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Sea Ray 390 Express Cruiser

Sea Ray's 390 Express Cruiser still makes hearts beat faster.

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Sea Ray's 390 Express Cruiser was one of the company's most popular models of all time – and it just might be the most popular express cruiser ever built. In Sea Magazine's most recent survey of Western yacht brokers, this model was ranked as one of the top five boats in its category – despite the fact that the 390 has been out of production since 1992.

The rise of the express cruiser was a true 1980s phenomenon. These flashy, sexy personal cruising machines became wildly popular about the time "Miami Vice" star Don Johnson made it cool to wear pastel-colored linen jackets and have a pet alligator named Elvis.

But you don't need to time-travel back to the 1980s to realize why the Sea Ray 390 Express Cruiser was such a hit. Its sporty exterior and its practical and accommodating interior combine to make it a real crowd pleaser – then and now.

Style and Substance

From its long, rail-protected foredeck to its raked-back windshield and swept-back radar arch, the 390 Express Cruiser is a definite eye-catcher. However, unlike many sporty cruisers of its type, this boat has an unexpected amount of room aboard.

The 390 is built on a wide-body deep-V hull, which gives it a smooth, solid ride. This is a dry-riding boat, and one that tracks well.

One notable feature of the 390 hull – recessed hull pockets for the propellers – gives the boat the ability to cruise in shallower water than many comparable-size cruisers. However, there's a trade-off for this advantage: Low-speed handling is a tad less precise.

Standard power is provided by a pair of 340-horsepower MerCruiser gasoline inboards, but optional 370 hp Caterpillar diesels were also available. The diesel version of this boat is especially popular on the used market – and a well-maintained one may sell for twice the price of a gasoline-powered version.

Part of the reason for that – along with the usual diesel advantages of long-term operation, increased safety and fuel economy – is the 390's performance with those big diesels. With the Caterpillars, the 390 cruises at 25 knots and can reach a top speed of 29 knots. With gasoline engines, the boat cruises at 17 knots, reaches a top speed of around 27 knots and guzzles fuel at a rate of 35 gallons per hour (at cruise speed).

Whatever powerplant you opt for, the twin engines are housed under the helm seats. They are easily accessible for maintenance and can be removed without a lot of difficulty, should major repair work ever need to be done.

Open the Door



The Sea Ray 390 Express Cruiser's interior has a plush atmosphere and is filled with amenities.

You enter the 390 through a door adjacent to the helm console. Inside the saloon, you'll find an impressive 6 feet, 4 inches of headroom. Seating is especially comfortable, with an L-shaped settee to port that seats at least six adults and a two-seat breakfast bar to starboard.

Both seating areas are adjacent to a big, full-size galley that offers many unexpected delights for seagoing gourmet chefs – including double stainless steel sinks, a full-size refrigerator/freezer and a range with an oven.

The breakfast bar faces a mirrored panel that retracts to reveal yet another seating area – in the guest stateroom. On the other side of the counter, there's a settee that converts to bunk-style berths. It's adjacent to a hanging locker and a privacy door that closes this stateroom off from the main saloon at bedtime.

basin.

Adjacent to both staterooms, the boat's stand-up head offers a marine toilet, a sink and a shower.

While the layout of the 390 Express Cruiser remained the same throughout its eight-year history, not all interiors looked alike. The first models came with "monkey fur" headliners and artificial woodgrain laminate trim that were typical for the era. However, by 1986, the 390 was updated and upgraded with genuine teak trim. Contemporary white laminate trim was added two years later, giving a boat with abundant natural light an even brighter interior.

In 1992, Sea Ray replaced the 390 Express Cruiser with the larger, curvier 400 Express Cruiser. That boat lived on until 2000, when it was replaced by the even larger, more contemporary-style 41 Express Cruiser.

Today's Sea Ray Express Cruisers are sleeker and even more "Euro-style" in appearance than the venerable 390 Express Cruiser. However, for boat buyers looking for a more conservative "Euro" look, the 390 fits the bill quite nicely — and it comes with a wealth of convenience features, to boot.

Sea Ray continually earns high marks for overall construction quality throughout its entire line — and perhaps that's one reason Sea Ray remains one of the world's top-selling lines of production boats. In the 390 Express Cruiser, buyers will find a well-crafted boat with unexpected spaciousness, a long list of practical amenities and a surprising range of features for a boat that is so affordable on the used market.

Perhaps it's time to Express yourself.

Specifications

Length	39'
Beam	13'11"
Draft	3'4"
Weight	16,400 pounds
Fuel capacity	300 gallons
Water capacity	100 gallons
Standard power	twin 340-horsepower MerCruiser gasoline inboards

The Good

Can handle a crowd: cockpit seats 10; interior sleeps four
 Sporty styling has Euro look, but without excessive curves
 Light and bright interior