



While many boaties regard yachts and powered craft as opposite, the MacGregor 26 seamlessly blends sail and engine power into a trailerable package. Paul Smith reports.

With more than 35,000 of the US-built MacGregor 26s sold around the world, this is an immensely popular boat. It's distributed in New Zealand by Christchurch-based Haven Yachts, and 25 boats have been sold in the last three years.

A key trailer boat requirement is easy launching and retrieving. While many trailer yachts require the trailer to be immersed so deep that rear sections of the tow vehicle are also saturated, MacGregor's new aluminium trailer has been designed so that the vessel can be floated on and off without the crew or tow vehicle getting wet. And with a typical towing weight of around 1700kg, the boat doesn't require a 4WD tow vehicle.

To minimise towing weight (while retaining the required sailing stability), MacGregor has developed a water ballast system. Once the vessel's launched, a transom valve is opened

Power sailer on a TRAILER



SPECIFICATIONS

MACGREGOR 26 (price as tested \$86,000)

LOA:	7.87m
BEAM:	2.29m
DRAUGHT:	0.3m (board up) to 1.75m (board down)
WEIGHT:	1264kg (less ballast)
CABIN HEADROOM:	1.83m
BERTHS:	Six
BALLAST:	533kg (permanent 136kg)

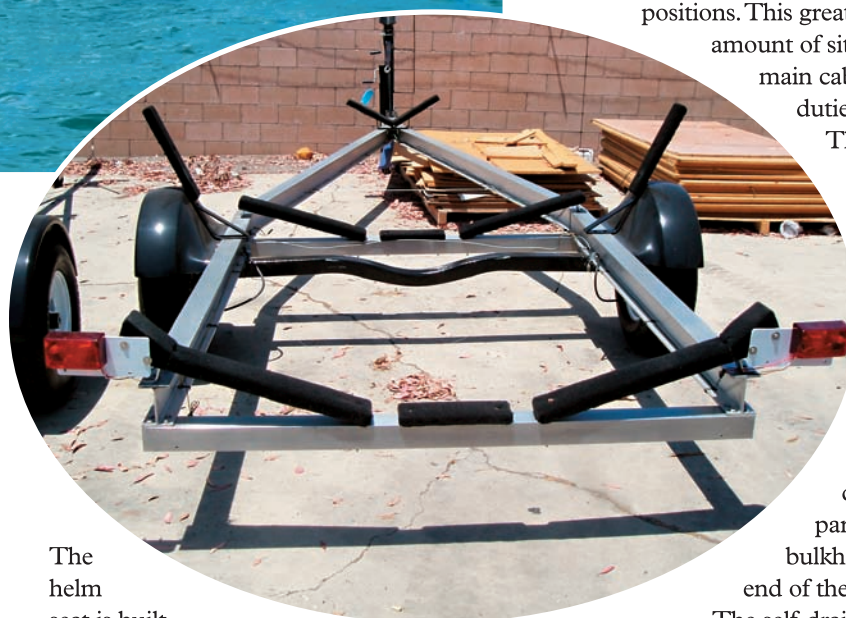
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allowing water to flood a ballast tank in the hull. When it's full, the valve is closed. This equates to 533kg of additional ballast that makes the craft stable and self-righting.

The tank can be emptied in about four minutes when the vessel is retrieved, or when under power. Its hull design incorporates a shallow draught vee bottom for higher speed under engine power and greater stability, while the sharp entry slices through the waves efficiently.

MacGregor has also kept the rigging process stress-free. The mast is raised or lowered using a small brake winch mounted on the support pole. It's a rotating mast (to increase mainsail performance) with conventional spreaders and upper/lower shrouds. The rig uses stay adjusters rather than turnbuckles and double micropress fittings for the shrouds.

A long, deep daggerboard can be pulled up into the boat when under power, beaching or downwind sailing. The boat's twin rudders and the outboard engine are steered by a stainless steel wheel on the cockpit pedestal.



The helm seat is built into the outboard engine cover which hinges up to give access to the engine well and transom's boarding ladder.

The twin rudders allow good control even when the yacht is heeled over as one rudder is always in the water. They can be raised and secured when the vessel is under engine power.

Layout

With its 7.8m LOA and 2.29m beam, the MacGregor 26 offers plenty of internal volume for family or two-couple cruising. The boat will sleep up to six adults.

There is a large double berth for'd with storage compartments under, and a large foredeck hatch for light and ventilation. To port is a long settee berth, again with storage under, while to starboard, just aft of the enclosed head compartment, the dinette converts to another full length single berth. A queen-size berth is located aft, under the cockpit.

An innovative feature is the one-piece, moulded GRP galley unit. This incorporates a sink and optional alcohol burning stove as well as cupboards for storage. The galley is mounted on sliders allowing it to be

moved aft and locked in one of three positions. This greatly extends the amount of sitting space in the main cabin when cooking duties are complete.

There is full headroom throughout the cabin area.

Neutral tones below decks enhance the feeling of space. The daggerboard trunk blends well into the design, forming part of the mirrored bulkhead at the for'd end of the dinette.

The self-draining cockpit (it's an open transom) has two full-length cockpit seats either side with compartments under for storage of two 50-litre fuel tanks.

Performance and handling

An outboard engine (up to 50hp) transforms the MacGregor 26 into a fully fledged power boat. A 50hp Yamaha four-stroke outboard gives the boat a top speed of around 35km/h – just enough to pull a waterskier (two skis) or water toys.

The outboard engine also allows the vessel to access distant destinations when time is tight. Under engine power, the rudders are retracted (steerage is by engine only) and the daggerboard can be raised up into the hull to reduce draught and drag.

The MacGregor 26 is a versatile vessel offering a range of boating opportunities. It lends itself to family cruising, offering plenty of internal space with sufficient performance under engine power to pull watertoys. Since the boat is trailerable, many waterways are opened up for exploration and enjoyment, and it's easily towed by a family sedan.

Depending upon the number of boxes ticked on the options list, a typical MacGregor 26 will set you back around \$86,000. ⚓

Construction

The boats are built of hand-laid solid GRP laminates with additional reinforcements at all stress points. A combination of uni-directional woven rovings and smooth cloth are used in conjunction with high-strength resins to form a lightweight but strong laminate.

Four main moulds are used to form the vessel – the hull incorporates the daggerboard trunk and water ballast tank, while the hull liner, the deck and the deck liner are the other major components. The hull and deck are joined using 5mm bolts at 100mm centres in conjunction with a high grade adhesive to ensure a watertight seal.