

La Dolce Vita



The contoured nacelle minimises drag while the wide hulls allow good load carrying on the Dufour 48.
Image Kevin Green



Tall topsides create vast interior space on the Dufour 48. Image Kevin Green

Italian styling with French sensibilities make this Dufour 48 a sweet addition to the catamaran cruising market, reports KEVIN GREEN.

Sailing around the world can have a profound effect on sailors, as it did for monohull dealer Matt Hayes. The former Olympic sailor and successful Sydney boat dealer came to a few conclusions during that 30 month circumnavigation, done on a 56ft Dufour monohull. "Everywhere we went there were cruising catamarans!"

This fact reflected the strong market for them, both in power and sail varieties. "So when the opportunity came to get this Dufour catamaran dealership, we jumped at the chance," explained Matt as we talked aboard the first hull (#29) to arrive in Australia. As a former Dufour monohull dealer, he well knew the flair of designer Umberto Felci, so had confidence in taking on this catamaran, despite the Italian being relatively new to the concept. For this initial model Felci collaborated with his company co-founder Lorenzo Giovannozzi.

The production cruising catamaran market has many customers but also has myriad models to choose from, as builders cash in on this growing sector. Sure, order books are full and there's often long waiting times. (By-the-way, Matt Hayes tells me he can have Dufour 48 here by next winter if you order now.) But it's a competitive sector with increasingly refined catamarans. This means market differentiators can be difficult to achieve.

FIRST CATAMARAN

Reaching Australia had been a long and interesting road for this marque. When a major monohull builder transitions to create a catamaran, it makes a major statement to the market, yet things did not go to plan for the La Rochelle based Dufour. Having seen the first hull at the 2018 Cannes Boat Show, I was impressed by the overall sleek design and general

finish. Initially designed as a charter boat, the takeover of Dufour by catamaran specialist Fountaine Pajot in May 2018 (for €26.6m) changed the fate of this 48 footer. Instead of becoming the unwanted orphan of the mighty Fountaine cat empire, its moulds and yard space in northern Italy, run by JLL Catamarans in Forli, was bought by Croatian charter company Under the Heavens. Check out their site if you want to charter one of the many Dufour 48s they rent. Both builder and charter company are backed by the Fozzy Group, one of the largest industrial groups in Ukraine. The Ukrainians' deep pockets mean that there are several new models under way, including a 44ft sail version and perhaps a motor version later.

BOLD DESIGN

'Design flair' is a well worn phrase, yet it certainly applies to this Dufour 48, thanks to a sleek, angular profile which oozes modern style. Lofting it, followed the idea of thirds: with the aft section, nacelle and foredeck equally divided. Cynics might say that Umberto Felci grabbed the upright features of the spacious Lagoons, combined the low-slung flybridges from the Fountaine Pajots, then added a dash of his own monohull topsides. Whatever the consensus, the 48 is a very stylised catamaran. Looking the part, gets you to first base with many prospective customers, including the younger, hipper buyer. Beyond that, there are a few questions to ask about the Dufour 48. Such as the modest bridgedeck clearance and the unusual angle of the raked flybridge. The former blemish, means going easy on the loading but the latter is more about style; and the flybridge certainly proved a functional space during our sea trial on Sydney Harbour.

LIVEABILITY

Climbing aboard the Dufour 48 shows the towering height of the topsides that comes to shoulder height, so the boarding gate midships is ideal, along with a removable ladder. Most noticeable is the midships location of the mast, which dictates that the flybridge is located right at the back. Aesthetically, this may raise a few questions, but from a practical perspective it ideally spreads the sail plan along the 48ft hull. Dual access to the low slung flybridge is ideal as well and all sail controls are here, thus leaving the main cockpit free for relaxation. A downside with this layout



TOP: The steering binnacle is ideally placed, beside all sail controls, so good for crewed or short-handed sailing. Image Kevin Green

ABOVE: All lines run directly from mast along spine to the jammers. Image Kevin Green



FROM TOP: A deep locker for tankage and rode plus trampolines to reduce weight forward all make for good design on the Dufour 48 foredeck. *Image Kevin Green*

A substantial windlass/capstan with rode in short gutter. *Image Kevin Green*

The track and self-tacking headsail creates a simple sail plan. *Image Kevin Green*

is divorcing the navigation crew from the relaxation crew; but there are many upsides.

Shoal water navigation, as we often do in Australia, is best done from a high vantage point and the sail controls sitting neatly alongside the offset helm show good ergonomics. It also creates space on the port side for the lounge table and benches. Overhead, a canvas bimini gives shade but also restricts access slightly to the boom. The boom is raked upward to clear the bimini and its height is high, yet reachable by taller crew. Another upside of the aft flybridge is the space around the mast foot which can have dual sun loungers, or for the bluewater couple, several large solar panels.

The starboard offset helm allows all lines to run directly from the mast via jammers to twin Antal electric winches, an ideal low-friction arrangement. Also good is the main track on the flybridge transom with lines running forward to near the helm.

Overall, a good arrangement for a couple to sail with, yet enough room for a crew to operate as well. The sail plan includes a self-tacking jib and the large fore-triangle space can fit a generous gennaker. In

THE STARBOARD OFFSET HELM ALLOWS ALL LINES TO RUN DIRECTLY FROM THE MAST VIA JAMMERS TO TWIN ANTAL ELECTRIC WINCHES, AN IDEAL LOW-FRICTION ARRANGEMENT

addition, a Code 0 can fly from the fixed bowsprit – ideal for moving this 15-ton cruiser in light airs. The helm has a double bench and is dominated by the large diameter wheel, but given it's hydraulic I'd question its dimensions – that are so large my fingers were trapped against the bulkhead at its sides. However, that's a small blemish on an otherwise good layout that has the 12 inch Raymarine Axiom plotter central and also at eye height are the two gauges for the 60hp Volvo sail drives. Dealer Matt Hayes is planning to change the three bladed fixed propellers to folding ones, to reduce drag. But fixed props give more power, especially going astern or coping with windage of this high cat; so something to consider.

Stepping-down onto the main deck, notable features include tall toerails and bulwarks towards the aft; to keep kids nicely secure. Walking forward to the bows

reveals a flat foredeck with space for dual sunbeds and adequate trampoline space to minimise weight and wave-slap forward. Here, a deep central locker holds tankage and rode, with the substantial Antal 1,500w vertical windlass-capstan on deck. The chain is in a short open gutter connected to the 45kg Ultra anchor located just outside the nacelle; so good weight centralisation. The anchor gutter is part of the central spine that extends to become a sturdy bowsprit, intersecting with the alloy main cross-beam; creating a strong structure. Other good points are cleating all round and bow seats to thrill guests when underway.

Returning below to the main cockpit, this space adjoining the saloon galley will win over many buyers. Fully protected by the overhead flybridge bulkhead, this is an all-weather dining and partying area. Just switch on the electric barbecue at the transom and relax on the generous benches. This apartment style living, is why cruising catamarans like this Dufour 48 sell. And of course, the easy water access from moulded steps on each side with an electric davit between for the dinghy (or hydraulic



The flybridge gives towering views and holds all sail controls, so I felt totally in control of the Dufour 48 despite the gale force winds. *Image Kevin Green*

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platform option). Other good points here include emergency quadrant access on the cockpit sole and generous locker space.

SALOON

The cockpit seamlessly flows into the saloon, but with a scupper in between, and the galley is here, so ideally placed for serving al fresco diners. Unlike some leading brands, Felci chose to avoid the acres of open-plan more suited to marina life than offshore; something I endorse. So, the island workbench supports crew in a seaway and is well anchored by the compression post for the mast. Around it are generous worktop space, a deep double sink, four burner gas hob and oven, plus double refrigerators. Dealer Matt Hayes wisely up-specified some of this to suite the Australian cruising market; so it also includes a washer/dryer in the downstairs utility room, electric heads and a ducted air conditioner. In front of the galley, the lounge wraps around the elevating fold-out dining table, to port. The navigation station sits on the starboard quarter. Here, a second 12 inch Raymarine Axiom plotter allows the skipper to work while giving clear views aft. Simply add a remote control for the auto-pilot and you are set. The plotter can also show the radar images from the Raymarine Quantum unit on the mast. Other notable features include two large hatches at the front for airflow and the overall high standard of finish, in lightwood laminates with good attention to detail.

Accommodation options vary from three to five cabins. Our review boat was the charter-friendly version. So, four ensuite cabins plus utility room and skipper space in the starboard bow. This arrangement can sleep nine and there's even a day head. Impressive. But of course over-kill for the dedicated cruiser who may opt for the three cabin, with the port hull as one large apartment.

The pick of cabins in our review boat is the starboard one aft, because of its private corridor and location to minimise motion at sea. The large semi-island bed (187cm wide) surrounded by locker space and hatches, including an aft facing one, is very good. Equally good is the nearly 2.0m headroom and the spacious ensuite with electric head. Again, plenty hatch ventilation plus a dedicated escape hatch in the hull. Quality finishes included teak grating in the bathroom, LED mood lighting and the general fixtures and fittings; showing typical Italian attention to detail. The sister cabin on port is similar in size, while the two forward cabins have athwartships beds, generous space and plenty storage; all reflecting the value of these towering topsides.

MONOCOQUE HULL

The JLL Catamarans yard in Forli used a monocoque build for the hulls, mini keels and nacelle - for stiffness and laid in solid glass. Decks and saloon are foam infused. All bulkheads are infused polyester or glued



TOP LEFT: All four heads were electric and good ventilation with quality Teak finishes. *Image Kevin Green*

TOP RIGHT: Essential safety feature - escape hatches and the Dufour 48 has three. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE: The extensively fitted aft galley includes hob, oven, double fridge and even a washer dryer in a utility room. *Image Kevin Green*

marine plywood. There are two opening glass escape hatches on starboard because of the separate cabins - with utility room in between - while on port only one hatch is required. The nacelle has a sculpted underside for wave deflection and the plumb bows maximise the waterline, and interior space. Looking aft, the bridgedeck clearance is modest, which I measured to be 60cm on hull #29. The tall hulls mean the engine rooms are spacious and the Volvo saildrive is fully accessible on the starboard side, including filters and electrics - all elevated in case of water ingress. On port, it's a bit crowded because of the house batteries surrounding it. Ideally, these heavy gel batteries should be centralised in the saloon to improve trim, and similarly with the 11kw generator which would be better placed in the foredeck locker.



TOP: The island bench and fully equipped galley is ideal for offshore cruising. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE: Vertical bulkheads maximise saloon space and the area has good practicalities - sizeable navigation station and comfy corner lounge. *Image Kevin Green*

WICHARD PACIFIC new copy to come



SYDNEY BY SAIL

The first test for the Dufour 48 was extricating itself from the pontoon at Darling Harbour with a strong side wind pinning it there. I've seen these kinds of tall flybridge cats with mini keels spun round by strong winds, so I admired dealer Matt Hayes' composure as he gently worked the throttle levers fore and aft to nudge the bows off first, then get us clear. The cat characteristic of two engines to pivot on, plus the flybridge stance of the Dufour 48, aided this manoeuvre. Once clear, I took control to feel the transmission and the hydraulic wheel, pushing the motors to full throttle. Done without hardly a murmur from the four cylinder Volvo sail drives or their transmissions and aided by those fixed three bladed propellers, we reached an impressive 9.1kts as the props spun at 2,900 revs; before slowing to a cruising speed of 8.2kts at 2,200rpm.

A strong north-westerly was blowing, so I sought some shelter on the north shore before clicking the Antal electric winch to hoist the square-topped Dacron mainsail. The two-speed Antal made short work of this, aided by the lazy jacks and the skylight in the bimini for viewing; before I turned our bows towards Taronga Zoo. My favourite night anchorage, where the animal sounds lull me to sleep. However, the 25kt gusts and thrill of sailing the first Dufour 48 quickly moved my mind back to matters in hand. Unlocking the jib furler, it ran out before I trimmed it and then largely forgot about it thanks to its self-tacking track. As the wind gusted to past 30kts at times, I checked that the jammers on the main track could be released quickly. While the main sheet and winch firmly controlled the alloy boom and the Dufour 48 majestically sailed on without complaint, aided by the smooth harbour waters. The Raymarine showed a speed of 9.2kts as I pushed fairly hard on the wind at 55° with the true wind speed dropping to 22kts by then, which was just a tad under her polar chart.

Tacking was equally successful, simply requiring a couple of turns of the wheel and the momentum of



TOP: The port fore-cabin athwartships bed offers sea views through the portlights while having plenty volume and storage. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE: The starboard aft cabin is my pick, as it has a private entrance and large ensuite. *Image Kevin Green*

OPPOSITE: The extensive wetted surface of a large, weighty cruiser requires an equally large sail plan so the generous fore-triangle for gennaker and bowsprit for Code 0 is ideal for the Dufour 48. *Image Kevin Green*

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TOP: The inside-outside layout aft is ideal for summer but is fully covered by the fibreglass flybridge; so all-weather. *Image Kevin Green*

ABOVE: The Volvo 60hp 4 cylinder saildrive with service points up high, and 11kw generator nearby in starboard hull. *Image Kevin Green*

the 15 ton hulls pushed us through the wind easily on our new course with about 100°. Easing the mainsail to go off-the-wind on a beam reach slowed us to 7.2kts as the sheltered north shore reduced the wind to 18kts. Looking astern the maelstrom from our wake told the tale of our two large fixed propellers that were dragging a bit, perhaps costing us up to two knots. A slight blemish on an otherwise well behaved cruiser that will definitely take you where you want to go and treat you sweetly once there; such is the Dufour 48 catamaran.

DUFOUR 48 SPECIFICATIONS



LEFT: The sail plan includes use of a Code 0 from the fixed bowsprit. *Image Performance Cruising Yachts*

ABOVE: The four cabin layout plus skipper's berth. *Image Performance Cruising Yachts*

Price	\$1,450,000 standard boat sail away
Price	\$1,817,400 review boat hull #29
LOA	14.70m (48ft)
Length waterline	14.10m
Beam	8.0m
Draft	1.30m
Displacement (light)	14,955kg
Mast Height	22.2m
Engine	2 x 60hp Volvo saildrives, fixed propellers
Fuel	900L
Water	700L
Mainsail	76m ²
Jib self-tacking	48m ²
Code Zero	90m ²
Gennaker:	110m ²
Design	Umberto Felci
CE Rating	A Ocean
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