

DOES 3 GO IN DUFOUR?



LA ROCHELLE-BASED DUFOUR YACHTS HAS BEEN PRODUCING GREAT CRUISING AND PERFORMANCE YACHTS SINCE 1964. ITS EXTREMELY POPULAR GRAND LARGE (GL) RANGE OF CRUISERS HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR AROUND 12 YEARS AND NOW THE 335GL JOINS THE FOLD AS THE NEW 'BABY' OF THE FLEET. **DUNCAN KENT** PUT HER THROUGH HER PACES.



I'd say there is some 50 per cent more volume below and around 30 per cent more deck area – especially in the cockpit.

All these latest boats have twin helms and voluminous interiors, and are intended for comfortable, fast and safe family cruising. Their sterns are very wide, which means their cockpits are huge, and twin wheels allow clear access aft between them to the fold-down teak swimming platform/transom.

Most of the older classics had overhanging or sugar-scoop style transoms – the former being noticeably pinched and therefore providing little in the way of accommodation space aft, the latter providing an increase in waterline length for better performance and easy boarding, but an expensive luxury in a marina berth where every inch counts. Dufour's new fold up/down transom platform means absolutely no space is wasted down below – indeed the aft cabin is vast on this 335 and akin to that of many a 50-footer. Paired with her plumb stem and broad shoulders, she really puts every cubic centimetre of space to good use and makes my own Nicholson 32 look like



Third largest French production boat builder, La Rochelle-based Dufour, continues to extend its latest range of cruising and performance yachts. The new Grand Large cruising range was first exhibited in the UK at London's 2004 boat show and now includes the 335, 375, 405, 445, 485 and 525 models. Both the cruising and performance series (the 36, 40 and 44) are designed by Umberto Felci – renowned for his ability to create very fast and stiff performance hulls without compromising on accommodation space and comfort.

These days a 34ft boat is often considered to be a starter yacht, whereas a few decades ago it would have been a serious offshore cruising vessel. However, if you were to compare the typical yacht of 30 years ago, a Sadler 34 for instance, you'd be amazed at just how much more room there is – both above and below decks. At a rough guess



a 26-footer!

Three versions of the 335GL are available: *Comfort*, *Liberty* and *Adventure*. The first is the standard model, but it includes common extras such as a high-power alternator, shore power, LED navlights and a large waste tank. The *Liberty* version features all the *Comfort* items, plus a dining set, CD player and speakers, additional domestic battery, fully battened mainsail, gas-sprung vang and outboard bracket. The *Adventure* model includes all the *Liberty* gear, plus cockpit shower, sprayhood, folding prop, mooring lines and six fenders.

A deep fin keel is standard, but a shoal keel version with increased ballast is also available for an additional £1,000. A *Grand Prix* racing orientated pack can also be ordered, which comprises larger sails, cockpit adjustable genoa cars, spinnaker bowsprit and removable backstay.



1



2



3

ACCOMMODATION

SALOON (1)

There is a surprising amount of room below in this boat. With a beam of just 350mm less than her 38ft sistership, there is room in the saloon to seat eight for drinks or six for dinner in comfort. The settees are straight and 1.90m (6ft 3in) long, so they make excellent sea berths with the addition of lee cloths. The table is well fiddled and has a bottle store and glass shelf in its stem.

Although there is plenty of natural light through the long portlights, there are only two small opening ports set within the lights – not ideal in hotter climes. The large hatch above helps, though, especially as it is fitted with an all-weather vent. Every hatch and portlight also has its own blind.

Locker space is good and there is room beneath the settees for gear.

GALLEY (2 & 3)

She has a good size, L-shaped, galley with all the usual facilities, including a sink with drainer and Corian covers, above average size fridge, gimbaled two-burner cooker with oven (no grill), gash bin and ample stowage for cutlery, crockery etc. I particularly like the cooker cover stowage and bottle rack each side of the cooker.

Although there is a small opening port above the cooker for ventilation, it could do with a light or two under the deckhead/over the cooker and fridge. An 11-bottle wine rack sits beneath the galley sole! (3)

NAVIGATION STATION (4)

It's great to see a new sub-40ft boat with a proper navigation station. While I fully understand that most people use electronic navigation underway these days, I still think it essential that the navigator has his own space to keep charts, logbooks, tide tables



4 5



6 7



etc and a central point to visit for all navigation information, VHF, etc.

This has a forward-facing chart table, plenty of instrument mounting space, chart stowage and a good switch panel with gauges. It also has a locker for books etc, a partitioned draw inside the chart table and stowage for small items in the plinth below and under the seat.

FORECABIN (5)

This sports a 1.80m x 2.00m V-berth with plenty of foot room. Two large clothes lockers provide ample stowage and there's room for bulkier items beneath the berth, behind the water tank. Headroom is 1.80m underneath the large, vented forehatch.

HEADS (6)

Yet again a good size for the length of boat and well laid out. Headroom and elbow space is more than adequate for showering and there's a handy access door to the cockpit locker. Although the lockers above the sink and loo are large, they are hinged at the top, so woe-betide you if you open them on a starboard tack!

A hatch above provides ventilation.

AFT CABIN (7)

This single aft cabin is vast for a 33ft boat. With the berth measuring 2.00m x 1.88m (6ft 6in x 6ft 2in) it's difficult to know which way to sleep on it. I would suggest transversely when you're at anchor, sitting up in bed to read with plenty of headroom, and longitudinally with a lee cloth when you're underway – if the saloon is occupied.

Two opening portlights give light and a good through flow of air, while a large clothes locker and shoebox provide a fair amount of stowage.

Headroom is 1.85m (6ft 1in).

ON DECK

3



COCKPIT (1)

The first, most obvious thing that hits you with the 335 is her broad stern and very spacious cockpit. She carries maximum beam almost all the way aft, which means there's even room to carry the side decks all the way back to the helms each side, so the helmsman can exit or return to the wheel without disturbing the occupants on the main benches.

Teak covered cockpit seats and sole are standard, which not only looks good, but also offers good non-slip properties. The helmsman has seats at deck level each side, enabling you effectively to sit 'outboard' to steer, giving you the best view forward. Furthermore, the genoa winches are within reach, although the mainsheet terminates on the coachroof and attaches to the forward end of the fixed cockpit table. The latter works well, but it's a pain to have to go to the coachroof to adjust the mainsheet when you're sailing singlehanded.

Having only one aft cabin, big though it is, has allowed the designer to include a huge, full depth cockpit locker, which can also be

accessed from the heads. The opening under the seat is easily big enough to squeeze an inflatable or sail bags down – maybe even a bike. Personally, I'd like to customise the area immediately accessible via the heads to form a hanging locker for oilies and the like – maybe even a tool store.

The gas bottle locker takes a single bottle only, which isn't brilliant for long term cruising as a back-up bottle will need to be stored in the undrained cockpit locker.

Lowering and raising the platform is easy using the simple mechanical tackle and jammer provided.

DECKS (2)

The side decks are clear to access thanks to the short headsail tracks being well inboard and there are gates in the rails each side for easy boarding. The teak toe rail looks smart and breaks where there are cleats, rather than fairleads, making mooring simple.

A teak safety rail leads as far as the mast and the cap shrouds, which are connected

1



2



to topside-mounted chainplates, make good handholds going forward.

Her foredeck is uncluttered and has a large, deep chain locker with windlass on a plinth inside. A single bow roller allows the anchor to self stow with most of its shank below deck, well clear of the headsail furling drum.

Well organised block arrangements allow all the lines to be controlled from the cockpit, bar the topping lift and outhaul – the latter causing us a little grief under sail when it dropped out of its poor

cam cleat on the underside of the boom and allowed the clew of the sail to wander mastwards. Nothing a small guide ring wouldn't sort, though.

RIG AND SAILS (3)

Fractional 7/8th rigged sloop with twin swept spreaders. Lower shrouds down to deck plates, cap shrouds to topside chainplates. The rig has no backstay, but relies on the triangulation of the well spaced cap shrouds for support aft.

The Liberty model comes with fully battened mainsail and lazyjacks, rigid vang and second coachroof winch for £2,298 more than the standard Comfort model, but it is probably worth the extra if you regularly sail short- or singlehanded.

Standard cruising sails are by Elvstrom, but more performance orientated sails can be purchased at an additional cost. A Facnor genoa furler is standard on all models. »



1

UNDER WAY

The day of our trial was bright and breezy, with a solid westerly F5 gusting F6. We first set two reefs just in case, but soon shook them out as the wind dropped briefly – only to put one back in again pretty sharpish.

Thanks to her near 2m deep keel with ballast bulb she's pretty stiff, further aided by her generous form stability created by shallow underwater lines and plentiful beam.

Her spade rudder is perfectly balanced to give a light but positive helm and being so deep meant it kept its grip on the water even in the frequent 25kn gusts.

With two of us on board handling her in these testing conditions wasn't a problem, but singlehanded you would definitely need to fit an autopilot or some means of leading the mainsheet back to the helms.

CLOSEHAULED (1)

With full sail set we averaged a comfortable 6.8kn closehauled, while easing off to 40° increased this to over 7kn in around 20kn of true wind. Opening the angle a little more caused the log to hit 7.8kn, while she kept doggedly on course with little effort on the helm. My only moan was the small foot supports, which weren't high enough and were not in the right place. Drop down ones would be better and could then be made to disappear when you don't want them.



2

REACHING

She seemed to be happiest at around 80° off the apparent wind, giving us a steady 7.8-8.1kn boat speed. The lack of a mainsheet track meant it wasn't easy to spill the gusts without the boom lifting, increasing the draught in the mainsail, but nevertheless she coped well with constant attention. Cruisers would have put a reef in well before we did, so it is unlikely to be an issue.

Putting a reef in calmed things with little detrimental effect on our speed. Felci really seems to have found an ideal compromise between speed and comfort with his new Dufour GL yachts.

RUNNING (2)

If there were any point of sail the 335 isn't particularly happy with it would be running downwind. Her smallish genoa doesn't offer much power off the wind and is soon in the shadow of the larger main. However, in slightly lighter airs this could be overcome with a cruising chute or similar. Her hull really wants to get a shift

on – you just have to give her the sail power to do it! My guess is she will fly downwind with a generous spinnaker. Well swept spreaders do restrict how far out the boom will go, so anything beyond a broad reach really requires a preventer of some kind.

Thanks to deep appendages, tracking off the wind isn't at all problematic – she simply goes where you point her.

CONCLUSION

The 335GL is a great all rounder. I hesitate to call her an ideal starter boat at just under 34ft long, but in this day and age that's exactly what she is. Saying that, she's versatile enough to keep the family safe and comfortable on cruising holidays, while still having the ability to perform impressively when you want to push her to her limits. An admirable compromise that few boat builders get completely right, but on which Dufour seems to have a definite edge.

FOR

- Spacious and comfortable below
- Sensible deck and cockpit layout
- Good equipment standard throughout
- Excellent navigation station

AGAINST

- No mainsheet track as standard
- Lack of opening ports in saloon

SPECIFICATIONS – DUFOUR 335 GL

LOA	10.28m	33ft 9in
LWL	9.00m	29ft 6in
Beam	3.49m	11ft 5in
Draught (shoal/deep)	1.55/ 1.90m	5ft 0in/ 6ft 3in
Displacement (shoal/deep)	5,550/ 5,450kg	12,235/ 12,015lbs
Ballast (shoal/deep)	1,650/ 1,550kg	3,638/ 3,417lbs
Sail Area (main/genoa)	29.0/ 25.0m ²	312/ 269ft ²
Fuel	160ltr	34 gal
Water	220ltr	48 gal
RCD Category	A-Ocean	
Berths	6 including saloon	
Engine/transmission	19hp Volvo diesel/Saildrive. 29hp option (+£1,506)	

Designers (Hull/Interior) Umberto Felci/Patrick Roseo **Builder** Dufour Yachts, La Rochelle, France www.dufour-yachts.com

Review yacht supplier Marco Marine 02380 453245 www.marcomarine.co.uk

Other UK dealers www.dufour-yachts.com

Price from £97,000