



# Dufour 335 GL on test

Dufour's new 335 is the epitome of the modern, high-volume cruising yacht. David Harding reports on this new Italian design

**W**hatever you think of today's high-sided, mass-market cruisers, there's no denying that they're pretty remarkable in some ways.

You might have reservations about their appearance and about their performance in both light and heavy airs – with good reason – but when it comes to interior volume it's hard not to agree that things have moved on over the past decade or two.

Take Dufour's new 335 Grand'Large, for example. Here's a 33-footer with an almost unbelievable amount of space down below and, for good measure, a cockpit that belongs to a boat at least 10ft longer.

What's more, she's designed by a man who knows how to make a boat go: Umberto Felci, who's also responsible for Dufour's Performance range including the 34e (see PBO August 2010).

Theoretically then, this boat has the potential to appeal both to family cruising sailors and to those who like a bit of oomph. She's sensibly priced too, starting from around £97,000 delivered, VAT-paid and ready to go before you start ticking your way down the options list.

So, what are the drawbacks? First of all you have to like the high-volume approach. As with many boats, that entails a vast amount of wetted area which, combined with a modest rig, means she's not going to be scintillating in light airs. On the other hand, along with most of the current crop of high-volume cruisers she does at least

have a deeper keel than earlier-generation designs. When a boat has so much beam it simply has to have a fair amount of draught to sail half decently in any breeze and, if there's a bulb on the bottom to lower the centre of gravity, so much the better.

Another characteristic of high-volume hulls is that they're unlikely to be as comfortable in a seaway as slimmer alternatives: there's simply more bulk to be slammed into and thrown around by the waves.

Boats like this are often less expensive than sportier boats or serious cruisers because their modest rigs place less strain on the structure, making life easier for the builder. Countering that is the fact that high-volume hulls with lots of wide open space down below are more prone to twisting and distortion than narrower hulls with lots of full- or half-height bulkheads. As ever, there are plenty of compromises.

## Following the fashion

Looking at the lines of the 335 it's noticeable how the longitudinal centre of buoyancy is well aft. It's around the aft end of the saloon, close to all the heavy kit: engine, batteries, calorifier, cooker and various tanks.

The stern is also extremely broad, and for that reason this 'baby' of the Dufour range sports twin wheels. You don't find those on many boats of this size.

Apart from giving the helmsman a good range

of steering positions, twin wheels make for easy passage through the cockpit to the stern. To save expensive extra length in the form of a sugar-scoop, Dufour have chosen a hinge-down transom that forms a full-width step-cum-bathing platform incorporating a swimming ladder.

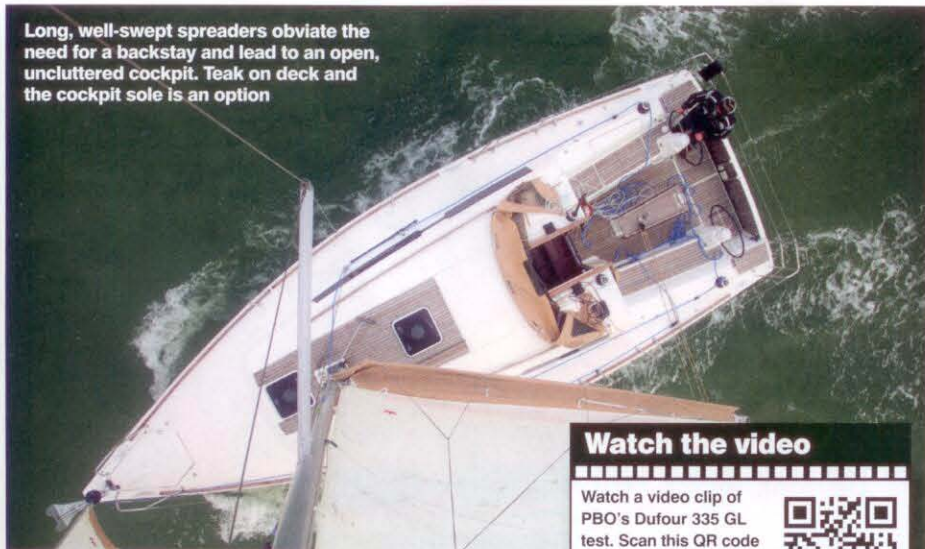
Making boarding easier still is the absence of a backstay, so the whole of the stern is remarkably open and uncluttered. There are times when a backstay is rather useful for hanging on to or dangling flags from, but for stern-to berthing, stepping aboard from a dinghy or anchoring for a swim this arrangement has its appeal.

An option in the middle of the cockpit, and a definite plus on a boat designed for serious socialising rather than for lots of crew leaping around, is a fixed table. A handy place to put things, it provides an essential bracing point given the distance between the seats and also acts as an anchor point for the 3:1 mainsheet, which is led forward along the boom and then back to a Harken 35 self-tailer on the starboard side of the coachroof.

One problem if you have a crew who want to see the instruments is that they can't. Dufour don't fit hatch garages on the current range and the standard mounting positions for instruments are on the aft ends of the coamings each side by the wheels, plus the aft end of the table. That's fine for the helmsman, though even then there's only space for two standard displays each side so you have to take a stroll across the cockpit



Long, well-swept spreaders obviate the need for a backstay and lead to an open, uncluttered cockpit. Teak on deck and the cockpit sole is an option



**Watch the video**

Watch a video clip of PBO's Dufour 335 GL test. Scan this QR code with your smartphone or visit [www.pbo.co.uk/dufour335](http://www.pbo.co.uk/dufour335)



A deep anchor locker, formed as part of the deck moulding, houses the rode and windlass



Welcome aboard: the hinge-down stern and twin wheels make for easy boarding

from time to time. Mounting them on the bulkheads either side of the companionway would probably be the best solution.

It's a super-size, family-friendly cockpit by any standards. With the helmsman as far aft as he could possibly be, standing almost on the transom, and the Harken 35 primary winches immediately forward of the wheels, the rest is free from ropes except for the mainsheet on the table.

Beneath the helmsman's feet are two lift-up sections of the cockpit sole, for a liferaft and dinghy, where they're easier to reach than if buried in the bottom of the locker to starboard.

The absence of a backstay means that the cap shrouds need to be swept aft further than on conventional fractional rigs. Here the two sets of long spreaders are swept 32.5° and the cap shrouds taken right outboard to chainplates on the topsides. With the lowers anchored on the inboard edge of the decks there's plenty of space to pass between them, plus the security of having a hand-hold each side.

Elsewhere on deck, little of note stands out. Non-slip in the form of the usual moulded-in diamond pattern covers all the obvious areas. Our test boat had the £2,900 option of teak along the centre section of the coachroof and on the cockpit sole.

In the bow is an anchor locker, formed as part of the deck moulding and including space for the chain and windlass. Inspection hatches allow access to the fastenings for the surrounding deck fittings and the forestay attachment, which is bolted through the deck moulding and a

plywood reinforcing pad. It's more usual to see the forestay attachment tied into the stem in some way, but one imagines Dufour have done their structural sums so it's not going to go anywhere. It was the same on the 325.

Fittings, rigging and hardware have well-known names on them: spars are from Z-Spars, basic cruising sails from Elvstrom (upgrades are offered), winches from Harken and deck organisers and clutches from Spinlock. Things are kept pretty basic as standard, with only the main halyard, kicker and two reefing lines led aft.

**Simple under sail**

On our test we had just the sort of conditions to let a boat like this perform at or near her best: 14-16 knots of wind, which was enough to keep her powered up most of the time. A knot or two more to start with proved to be the top end of what was comfortable for full sail, while in the occasional lull of 10-12 knots we felt rather stuck to the water. The way the rig and hardware are set up it's not easy to change gears quickly, but when we had everything trimmed for the middle wind speeds the boat slipped along pretty well.

She's notably easy to sail, with a groove so wide it can't really be called a groove. Hard on the wind we clocked 6.2-6.3 knots and tacked through just under 80°. Our speed quickly built to nearly 7 knots if we footed off a few degrees.

Speed through the water was nothing to

**Tech spec**

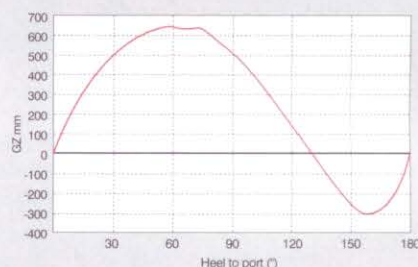


The standard bulbed fin gives a draught of 1.9m (6ft 3in)



LOA	9.98m (32ft 9in)
LWL	9.00m (29ft 6in)
Beam	3.48m (11ft 5in)
Draught - standard fin	1.90m (6ft 3in)
- shallow fin	1.55m (5ft 1in)
Displacement (deep fin)	5,450kg (12,015lb)
Ballast (deep fin)	1,550kg (3,417lb)
Sail area	50.65sq m (545sq ft)
Displacement/length ratio	209.5
Sail area/displacement ratio	16.58
RCD category	A
Engine	Volvo 19hp diesel saildrive
Headroom	1.85m (6ft 1in)
Builder	Dufour, France
Distributors	South Coast: Marco Marine, Hamble South West: Marco Marine, Plymouth East Coast: Burton Waters, Ipswich North West: Yachtshop, Holyhead Details on <a href="http://www.dufour-yachts.com">www.dufour-yachts.com</a>

**PRICE: FROM £97,026**



The GZ curve shows the maximum righting moment at 57° and an angle of vanishing stability (AVS) of 131°





The accommodation is palatial for a boat of this length. Timber trim is unfussy and tidy on the whole



**LEFT** Wine cellar: despite the 335's shallow hull, Dufour have created space for a few bottles in the bilge



**RIGHT** An unusually roomy forecabin, with fiddled shelving and plenty of width at the bunk's forward end

complain about. Neither was the balance of the helm – it remained pleasantly light – or the grip of the rudder. Although we didn't manage to push her hard enough to give the rudder a thorough test, it kept the boat on track if we deliberately sailed too deep with the sheets pinned in and pushed her to around 30° of heel. Like the keel, it's a good depth, as it needs to be with such a broad stern.

As well as the standard 1.9m (6ft 3in) fin, our boat had the optional folding prop. These two factors would make an enormous difference compared with a shallow fin (1.55m/5ft 1in) and the standard fixed two-blader.

Our biggest challenge in performance terms was the lack of tension in the forestay and, initially, the genoa halyard. As standard the halyard is cleated at the mast, where there's no winch, so we had to pull out one of the reefing lines to liberate the necessary block, deck-organiser sheave and clutch, then feed the halyard aft and tension it properly. It can be led aft as an extra.

Removing the excessive forestay sag without a backstay to help would be more of a challenge. The caps were tight, and in theory tight caps in a swept-spreader rig translate to a tight forestay, but sometimes in such instances the only solution is to tension the forestay directly. It was notable that, even with tight caps and fairly slack lowers, mast bend was minimal.

Given the nature of the boat it would be unfair to criticise the lack of rig-and-sail-tweaking ability. Keeping the layout simple, clear and uncluttered has been the builder's priority and, in any event, the boat seems to sail just fine for such a high-volume cruiser. If you want more

responsiveness and performance and like pulling rigs and sails into shape, buy a 34e – or, as a compromise, spend some extra on the Grand Prix pack that gives you more sail and towing genoa cars among other goodies.

Something I would like to see as standard is a way of adjusting the sheet leads to ensure enough leech tension on the headsail when it's well reefed. Because the tracks are so short, their forward ends being just abaft the lower shrouds, they simply don't extend forward far enough. I tried reefing the headsail to check. One solution might be a barber-auler from the base of the mast, pulling the clew both down and inboard. If you're trying to make upwind in heavy weather you really do need to ensure that your sail plan is working efficiently.

In the lighter conditions we experienced, the small headsail was so easy to manage that, if the helm and crew were reasonably well coordinated, it was hardly necessary even to use a winch handle during tacks.

Having the mainsheet led to a coachroof winch is one of my pet hates because it's way out of the helmsman's reach. Those similarly inclined can have a German-style system led aft to winches each side or, alternatively, a more powerful purchase mounted on the table – something like a 6:1 plus a fine-tune.

### Sitting comfortably

Twin wheels are great for getting comfortable well outboard and being able to see the luff of the jib. If you're one of those helmsmen who usually insists on sitting behind the wheel, you'll have to learn to sit to one side because

that's the only option here. A foot-brace helps you counter the forces of gravity, though with cockpits this wide you're acutely aware that it's a long way down to the leeward side when the boat's heeling heavily or being thrown around in big seas. Strongpoints for lifelines are dotted around liberally.

As usual with twin wheels there's a small amount of play in the system and, in this case, the combination of chain and cable linkage produces a slightly notchy feel at times.

My only other observation of note under sail was a tendency to slam in the modest but typically steep Solent chop. With such a beamy, flat-sectioned hull that's not surprising and, in any event, every hull has a wave length it doesn't like. Loading the boat up and fitting the optional second water tank in the bow would probably help. Ours was very lightly laden, with minimal fuel and water aboard.

One thing the boat did very well was to heave to. With the helm unattended she sat happily, drifting gently sideways with the wind on the beam while we sorted out the genoa halyard. From there she would gybe round with the sheets still pinned in to carry on sailing.

In the not-very-testing conditions of our test, the new Dufour proved to be an easy, well-mannered and respectably quick boat to sail. Under power she was predictably predictable, as is the norm these days with saildrives and fin keels, exhibiting absolutely no quirks and virtually no prop-walk in astern. A comfortable 2,000rpm from the 19hp Volvo (the 29hp version is an option) gave us 6.3 knots, which increased to 7 knots when the engine was nudged up a further 500rpm.



Despite her voluminous hull, the Dufour 335 is a sprightly performer in the right conditions



### Down below

If volume below decks is what you like, you'll love the Dufour: she's simply cavernous.

There's a roomy saloon with 1.88m (6ft 2in) bunks each side, a generous galley and chart table, an aft cabin that's impressive for a boat with an aft cockpit, a more-than-adequately-sized heads compartment and a forecabin with room to sleep, dress and turn around.

Space to stretch vertically as well as horizontally is ample for most people. Headroom is 1.85m (6ft 1in) at the aft end of the saloon and still nigh on 6ft in the forecabin.

The interior is based around an internal moulding that incorporates hull-stiffening members and landings for the bulkheads as well as many of the joinery modules. Joinery is neat enough on the whole but in very modular, slot-together style with lots of square corners and almost universally unsealed end-grain out of sight and inside lockers. It's tidier than some, though not exactly in the Scandinavian league. One obvious misfit on the test boat was the forecabin door, which was some way off being able to close.

Neat touches include a wine rack beneath the aftermost sole board at the bottom of the companionway steps and, right next to it, a good-sized gash bin that slides out from under the galley. It was also good to see saloon berths of a good width, parallel to the centreline and fitted with lee-cloths so they could be used for sleeping out at sea. Hull-side ports give a view of the outside with no need to stand up.

Further signs that the interior has been thought about include a lifting section in the chart table's lid, so there's no need to hinge it

all up to extract a pencil. On the other hand, as on most production boats, trimming details such as little lockers and cubbyholes to make best use of space are hard to find.

Accessible stowage for large items is good because the diesel tank is beneath the floor of the cockpit locker and the 215lt (47gal) water tank under the aft cabin berth together with the batteries. That leaves all the under-bunk space in the saloon (except that taken up by the calorifier) and the forecabin free unless you choose the extra water tank in the bow.

Wet-hanging space is provided by a few hooks in the heads, and handholds are reasonable throughout by today's standards.

The engine can be reached from forward, aft and both sides. Some of the fastenings for deck hardware can be seen, too, though the rest are hidden behind the moulded headliner. A lightweight tongue-and-groove-effect moulding lines the hullsides.

### PBO's verdict

This is one very cleverly-conceived boat. Dufour have thought long and hard about what the majority market wants and provided it by the sackload.

The result is an attractively-priced, undemanding boat that's extraordinarily roomy both below decks and above, that's sufficiently different to stand out from some of the alternatives and that sails pretty well in the sort of conditions in which most coastal-cruising and Channel-hopping yachtsmen will choose to sail.

If the 'give the people what they want' maxim is a recipe for success, this new Dufour is set to become extremely popular.

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## Other boats to look at



### Bavaria 32

**PRICE: £68,460**

This new-generation design from Bruce Farr sails much better than her predecessors. A hinge-down transom and a mainsheet on the cockpit table are features in common with the Dufour.

■ [www.clippermarine.co.uk](http://www.clippermarine.co.uk)



### Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 33i

**PRICE: £67,797**

Also from a designer with a race-boat pedigree – Marc Lombard – this capacious 32-footer comes with a choice of standard, deep, swing or performance keels.

■ [www.jeanneau.com](http://www.jeanneau.com)



### Hanse 325

**PRICE: £73,192**

Slightly shorter at 9.6m (31ft 6in), this Judel & Vrolijk design is a development of the 320 and comes with a self-tacking jib and standard or shallow fins. Probably the sportiest of these three.

■ [www.hanseyachts.co.uk](http://www.hanseyachts.co.uk)