

HIGH FASHION

A luxury motorboat with a black canvas top and white cushions, carrying three people on a blue body of water. The boat is viewed from a high angle, showing its wooden deck and metal railings. The background is a clear blue sky and water.

FEBRUARY 2006 *BOATING WORLD* BOAT OF THE MONTH

A FLOAT

With the new Sanpan 2500 RE Designer Collection, you're not pontooning, you're styling.

By Alan Jones

The guy at the gas station looks at the trailered boat at the pump, arches an eyebrow and asks, "Y'all going boating today?" Certainly a fair question with the temperature hovering around 40 degrees and the wind crisply snapping an American flag. "Yep," comes the unadorned answer. The attendant scratches his head and says, "Well at least it's better than yesterday." And he's right; on the previous day ice pellets were observed bouncing off the pavement. So what's this group of four doing all dressed up like they're on their way to make a house call on Santa Claus? They're going pontooning — in style — on Sanpan's 2500 RE Designer Collection.



SANPAN 2500 RE DESIGNER COLLECTION



LOA 25'2"

Beam 8'6"

Weight 2,551 lbs.

Fuel 24 gal.

Base Price \$37,062

(w/150-hp Yamaha TLR)

Price As Tested \$38,705

(w/150-hp Yamaha TLR)

Structural Warranty See local dealer

NMMA Certified? Yes

Sanpan Boats

P.O. Box 1158

Elkhart, IN 46515

(888) 463-3739

www.godfreymarine.com

Test Data

Performance data was gathered with a Yamaha F150, four people on board, and 22 gallons of fuel.

Top Speed 30.1 mph

0-25 mph 5 seconds

Decibels @ Idle 53 dB-A

Decibels @ WOT 90 dB-A

Standard Features

NextWave electrical system, plug and play Deutsche connectors, rub rail, transducer bracket, anti-feedback steering, compass, master power switch, horn, hourmeter, hydraulic steering, Premium stereo w/four speakers and subwoofer, stainless-steel speaker covers, aluminum gate legs, stainless-steel removable drink holders, logo-embossed upholstery, halogen docking lights, rear-entry boarding access, and Bimini top with 1 1/2-inch frame and push button release.

Options

Aluminum under-deck skin, lifting strakes, Tripletoon package, TAP Fin System, in-dash depth/fish finder, Kenwood satellite system, air mattress, bow cooler table, changing room, flip-up refreshment center, Porta-Potti, stainless-steel gas grill, playpen cover, 35-gallon fuel tank, double canopy with full enclosure, remote spotlight and ski tow bar.



Although Lake Lanier — just 45 minutes from Atlanta — gets 8 million visitors a year, only four are visible today as the Sanpan 2500 RE Designer Collection 4-Gate pontoon boat slides off the trailer at the ramp at Aqualand, the world's largest inland marina and America's biggest with 2,250 slips. The lake itself is huge, having more than 392 miles of coastline, so after easing into the helm seat, it seems like it would be a good idea to boot up the optional Lowrance M68 GPS, which is flush-mounted into the dash, and set it to the "Hansel and Gretel" setting so they can find their way back.

It's almost involuntary, but the driver's first reaction upon sitting down is to exclaim, "Ooooh" — not just because the seat is cold, but because it's also extremely comfortable. Besides sliding and swiveling, when you recline the backrest, the armrests stay level. When you swivel toward the centerline (while at rest) to join the conversation in the cockpit, though, you must first shift the power lever back to avoid hitting it ... no biggie. Sanpan has one of the nicest helm stations going with large and highly visible Faria gauges with stainless-steel bezels, all set into a faux wood panel. The rocker accessory switches are set off to the right and are easily accessible,

but are far enough away to inhibit accidental engagement. There's a distinctive Italian custom sport wheel that fits your hand comfortably. The large expanse of metal on it can reflect the sun when it's at certain angles, but you can negate that by tilting the wheel as needed.

The hard-rocking crew is pleased to find that as part of the Designer Collection package, there's a deluxe Kenwood CD stereo system with four speakers that each have a stylized stainless-steel grill. The piece de resistance of this system is a subwoofer that you can adjust from "mild aftershock" all the way to full-blown "earthquake." There's even a rack to hold CD cases set into the dash. The entire molded console is intricately shaped to achieve maximum utility. From the front, it looks positively "Jetson-esque" with the space-bubble windshield and curved front with swooping graphics.

Putting the 2500 on plane is an eye-watering experience thanks to the cold temperature and speed of the pontoon, which reaches 30 mph with only a Yamaha F150 pushing it — very respectable for a 25-foot, two-pontoon hull. It's fast out of the hole too, reaching 25 mph in just five seconds, giving you more than enough performance to tow inflatables around at a child-shrieking speed. As you might expect for a

Yamaha 4-stroke that's concealed behind a padded engine well, it's very quiet, measuring only 53 decibels at idle and 90 decibels at wide-open throttle. What's even more impressive is that this boat doesn't even have the optional performance package that gives you lifting strakes and a more hydrodynamic aluminum under-deck skin. For those who want to go skiing or fast cruising, Sanpan even offers a Tripletoon option, which allows it to be powered with up to a 225-hp engine (160 hp max for the double-toon version).

The crew's immediate goal lies across the lake: the non-windy lee side. And as the pontoon comes off plane, it settles in the calm waters protected by the tall

Georgia pines. The sudden increase in warmth allows them to shed their outer layers in reptilian fashion. For the leisurely cruise along the shoreline, half of the crew heads to the bow to luxuriously recline on the two settees, which have the perfect amount of backrest angle when passengers are facing forward. It's up here that you get a better look at what makes the Designer Collection so unique.

The first thing you notice is the darker Sunbrella fabric inserts set into the sturdy, yet supple, 48-ounce GX48 expanded vinyl. Sanpan has always been at the forefront in providing plush seating, which the company calls its "Total Comfort System." It starts with Perma-

Life composite seat bases that have a water management system, which is covered with ergonomically shaped, multi-density foam that's soft where comfort is required and firm where extra support is needed. You can see the attention to detail in the ultra-clean French stitching that allows the seams to lay very flat. Underneath the two lounge seats in the bow and the L-shaped settee in the stern are cavernous storage compartments, some of which even have suspended trays to hold smaller, more delicate items. The Designer Collection gives you some options that are put to immediate use, like the color-coordinated pillows and fringed blanket, which are ideal for days like today. The Sunbrella fabrics are woven from color-infused fibers, which are stain- and fade-resistant and are also treated with a fluorocarbon finish that repels water to prevent mildewing. These items, like the plush carpeting, are covered by Sanpan's five-year limited warranty, while major items like the deck and pontoons are covered by a transferable lifetime limited warranty. In addition to the aforementioned monogrammed speaker covers, nice aesthetic touches include the aluminum gate logo up front, halogen docking lights, logo-embossed upholstery, stainless-steel drink holders, and the elegant champagne anodized contour rails that encircle the entire boat.

As the Sanpan cruises the coastline, a placid cove is spotted, so the driver turns in to investigate. Its most prominent feature is a crescent-shaped beach that looks to be perfect for a little stroll. And disem-





barking from the Sanpan is easy, thanks to the bow gate and extended forward platform. As the 4-Gate nomenclature in the boat's name would imply, there are gates on all quadrants, so no matter what the docking or beaching situation, entry and exits are no problem. For those boarding from the water (not gonna happen today), there's an extra-long, four-step boarding ladder. Another nice touch is the sunpad on the stern, which doesn't have the usual dark graphic swirls that heat up like solar panels. There's even a lip to prevent those sunbathing (also not on the agenda) from rolling off.

Eventually, stomachs begin to growl and thoughts turn to the waterfront restaurant, which is purported to be on the windward side of the lake, so off they go. Even though the Sanpan is slogging across the corrugated lake, there are no

vibrations or rattles being felt or heard, and it's handling the increasingly rough water in style. No big surprise when you see how Sanpan's StrataTech chassis are constructed, with their fully bolted MarineDeck PTP decking, extruded aluminum M-saddle brackets and 3-inch C-channels.

Despite the four crewmembers "eagle-eyeing" the shoreline, the restaurant remains hidden. But thanks to cell phone technology, they place a call to a helpful person at Mark's Marine at Lanier, who meets them at the water's edge with a bucket of chicken and fixin's, courtesy of the colonel in the white suit, which is literally finger-lickin' good because of the absence of napkins. Dining at the long cockpit table is a pleasure, thanks to the stable twin pedestals, but stowing such a large

table could be cumbersome. So Sanpan solves that problem in a unique way by allowing you to simply install it out of the way next to the starboard-side entertainment center, which features a wet bar, sink, cooler, loads of storage below, and a beverage prep area. And with the table in place, you now have a large food prep station or an hors d'oeuvres presentation area. There's even an additional carry-on cooler and an option for yet another wet bar station and trash receptacle that handily flips up into position. Another must-have option is the pull-up changing station/head compartment, located on the port side.

If cold-weather cruising was a regular affair or if owners want to camp out on board, Sanpan has a total-boat enclosure and an inflatable mattress to turn the 2500 into a gigantic floating campsite.

When equipped with a 150-hp Yamaha 4-stroke and loaded with options, the Sanpan 2500 Designer Collection carries a suggested list price of \$38,705, which is pretty steep for a twin pontoon boat. But for owners who demand the best in functionality, fit and finish, and looks, Sanpans are a great fit.



And it's a good guess that the Designer Collection, with its understated elegance, will find itself docked behind some waterfront mansion or towed behind a luxury SUV — and look like it belongs there. 