

Sea Ray SDX 290 (2016-)

Brief Summary

Few things can be more appealing for day cruising than a big deckboat. Not all of us can make the time for overnights and those cabins become nothing more than wasted space. For those who could use that space for other things, enter the Sea Ray SDX 290 (formerly known as the 290 Sundeck). It's all about maximizing space for either holding people or entertaining them.

Price

Base Price

Prices, features, designs, and equipment are subject to change. Please see your local dealer or visit the builder's website for the latest information available on this boat model.

Key Features

- Comfortably seats 17 people while underway
- Open floor plan with expanded beam and convertible seating, including aft-facing transom loungers and optional sun pad
- Submersible swim platform option
- Enclosed head compartment with portable head, vanity and sink
- Standard arch with Bimini or an optional watersports tower with articulating Bimini
- Stereo with wireless Bluetooth for easy control of audio devices on board
- Wet bar with integral sink and faucet

Test Results

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
650	4.2	3.7	1.45	2.9	2.52	222	193	66
1000	6	5.2	2.35	2.55	2.22	195	170	71
1500	8.1	7	3.95	2.05	1.78	157	136	72

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
2000	10.2	8.9	6.55	1.56	1.35	119	104	79
2500	16.3	14.2	8.85	1.84	1.6	141	123	80
3000	25.8	22.4	11.1	2.32	2.02	177	154	83
3500	32.5	28.3	15.35	2.12	1.84	162	141	82
4000	38.1	33.1	20.8	1.83	1.59	140	122	83
4500	43.2	37.5	26.35	1.64	1.42	125	109	86
5000	47.5	41.3	33.3	1.42	1.24	109	95	93

[View the test results in metric units](#)

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Specifications

Length Overall	29' 2" / 8.9 m
BEAM	9' 2.74 m
Dry Weight	6,471 lbs. 2,935 kg
Tested Weight	7,401 lbs. 3,357 kg
Draft	
Draft Up	24" 61 cm
Draft Down	42" 106 cm

Air Draft	
Deadrise/Transom	21-deg.
Max Headroom	open
Bridge Clearance	N/A
Weight Capacity	
Person Capacity	17
Fuel Capacity	85 gal. 322 L
Water Capacity	20 gal. 76 L
Length on Trailer	
Height on Trailer	
Trailer Weight	
Total Weight	7,401 lbs. 3,357 kg
Aft Deck	
Salon Inside Width	
Salon Fore & Aft	
Salon Height	
Salon Volume	

Galley Volume	
Master SR Width	
Master SR fore & Aft	
Master SR Overhead	
Master SR Volume	
Eng. Room Volume	

Acceleration Times & Conditions

Time to Plane	4.0 sec.
0 to 20	
Ratio	N/A
Props	24 B3
Load	2 persons, full fuel, no water, 50 lbs. of gear
Climate	59 deg., 84 humid.; wind: 0-5 mph; seas: calm

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck running shot

The Sea Ray SDX 290 has a LOA of 29’2” (8.89 m), a beam of 9’ (2.74 m) and a draft of 42” (106 cm).

Overview

A deckboat of this size appeals to so many because few of us have the time to spend weekends away or to take the boat to distant horizons. For those who play closer to home, there’s a definite need to make that

play-pen the best that it can be and maximize our time onboard. Equally important is the notion that buying a boat immediately increases an owner's circle of friends. The SDX 290's capacity is limited only by the number of seats, 17 in this case. Everyone can come along while cruising to that favorite anchorage for a private party.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck floor plan

The overhead view shows how far forward Sea Ray carries the 290 Sundeck's beam, creating a spacious bow seating area.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck hull color

Two colors are available for the graphics band for no upcharge. Add color to the topsides (\$1,692), such as the Horizon shade seen here, or opt for a two-tone scheme for \$2,385.

Features Inspection

Seating

The Bow.

One of the most instantly recognizable characteristics of a Sundeck is the beam being carried so far forward to a more squared-off bow. It's a design element often found in the deckboat genre. It opens up the bow area and makes it more of a social area than just an area to sit in while underway.

Crowd Control.

The bow seating design provides generous U-shaped seating for nearly a half dozen people and we like that all cushions are a seat and a half wide. If there aren't many people up front, a couple can stretch out on the chaise-style lounges and work on their tans. With the table in place, passengers can enjoy lunch or cocktails.

Bow Storage.

Each hinged seat bottom cushion opens to reveal the self-draining and insulated storage compartments that can be used for keeping food and drinks cool if the carry-on cooler isn't big enough.

By the Numbers

We measured the Sea Ray SDX 290's bow at 5'1" (1.55 m) at the forward end and 6'6" (1.98 m) at the aft. Between the seats we measured 31" (79 cm) so occupants will not be knocking knees when facing each other at the table. Side caprails are 21" (53.3 cm) above the cushions, providing comfort and safety.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck bow

With the beam being carried so far forward, the bow seating is spacious. An optional filler cushion (\$577) can be installed to turn the area into a sun pad. Notice the pedestal mount up front.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck bow storage

The storage underneath the two bow seats is insulated and self-draining so they can be used as coolers.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck arm rests

The bow seats get upscale upholstery and notice the flip-down armrests. We prefer these to flip-up types because these don't need to be unlatched when stowed.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck sun pad

Adding a filler cushion turns the bow into a large sun pad.

Easy Beaching.

Beach access is provided via a beach ladder concealed beneath a center bow hatch that opens on gas struts. A freshwater pull-out shower at the bow facilitates washing sand off passengers' feet before they step onto the clean deck. Our test boat had the optional windlass that can be ordered with either a galvanized anchor (\$3,323) or a stainless steel one (\$4,246). It takes the place of the bow beach ladder and all controls for the windlass are located at the helm.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck windlass

Located beneath a hatch in the bow, the optional windlass on our test boat replaces the standard beach ladder.

Cockpit Seating.

The cockpit lounge starts with a roomy L-shaped seat to port and an opposing double seat to starboard. The helm and companion seats have flip-flop seatbacks that can be moved forward to expand the cockpit seating.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck seat backs

The seatbacks can be flipped forward or back to facilitate forward-facing seating or to let occupants join the gathering in the cockpit.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck cockpit

The walkthrough to the cockpit is angled so it doesn't impinge on the available seating. The L-shaped seat blends with the port side passenger seat with its flip-flop seatback. Notice the carry-on cooler underneath.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck double wide seat

To starboard, there's a double-wide seat abaft the helm seat with its flip-flop backrest.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck step

A flip-down step allows for a more comfortable transition to the caprail for boarding or disembarking.

Cockpit Storage.

Storage is underneath the seats and to port there's dedicated storage for a 25-quart (23.7 L) carry-on cooler. The cooler slides out so that passengers don't have to get up to access it, which is good. We would, however, like to see a raised lip in the deck, or some other means to hold the cooler in place when the boat is running.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck sole lockers

There are two lockable in-deck storage compartments... one at the bow, and the other in the center of the cockpit. Note that both open on twin gas struts.

Shade Options

Shade provides a welcome respite on a sunny day. The SDX 290 comes with a standard Bimini top, but we recommend going one better. Sea Ray also makes available a collapsible watersports tower (\$4,615) fabricated from black or white powder-coated tubular framing. It includes a Bimini top mounted *above* the framing and provides an elevated tow point 6'8" (2.03m) high for wakeboarding. This towpoint is accessed through a zippered slot in the Bimini. The tower is collapsible but the Bimini sticks up in the air unless owners opt for the tower with the tilting Bimini (\$5,385) that will lay flat when the tower is lowered. Additional options include wakeboard racks (\$1,115).

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck tower

The collapsible tower is an attractive option that provides shade and an elevated tow point for wakeboarding.

The Stern.

In the SDX 290's stern, an aft-facing lounge seats four and keeps beverages at hand with drink holders on each side. For added comfort, the lower cushions lift to raise the knees just a bit, a remarkably more comfortable position. Do it all the way across or split it two-thirds and one-third.

No Cooler.

Previous models had a center cooler in the middle of the seats, but this served more to inhibit the usability of the seating than to increase the convenience of not having to go into the cockpit to get a drink. In our opinion, the layout on our test boat was better. We'd rather have more guests join us in the seats and get up if we need to. To starboard, and a little out of the way, are an optional remote for the stereo (\$231) and a 12V accessory plug. Since most of us are controlling the music via Bluetooth anyway, we don't see this location as a hindrance.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck aft lounge

The aft lounge is a great place to relax at any time the SDX 290 isn't underway. Notice the raised cushions that provide leg support.

Entertainment

Since we've been touting this boat as a premium level entertainment platform, let's get to the entertainment features. The Swim Platform. The swim platform is the recreational focal point on this boat. It extended 2'9" (.84 m) from the transom and was covered with the optional SeaDek rubber non-skid (\$654) that is more comfortable to walk on and remains cool to the touch, even in direct sunlight.

Pet-Friendly.

The conventional reboarding ladder is to the starboard side but Sea Ray has gone one step better -- literally. In the center of our test boat's platform was a manual flip-out swim step (\$1,385) that created a wide step leading into and out of the water. This is not only a great feature for the family, it's also good for people who boat with pets. Fido can now get out of the water as easily as he did when he jumped in. When deployed, the step has positive buoyancy, which brings it up within reach and makes it easier to stow from topside. Additionally, when people are in the water there are two stainless-steel grab handles that allow for them to comfortably remain close to the boat.

~~Sea Ray 290 Sundeck~~ swim platform

The SDX 290 comes with a large swim platform, seen here with the optional SeaDeck non-skid matting. Notice how the platform extends well past the hull's running surface.

~~Sea Ray 290 Sundeck~~ swim step

The optional manual swim step provides a method of reboarding that is people and pet-friendly.

The Cockpit Wet Bar.

In its most basic form, the SDX 290's cockpit wet bar provides a freshwater sink and trash receptacle. Owners can upgrade with a cockpit grill (\$2,462) and cockpit refrigerator (\$1,100). Both will put increased demands on the electrical system and will require the shorepower package (\$2,000) and the inverter (\$2,692) that allows both units to be used when on the water or when tied up at the dock.

~~Sea Ray 290 Sundeck~~ wet bar

The cockpit wet bar can be upgraded with an electric grill and cockpit refrigerator.

Extra Tables.

Sea Ray offers side-mount pedestal tables (\$538 each) and we recommend purchasing two, one for the bow and one for the cockpit. If water toys are going to be a part of the picture, an air compressor can be added (\$308).

~~Sea Ray 290i Sundeck~~ table

Adding pedestal tables to the bow and cockpit makes for an even more inviting atmosphere.

Head.

The head compartment is located in the port console and it has an interior light, and opening portlight for ventilation. We measured 4'3" (1.29 m) of headroom with 2'9" (.84 m) over the toilet. An interior upgrade (\$538) adds a freshwater faucet and a metallic countertop that has a distressed hammered appearance. A portable head comes standard and owners can upgrade to the optional VacuFlush head that includes a 10-gallon (38 L) holding tank (\$1,846). We would also add the dockside pump-out (\$231).

~~Sea Ray 290i Sundeck~~ head

On our test boat, the head had upgrades including the VacuFlush toilet and freshwater sink.

Storage Shelf.

The head also has a neat little trick. Sea Ray recognized that virtually every owner uses the head area for storage and provided a flip-down shelf that basically fills in the counter, creating a single-level compartment above the toilet. For the most part, items in this compartment, such as beach chairs or water toys, will be taken out once the boat arrives at its destination. After the items are removed, flip up the shelf, latch it into position and a functional head remains.

~~Sea Ray 290i Sundeck~~ head shelf

With the shelf in the head lowered, there's single-level storage above the toilet that makes it easier to store and retrieve items.

Operations

The Helm.

The SDX 290's helm has a sleek, modern feel. The silver interior color that we've seen throughout the boat is continued at the helm console. A dark visor lies above the central pod that houses a pair of SmartCraft gauges. An upgrade is available that includes a Raymarine Chartplotter (\$1,269) and the digital dash option includes the chartplotter and integrates the audio control to the Fusion 750 Series stereo (\$2,538), all with touchscreen functionality.

Cruise Control.

If the SDX 290 is for spending a lot of time towing watersports, we would recommend the Smart Tow digital speed control tachometer (\$769). A GPS-based engine controller provides for more precise speed settings while towing.

Smart Storage.

To the left-hand side of the helm is a flat area that has a flip-open cover. This "saddlebag storage" is a convenient feature that we used during our short time on board. There is a 12-volt accessory plug located inside that facilitates cell-phone charging. It also leaves the adjacent stainless steel drink holder open for its intended purpose.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck helm

The helm of the 290 Sundeck is at once attractive and functional.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck chart plotter

The Raymarine a65 chartplotter can also be interconnected with the entertainment system.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck batteries

The house batteries are under the port seat and an optional charger mounts alongside. Engine start batteries are under the aft seat with a switch just above.

The Engine.

The Sea Ray SDX 290's standard single engine is a 300-hp MerCruiser 6.2 L with emission control technology that meets EPA clean air standards and an optional 380-hp big block is available (\$7,154). The MerCruiser 8.2 MAG also has the ECT technology and could be the better choice for high-altitude applications. Both engines include digital throttle and shift, and turn a Bravo 3 sterndrive with counter-rotating propellers. Hydraulic trim tabs are standard issue for the SDX 290 and when used with the SmartCraft auto trim mode, make for smooth and effortless piloting.

Performance

The Sea Ray SDX 290 has an LOA of 29'2" (8.89 m), a beam of 9' (2.74 m) and a draft of 42" (106 cm). With an empty weight of 6,471 lbs. (2,935 kg), full fuel and two people onboard, we had an estimated test weight of 7,401 lbs. (3,357 kg). With the 380-hp MerCruiser 8.2 MAG ECT turning a Bravo 3 outdrive, we a top speed of 47.5 mph at 5000 rpm. At that speed we were burning 33.3 gph for a range of 109 miles. Best cruise was at 3000 rpm where the speed was at 25.8 mph and fuel burn was lowered to 11.1 gph. That produced a range of 177 miles while maintaining a 10% reserve.

Acceleration.

In holeshot tests, we reached planing speed in 4 seconds and accelerated to 20 mph in 5.4 seconds, and 30 mph in 8.6 seconds.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck running shot

The SDX 290 cruises at 25.8 mph with an 11.1 gph fuel burn.

Handling

While she certainly is a big boat, the SDX 290 has the agility and maneuverability of a sportboat. We noticed no chine walk during our heavy handed "drive it like you stole it" turns and she has just enough slide to maintain the turn but not induce the forces that shove everyone onboard to one side. When driven with a tamer hand, she felt smooth and comfortable and when we drove back through our own wakes, the SDX 290 felt rock solid.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck running shot

Freeboard measured 3'5" (1.04 m) at the stern and 3'9" (1.14 m) at the bow, which should provide for a dry ride.

Fit-and-Finish.

The fit-and-finish of the SDX 290 is high quality. All cushions are fabricated with multiple vinyl textures and foam densities, quilting, bead welting and custom embroidery. In the recessed areas of the bulwarks, there are expected speakers and stainless steel drink holders but the areas are also lined with a new material recently introduced by Sea Ray. With its soft-touch, Ultravynyl is similar to Ultraleather but it's more resilient to the elements and it adds to the level of class seen throughout the SDX 290.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck upholstery

The upholstery is treated with quilting and custom-embroidery, both of which indicate that it was not assembled quickly or haphazardly.

Sea Ray 290 Sundeck ultra vinyl

The material around this speaker is Ultravynyl, soft to the touch like Ultraleather but more resilient to the elements.

Observations

The Sundeck line from Sea Ray has always been about maximizing play space without compromising ride quality. The SDX 290 has the stability and size to provide a soft, dry ride. As far as looks go, she's also a home run. To complement the good looks, there are a handful of hull colors and graphic packages available to jazz up this big deckboat.