

BOAT SHOW SHOPPER'S GUIDE
20 BARGAIN HUNTER TIPS

50th
ANNIVERSARY YEAR

BOATING[®]

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**YAMAHA
FX CRUISER**



Regal 2860 Window Express

SUNSHINE VITAMIN

Are you getting enough? BY PETE MCDONALD

With its new 2860 Window Express, Regal said, “Let there be light, and there was, and it was good.” It definitely was good when I stepped down into the cabin and felt the warm glow of daylight. And that was on a cloudy day. When the sun emerged, the 2860 Window Express’ cabin glowed like a cheery breakfast room. I’ve never set foot in another midsize cruiser that felt so welcoming belowdecks.

The source of that illumination is Regal’s “cat’s-eye” window design. Instead of one continuous sloping fore-



CAT’S-EYE WINDOWS HELP ILLUMINATE THIS SWEET RIDE.
TOP END: 46.4 MPH.

deck as seen on competitors such as the Sea Ray 280 Sundancer (\$127,749 with twin 220-hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI Bravo Threes), the 2860 Window Express has a split slope with two curved window inserts that bathe the cabin in natural light from above the V-berth. Combine that with the Bowmar hatch overhead, large side windows, traditional small screened ports, and a white inte-

rior, and the cabin feels larger than it is. But what if the sun is too intense, or you want privacy overnight? Pop in the shading inserts and all is well.

The windows alone should make any potential buyer of a midsize cruiser take a serious look at the 2860 Window Express. And despite a few nitpicks, the rest of the boat proves to be a winner, too.

CABIN FEVER. There’s more to the cabin than just the windows. There’s a horseshoe-shaped, plush, white vinyl settee. Snap in the table to form a dinette or use the insert for the V-berth. Underneath are fully lined stowage bins. There’s a cedar-lined hanging locker to port with dedicated stowage for the window screens and shade inserts. When you open the locker’s door, a light automatically clicks on—more enlightened design. The top of the cedar cabinet is fiddled for stowage of loose items. Where do the cherry veneer table and base go? In a shallow hatch under the carpeted floor. (The shower sump sits under a hatch in this stowage space.)

To starboard, the microwave in the galley hides behind a cherry veneer cabinet door, giving the entire setup a sleek look. A trash can is concealed behind another door. The optional alcohol/electric stove (\$208) is hidden by a cutting board on the fiddled Corian counter. If you accidentally slide the cutting board back in place while the stove is on, the stove automatically clicks off. A white snap-in carpet also contributes to the cabin’s brightness, but it can stain or show dirt easily.

The fully lined head to port is another bright spot, with 6’ of headroom, a fiddled vanity, and an outlet for a hair-dryer under a protective waterproof hatch. Look above the standard screened port. One of the large side windows extends over the head, making the area much less claustrophobic. The pumpout toilet is a \$615 option. Should you want to shower, there’s a standard six-gallon water heater.

If you boat in warm climates, opt for the air conditioning unit—with reverse-cycle heat—for an additional \$3,462. That means you’ll also need to get the genset for \$10,685. The genset eats up a lot of space in the engine compartment, which is already cramped with the engines, making service and repair a chore.

The midcabin berth is also done well. A full-length mirror adds to the illusion of even more space. It fits a queen-size mattress, rather than a full, and has a tremendous amount of sit-up room.

PHOTO RIGHT FOREST JOHNSON



BOATING

Certified Test Results

Regal 2860

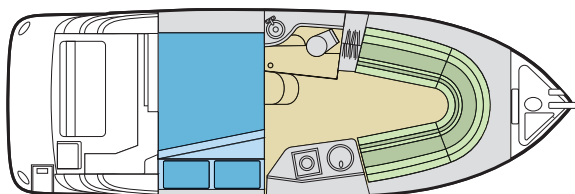


THE HIGHS Cabin's natural light cat's-eye window system is brilliant, literally. Creative stowage space abounds. Pull-up cleats on the swim platform let you cross-tie in a slip and retract at play so you don't stub your toes.

THE LOWS Not a lot of step-in room in the engine compartment, particularly with the optional genset. Single captain's chair means driver rides alone. Steering wheel partially obstructs gauges at the helm.

SPEED				EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level	
1000	5.0	5.8	2.8	1.8	2.1	162	186	1	66	
1500	7.0	8.1	4.8	1.5	1.7	132	152	2	69	
2000	8.4	9.7	8.8	1.0	1.1	86	99	5	72	
2500	12.3	14.1	14.2	0.9	1.0	78	89	5	79	
3000	21.5	24.7	14.3	1.5	1.7	135	155	3	78	
3500	28.5	32.8	18.1	1.6	1.8	142	163	2	78	
4000	32.7	37.6	21.9	1.5	1.7	134	155	2	79	
4500	37.7	43.4	29.0	1.3	1.5	117	135	1	80	
4750	40.3	46.4	31.2	1.3	1.5	116	134	1	84	

Advertised fuel capacity 100 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with two persons aboard, half fuel, no water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.



Monthly Payment \$855

(6.25% interest with 20% down on test boat power, tax not included; 15-year loan to qualified buyers estimated by Excel Credit)

LOA	29'5"
Beam	8'6"
Draft (max.)	3'3"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	9,000
Transom deadrise	18°
Bridge clearance	9'0"
Max. cabin headroom	6'3"
Fuel capacity (gal.)	100
Water capacity (gal.)	35
Price (w/standard power)	\$124,582
Price (w/test power)	\$124,582

STANDARD POWER Twin 220-hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI Bravo Three gasoline stern drives.

OPTIONAL POWER Twin MerCruiser gasoline stern drives or twin Volvo gasoline or diesel stern drives to 450 hp.

TEST BOAT POWER Twin 220-hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI Bravo Three V-6 gasoline stern drives with 262 cid, swinging 24" ss propsets through 2.2:1 reductions.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT (major items) Battery charger; battery switch; Sunbrella Bimini top; bow anchor roller; CO detectors; chartholder; cockpit table w/filler cushion; compass; Corian galley top; 12v outlet; digital depthsounder; shorepower outlet w/cord; dockside water inlet; refrigerator; stove; galvanic isolator; hot water heater; hot/cold transom shower; microwave; radar arch; AM/FM/CD player; tilt steering w/stereo controls; trim tabs; water/waste monitor; windshield wiper; vacuum-flush head; ss telescoping stern ladder; 25-qt. removable cooler; ss drinkholders; hourmeter; 120v outlet.

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OPEN AIR. The cockpit in the 2860 Window Express is set up like a typical cruiser in this class, with a wrap-around bench to port, a transom bench, and an enter-

tainment center behind the helm to accommodate passengers. The captain's chair at the helm has seating for one and a flip-up bolster—similar to the Sea Ray 280 Sundancer. The Four Winns 288 Vista (\$127,046 with twin 220-hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI Bravo Threes) has a more inspired cockpit setup, with a doublewide captain's seat that has two separate flip-up bolsters. Behind the Four Winn's captain's seat is horseshoe-shaped bench seating that wraps around the transom. The 288 Vista's entertainment center sits to port behind bench seating for two. The Four Winns is a slightly longer, beamier boat, but its cabin doesn't have nearly as much natural light.

Regal also outshines the competition with its foredeck, which has grippy diamond nonslip everywhere. The stainless-steel guard rail is knee-high throughout its length, so you won't accidentally stumble over it. Plus, there's a flat surface with a ledge forward so you can sit and handle the anchor in rough seas. Regal also placed a light forward so you can see what you're doing when handling the anchor at night. Or get the optional windless (\$2,077) and do it all from the helm. If you're underway at night, the spotlight mounts to the deck to hold a steadier beam than on the rail.

On the other end of the boat, the standard bolt-on swim platform features pull-up cleats so you can cross-tie in a slip, then retract them when you're at sea so nobody stubs a toe entering and exiting the water. A huge dunage box on the transom opens on gas-assisted struts. The engine hatch opens aft on an electric ram, so you access the compartment from the swim platform rather than the cockpit. Enter the cockpit through the sturdy outboard-swinging door to starboard. A rubberized strip on the port topsides and handholds on the standard radar arch make for easy boarding from the dock.

RUN FREE. Underway, the 2860 Window Express runs smooth and takes chop and waves well. It has a traditional V-hull that Regal calls OceanTrac (as opposed to FasTrac—the stepped hull found on its sportboats), which features 18 degrees of deadrise at the transom, a keelpad, and hard reversed chines that extend forward. The result is a boat that has excellent stability and a dry ride. If the ride does get wet or uncomfortable, throttle back to 2500 rpm and 14 mph and you'll still be on plane.

The 2860 Window Express took nine seconds to plane but didn't have the excessive bowrise I've experienced on other cruisers. It took 15 seconds to reach 30 mph and it topped out at over 46 mph—respectable for a midsize cruiser. It's also quiet. At idle, I recorded a whisper quiet 62 dB-A at the helm. At cruising speeds, the decibels stayed in the 70s, so passengers don't have to shout to talk to each other. And if anyone wants to take the conversation down below, the cabin is sure to keep it light and lively. As it should be clear by now, you won't find a 28-footer with more, ahem, window dressing. †



EXTRA POINT

The engine compartment gasket is screwed in, rather than glued, so it won't shake loose or lose its grip due to heat.