

Why Consider a Shrimper 21?

Jon Davies - S21-36 *Merriwinds*

Looking for a bit more comfort and better facilities than a '19' can offer. Getting older and feeling less agile; finding the Shrimper 19 more confining than it used to be. Hoping to take two growing grandchildren for the occasional night aboard. These are Important considerations for a boat owner, and after twelve years enjoying sailing Shrimper 19s (nine of them in a 2+2) we wondered whether, finally, a bigger boat might suit us better. However, we did not want to lose the reassuring sailing qualities, companionship, support, and well-organised sailing events that are associated with Shrimper sailing.

I had looked at a 21 when they first came out and wondered why on earth anyone would consider buying something that seemed to offer just a little more room, but with the big disadvantages of greater towing weight, higher mooring fees, harder to sail single handed, and a huge increase in price. From a few feet away a 21 looks very similar to a 19. How could it be it be worth the large investment just for a few extra inches of space?

It is only when you step on board that you begin to realise that the 21 is a lot more than a 'stretched 19'. The moored boat is more stable in the water with less movement as you walk around. The cockpit feels twice the size and there is no engine cover taking up room at the front. The step up on to the cabin top, while the same height as a 19, because of the extra width feels easier. The deck is broader and longer and you feel more secure. The small side decks mean that, with a spray hood erected, it is still possible to reach the front of the boat. External storage? Under the seats in the cockpit there are two large lockers with space for all the fenders and equipment you will ever need.

Going below one is immediately struck by how much wider the boat feels, and the amount of floor space. The centreboard case is much less intrusive and there is room to walk around it, especially at the front. The berths are much larger and the seats are more comfortable with proper padded backrests. Several people can sit together in comfort. Headroom is better than a 19, and the cabin feels much less confined. Looking forward there is an open space, and beyond it a separate cabin with a bed that looks deceptively like that of the 2+2, except that it is much bigger and can easily accommodate two adults in comfort. There is even a curtain to divide the 'bedroom' from the rest. What about storage? There is plenty of room for a toilet at the front, and there are lockers everywhere! Under the seats, under the floor, under the bed, there are shelves behind the seats, dedicated racks for cups and plates and even two cupboards under the cooker and sink. Yes! A proper sink with a pump feeding water from a tank in the cockpit locker. What is more it drains outside. Opposite there is a decent two burner stove (with a glass cover) fed from a large Camping Gaz cylinder in its own sealed locker at the stern. I remember ISW cooking competitions requiring a lot of imagination with the single tiny burner on Shrimper 19s. The 21 looks as if it could provide a family meal in comparison.

The Shrimper 21 interior is a relaxing place to be, it can be lived in without carefully wondering where to step next, what you will bump into when you turn round, or continually moving piles of stuff from one place to another because there is no permanent storage for it. The cabin also feels lighter, the windows being higher up and there are neat spotlights either side with a proper ceiling light in the forward cabin. A huge difference to the habitability comes from the lack of obstructive internal mast support at the front (a mod that was also apparently planned for the 'mark 3' Shrimper 19 that was never produced).

Outside, the biggest difference is that the boom is attached directly to the tabernacle which makes raising and lowering the mast much simpler (using the bowsprit as a fulcrum as on later 19s). Rigging

the sails is also much easier; the mainsail simply runs into a slide on the gaff and is then attached to the mast with Velcro straps, there is no more head-scratching with time-consuming lacing to do! (although the Velcro is not liked by everyone and the loops can sometimes 'stick' together). The 21 also comes supplied with a dedicated support for the spars that mounts on the transom when the boat is transported.

Sailing a 21 is exactly what you would expect if you are familiar with a 19; it feels slightly heavier but retains its good manners. Weather helm feels less. Its acceleration is not quite so quick off the mark, but once underway it sails at about a half knot faster due to the longer waterline. Having slightly more freeboard and more weight, it is also initially less affected by waves. The sails generally complement the boat well, just like a 19. One criticism is the jib which requires quite a bit more pull, and its jam cleats do not allow the sail to be released as easily. Many 21 owners have addressed this problem with new fittings. The spars and sails all weigh a little more than the 19 which makes quickly raising, and later packing away the mainsail require a bit more effort, but this is not a huge problem. The 21 draws about six inches more than the 19 which might just catch out the very shallow water sailor. When motoring, the engine (identical to a 19) must work a bit harder and this is noticeable at first. However, overall, on the water the boat is well-balanced and sails well with no surprises, especially for a 19 sailor.

It really looks as if, when designing the 21, they looked carefully at a 19, scaled it up, made the best use of the newly available space, and decided on a few things that could be improved to make the boat more relaxed to live aboard and easier to rig and derig. There have been no short cuts taken and the 21 is just as well made and finished as the 19. The overall impression is that it is a little more competent, and just a bit less compromised.

Of course, as already mentioned, there are disadvantages, mainly to the substantial cost and the extra size and weight which we shall have to live with. However, so far owning a 21 has been a series of pleasant discoveries. It appears to be everything we were looking for in a bigger boat but, importantly, it remains a Shrimper!



General view of the S21 interior looking back from the front bed area showing the amount of floor space. Part of the cooker is visible on the left with its locker below. The sink is on the right.