foot seas coming around the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which the Sabre simply powered through at 20 knots. We cruised past the barren, windswept southern tip of San Juan Island, marked by an iconic, stark-white lighthouse, and cleared U.S. customs at Friday Harbor, Washington. After that it was a bittersweet return through the islands to Bellingham Yacht Sales.

"In a boat like this you can see all the San Juans in a week or so and not repeat yourself," Collins says, as we tied up. "You have the speed and comfort to go wherever you want." Our short cruise, as it turned out, simply created the desire to go back and do it all over again. ♦