

## Chaparral 310 Signature

**The 310 Signature sports a unique and striking look and excellent use of cabin space.**

By RANDY VANCE FEBRUARY 10, 2010

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For the past few model years, Chaparral's engineers have been developing their WideTech line of speedboats, capitalizing on forward space provided by proud chines married to a tri-point look at the bow. Already strong in the express cruiser lineup, Chaparral needed to fill just one gap in its lineup to complete its catalog of sporty and luxurious cruisers. Enter the 310 Signature, with that remarkable WideTech look.

On test day, we had models on board for photography and a chopper overhead, and our wind-swept open water was about as friendly as the Rocky Mountains. These were not the conditions for forcing 35 mph photo runs, yet we did them, and our crew enjoyed a comfortable though athletic ride while it smiled for the camera. That revealed more than a chart of GPS numbers and fuel flow statistics could. The 310 is built to cruise comfortably, capably and with the guts to handle crummy waters.


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Later, with notebook in hand, I stepped through, over and inside the new boat, jotting observations.

For operating convenience, the helm is equipped with smoothly operating digital throttle and shift and is complete with digital instruments that give fuel-flow information to help manage the boat's efficient cruise speed of 2.6 mpg at 30 mph. Getting it cranked up is easy too, because Chaparral put the battery switches and distribution panel in the same place — conveniently located as you enter the cabin — meaning you don't have to climb into the bilge or open a storage locker to “wake up the boat.”

Convenience of ownership was further addressed by offering good access to the engines — I could easily reach around to the spark plugs and oil filters of both. Sea strainers are comfortably reachable, even for the optional genset. Accessing the engine compartment itself is eased by way of a power lift, a necessity on cruising boats that enjoy the benefits of lounge components and hatches molded into a single unit to optimize cockpit utility and maintenance access.

Live-aboard convenience is nicely seasoned with luxury, both in the cockpit and the cabin below. Aft cockpit seating is ample, though I prefer a starboard positioning of the cockpit galley and portside arrangement of the lounges. On the other hand, the layout nicely accommodates the portside transom boarding location — something many captains prefer for aft visibility when coming alongside the dock on that side. Regardless of your preference, like us, you'll be impressed by the “power slide” aft lounge that lies flat as a sunning station at the touch of an electric switch. Instead of copying Sea Ray's popular cockpit grill station, Chaparral left the grill off the galley, opting for a stanchionmount arrangement and dedicated storage at the transom — less convenient at dinnertime but also less expensive and less obtrusive when cruising, not

cooking. The cabin entrance is via a molded sliding door with sliding screen. Steps to the cabin sole are easy to navigate due to their size and the placement of rails. The steps, of fine hardwood, add still another touch of elegance to the cabin. Complementary wood tones are found throughout in the high-gloss dinette table and galley cabinetry. Though the cabin sole is covered in faux teak and holly, it is natural-looking, warm and inviting — so much so that we had to kneel down to spot the “faux.”

There is an aft cabin, as in most cruisers this size, but its first function is to enjoy DVDs on the 20-inch flat-panel TV while reclining in the conversation-pit seats. A privacy curtain closes off the room for sleeping after the flick.

Natural lighting below is subdued due to only one screened deck hatch and four large port lights, unlike the Sea Ray 310 that includes a large skylight. But a larger deck hatch means less sunning space topside — an activity Chaparral accommodated with an optional sun pad. Gaining the foredeck is easy thanks to molded-in steps from the cockpit and a sturdy stainless-steel handrail. I stepped up with one hand to the rail and the other swinging back the hard-top hatch, which stays in place on gas struts. Footing is solid and secure, and walkways to the cleats are wider than in many cruisers, something experienced and nonexperienced crews alike will appreciate.

For shopping leads, we noted that Chaparral's base price of \$165,120 includes twin 270 hp Volvo Penta GXi MPI and Duoprop drives and the hardtop is standard. The Sea Ray 310 Sundancer hit the ticker at \$176,056 but with bigger 350-mag Mercruiser 300 hp engines and Bravo three drives and a radar arch, but Sea Ray's aft cabin doesn't double as a TV area, as does the Chaparral's. Formula's 310 PC is a logical competitor and features exemplary styling and construction. However, it stings the wallet at a base price of \$291,460, but with sporty Volvo Penta 5.7-liter GXi and Duoprop drives as base engines.

In the market of 31-foot cruisers, the 310 Signature sports a unique and striking look and excellent use of cabin space, and it offers a quality boating experience for the buck and a lifetime warranty backed by a solid company.

**Contact:** 229-686-7481, [www.chaparralboats.com](http://www.chaparralboats.com)

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