



review

Absolute 58 Fly

WORDS BY SARAH ELLIOTT  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
BRYCE TAYLOR

It's big, it's blingy, it's blue . . . it's the Absolute 58 Fly. This latest model from the Italian yard (which also makes the Navetta trawler-style range) is a luxury motor yacht with a Kiwi-friendly flybridge, designed to sleep seven or more in a generous amount of luxury.



Owners Geoff and Shelley Payne decided on the 58 Fly after seeing its world launch at the Hong Kong International Boat Show in February last year. The Paynes had viewed the smaller 56 model in Sydney, and liked what they saw; once they laid eyes on the

new 58, the deal was done. At 17.3m LOA she's a bit bigger than their previous boat, a 16m Carver, but with three adult daughters and the first of the grandchildren already on the scene, the Paynes were happy to have more room to move.

"There were two main non-negotiables: each of the cabins had to have its own en suite – when you've got girls who like their own space that's very important. All the cabins have full headroom too," says Geoff. "The other thing was – I was getting



# ABSOLUTE PERFECTION



tired of going up and down a ladder to get to the engine room, so to have walk-in access [through the guest cabin in the transom] was a bonus."

Standing next to the boat in Auckland's Viaduct Harbour, the first impression is one of size: it's a beamy boat, and a high one. With high topsides to create large interior volume, and the large flybridge on top, it's basically three storeys. The hull shape has a deep V forward, quickly flaring out into the max beam of 4.8m, which is carried right aft. A long chine and a couple of chunky spray rails keep the water where it should be.

The large, flat topsides are segmented with a long panel of windows for the lower cabins, and mirrored glass around the main saloon level, giving it quite the James Bond look. In fact, the whole boat generates the sense that Daniel Craig could appear at any



time, holding a Martini – or at least one or two Bond girls.

Interestingly, the boat wasn't originally blue – that dark navy on the exterior is in fact a clever vinyl wrap over the white topsides, added when the boat arrived in New Zealand. Shelley wanted a blue boat but that wasn't a factory option; a bit of Kiwi ingenuity solved that problem. It also has no traditional antifouling; instead, a high-tech silicone film discourages marine growth (see sidebar).

The boat's name – *Sapheira* – also ties in with the blue theme, and Shelley's passion for sapphires.

Entry is via the enormous rear boarding platform; this can be lowered hydraulically to below the surface for ease of swimming, or launching and retrieval of the tender. An electric barbecue is concealed under a large hinged cover in the transom. Also accessed off the platform is the guest cabin, which contains a single berth, head and shower, and an elegant glass sink. A door beyond leads into the large engine room, which also houses the generator.

Back up on deck, there's plenty of room for lounging. In the cockpit there's a large seating area across the transom, which has reversible seat backs to create an elevated sunbathing platform.

There's also a huge entertaining area up on the wide, high bow, with a curved seat in front of the windscreen and daybeds with adjustable backs taking up most of the bow area. The cockpit can be fully enclosed with clears if the weather isn't great, and a pull-down screen across the transom provides privacy at the dock.



A MITTIE  
BY RICHIE



## Mirrored glass makes for a James Bond-look. The martini won't be far away

And, just in case you have a full complement on board and need a further outdoor entertaining area, there's the flybridge, which has a retractable soft-top within a solid superstructure, two separate seating areas, one with a table, and a wet bar, as well as the upper helm station.

This is where Bond would probably drive the boat from, with excellent visibility from the elevated position, and two 12-inch screens for chartplotter or other displays. There is also a 6m<sup>2</sup> 'terrace' aft of the steps, which can be used for tender storage.

Back downstairs, entry to the interior from the cockpit is seamless: a large mirrored-glass door slides right back to completely connect the two spaces. In keeping with Kiwi tastes, the galley is aft (to port), with a dining area to starboard, then forward of this, up one step, is what can only be described as the lounge, with a U-shaped settee to port and more seating (with storage underneath) to starboard.

The combination of cream leather upholstery and dark, chocolatey timber on the floors and cabinetry creates a sense of luxury, while the large windows on all sides let in 360° views and plenty of light. Illumination is also provided from above by strips of dimmable LED lights embedded in the ceiling.

The main helm station, to starboard, has a leather double helm seat. The Paynes chose to have extra-large 16-inch Garmin screens installed here for performance and navigation



## ON THE WATER

We are lucky enough to have been invited along on *Sapheira's* maiden voyage. The boat is being managed by Chris Smith of BoatSmith Marine Services, and it's him who takes the helm – or the joystick – to manoeuvre us out of the marina.

The boat is powered by a pair of Volvo IPS800 diesels with pod drives, something Geoff has not experienced before but is keen to get the hang of. A bow thruster was also added for extra manoeuvrability in New Zealand's often windy conditions.

This equipment makes it easy to get even a substantial boat like this in and out of a tight space, and soon we are out on the harbour. Because we are so far above the water at the helm station, even though we are gliding along at the 12-knot limit, it's hard to tell how fast we are moving – apart from the large readout on the dash in front of us.

This illusion is sustained even once we are out of the slow zone and powering up to 20, then close to 30 knots in the channel – you are eating up the miles, but there is no splashing or pounding

to indicate that, and certainly no water on the windscreen.

For such a big boat she turns easily, too. Once again, from our elevated position we feel quite pleasantly distanced from what's going on at water level. The best way to get a sense of how fast we're going is in one of the cabins down below, enjoying the smooth, flat ride while looking out the windows at the sea rushing past.

Comfortable cruising speed is around 20–25 knots, which makes short work of a trip to Kawau or the Barrier. *Sapheira* uses about 10 litres per nautical mile at 25 knots, or 8.1 litres per nautical mile if you're going flat-out, at 30 knots.

The Paynes are looking forward to a summer full of cruising, exploring the Hauraki Gulf and the Northland coast, up to the Bay of Islands. On a helicopter trip down that coast a few years ago, Geoff was blown away by all the little bays and inlets he could see below, just waiting to be explored.

"It was just fantastic – all I could see was all these little bays and the only way to access them was by boat. It made me just want to get a boat and get out there." **BNZ**



### Absolute 58 Fly

PACKAGES FROM  
\$1.8 million

MANUFACTURED BY  
Absolute Yachts  
[www.absoluteyachts.com](http://www.absoluteyachts.com)

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Sumptuous styling

Joystick manoeuvring

View from the flybridge

#### SPECIFICATIONS

loa 17.27m

beam 4.80m

draft 1.41m

displacement 30.03 tonnes

engines 2 x 600hp Volvo D8 with IPS

fuel 2,000 litres

water 650 litres

#### WATCH IT

