Absolute 47 Fly review: Impressive all-rounder would make an excellent family boat

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A roasting hot Italian test of the Absolute 47 Fly provides us with ideal conditions to test the flexibility of this neatly packaged 48ft flybridge.

August 2019 in Varazze on Italy's Liguria coast and Europe is in the midst of a sweltering heat wave. On the day of the test the mercury hits 36-degrees in London and it's even hotter here.

As we idle out of the stifling marina basin, with me at the flybridge helm, there isn't a whisper of wind to ease the heat. The Absolute 47 we have on test – destined for North America – doesn't have the optional hard top or bimini fitted so the top deck is taking a real pounding.

Eventually, respite comes at the end of the marina breakwater when I can surge the throttles forward and get an artificial breeze running across the deck.

The relief is immediate as is the sense of a boat that has been put together by people who really understand how to get the best from IPS.

The twin 480hp IPS650s are the only engine option and outright speed is rather tame. We maxed out at 28.2 knots with just four crew on board and tanks that were a way off 100% full.

However, progress is so smooth that at a cruising speed of around 22 knots this hardly seems to matter and, as with many IPS configurations, there is an efficiency reward for keeping the revs up.

Fuel burn spikes at 3,000rpm when the motors are straining to get the hull over the hump and on to the plane, but once the boat is skimming across the water the range peaks at 25 knots, the most efficient speed once the boat is over displacement pace.

This is a beautifully mannered boat, not particularly exciting from behind the wheel but extremely predictable and smooth in its response to helm inputs. The steering is light but even enthusiastic whirling of the wheel fails to provoke any drama.

The downside is a ponderous turning circle but that's more of an IPS characteristic than a fault of the hull, which isn't facing much of a challenge on a flat calm day.

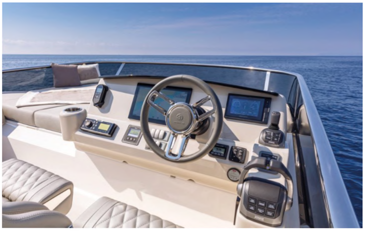
The styling will divide opinion but the feeling of space is astonishing

The water is like blue silk with not even a hint of a swell to wrong foot proceedings. The best I can do is run across our wake but it's a pitiful challenge to the Absolute 47's 23-tonne bulk.

Blurred lines

Though the 47 is clearly more of a straight line animal than carver of hard turns, the ergonomics of its helm maintains Absolute's reputation for being the best in the business when it comes to driving environment.

The oft-neglected upper helm gets a comfortable, fully adjustable seat with an identical one next to it for the navigator and a chunky steering wheel, which can also be adjusted for height.

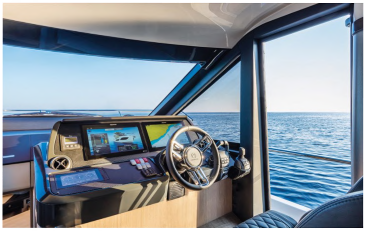


Exemplary ergonomics at the upper helm

The throttles are mounted on a substantial moulding that juts out towards the seat so that you can sit back comfortably in the chair. There's only one 16-inch Garmin chart-plotter but it's fitted in the middle of the dash so the person in either seat can use it with equal ease.

The IPS joystick is mounted quite far forward but, given that most skippers will stand to berth the boat, that isn't really an issue and it helps that you can look back from the helm through the companionway hatch to check proximity to the quayside or communicate with crew on the main deck.

Things are even better at the lower helm where there are two MFDs so you can split navigation data with boat information or run a feed from one of the on board cameras and reap the benefits of the jets of cool air coming from the tactile circular air vents. If you want natural ventilation, the full-height helm door pops open manually and grants easy access to the starboard deck.



The joystick is well positioned to pop your head out of the door when mooring

The Absolute 47 is a tall boat and though it looks ungainly from the quayside the amount of headroom on offer throughout the interior is superb. Once again it's the lower helm that benefits because there is enough room to stand and drive the boat if you aren't comfortable on the softly upholstered, adjustable helm seats.

In rough weather or on entering an unfamiliar port, being able to stand at the helm seems to lend a greater sense of safety and control, I find.

Headroom plays a key part in making the Absolute 47's accommodation feel so luxurious and far larger than it ought to for a boat of less than 50ft. The use of space is clever too, through little things like using sliding doors as opposed to swinging ones, which gobble up valuable space, and more significant design decisions like putting the ensuite master cabin in the bow.

The use of space in the forward master is brilliant

The hull windows that look so cartoonish from the outside make much more sense in here, where they fire light into the cabin with help from a pair of opening ports. There is no skylight above because of the seating on the foredeck, but there is an escape hatch for emergencies.

The cabin may not have as much floor space as rivals which put their master amidships but because the double bed is angled, and Absolute has built as far into the forepeak as possible, it's still easy to walk around the bed and access the drawer storage incorporated into its base.

Plush, soft carpet, subtle indirect lighting and satisfyingly chunky door handles all add to the perception of quality, as does the solidity of the floors under foot. Cleverly, in what could be wasted space in the very forward end of the cabin, the designers have installed a dinky vanity unit.

The small bureau in the VIP is a luxurious addition

The big ensuite bathroom is neatly thought out as well, with plenty of storage solutions and an opening port in the separate shower cubicle for some natural ventilation.

Guests welcome

The pay off for the master suite being up front is the size of the two guest cabins that share the space amidships. To starboard is a reasonably formulaic twin cabin, though its large hull window means it's notably bright and there's a decent amount of storage in the floor-to-ceiling wardrobe.

The double VIP cabin to port is a clever piece of design because, despite some level changes in the floor, it features a walk around double bed, bureau and even a walk-in wardrobe. It has the feeling of a scaled down master cabin rather than a guest cabin and, like the cabin opposite, bathes in natural light from an oversized hull window and opening port.

The "mini-master" VIP has a walk-in wardrobe in the aft corner

The small price to pay for these capacious guest cabins is a couple of shallow steps to negotiate inside the saloon but the main deck is hard to fault. The aft galley layout works so well on boats of this size, especially with cockpit doors that slide right across and an electric drop-down window, which creates a small bar area facing into the cockpit.

Strangely the window didn't retract flush with the counter on our test boat, presumably just a fault on this particular unit. Space in the L-shaped galley is boosted by not having to incorporate a fridge/freezer, which is installed opposite and of domestic dimensions.

Another clever space-saving move is the fiddled storage for plates and glassware in a pair of drawers beneath the sofa to starboard. Not only does it free up more space but because the sofa is a couple of steps up from the galley it's easy to access the drawers from galley level.

Crockery and glassware storage beneath the sofa frees up galley space

The thoughtfulness of detail reappears here in the galley tap which pushes flat to the counter when not in use, the handrail and fiddled shelving integrated into the end of the galley unit, and LED lighting, which winds its way in from the cockpit to form two meandering strips of illumination.

There's a reassuring heft to the fitments in the cockpit from the engineered clunk of the doors to the neatly rounded grab rails and chunky fairleads that feed big open cleats.

Optional electric winches to help tighten stern lines and a shade drops down from the flybridge overhang at the touch of a button to improve shelter and provide privacy on busy quaysides.

Note the use of fabric and strip lighting on the cockpit overhang

This is also where the engineroom is accessed, via a hatch on the cockpit deck and a removable ladder. It's an excellent installation, with space to work on all sides of both engines and good access to the IPS pods themselves.

It's well lit and easy to identify wiring and pipe runs because everything is labelled, it's just a shame that the fuel filters don't have clear bowls for quick visual checks of the state of the fuel.

At the opposite end of the boat the foredeck proves to be another flexible living space, offering a great spot for guests to relax on deck. It's a versatile space that can be configured as a sunpad or with shallow seating and a table; a canopy offers some shade in the heat of the day. If I weren't at the helm it's where I would be on a boiling day like this.

A collapsible canopy offers some shade over the seating on the fordeck

Given this will most likely be an owner-run boat its wide, flat decks and tall guardrails make it easy to handle with just a couple of people on board. The joystick may make handling the boat easier at mooring time but that's no good if the crew are struggling to move around handling lines and fenders.

That's not an issue here and with the side door on the main deck the skipper can easily slide on to deck and grab a line if needed.

Price as reviewed: **£789,738.00 ex. VAT**

Verdict

Considering Absolute has another small flybridge in its stable in the 45 Fly, the 47 manages to run alongside it by being enough of a different proposition to justify both their places in the range. The 45 has a crew cabin and two big ensuites, so caters for those who may want a skipper or deck hand, but the Absolute 47 is an excellent package for a family or a couple who want to host guests regularly – six adults could spend a week on board and not get beneath each others' feet. The Absolute 47 has its compromises: if you want anything other than IPS tough luck and not everyone will warm to its looks, but this aside, it is a mightily impressive all-rounder and a solid example of how usable a small flybridge can be.

Details

Starting price: €700,000 (ex. VAT)
LOA: 48ft 0in (14.63m)
Beam : 14ft 8in (4.48m)
Draught: 4ft 1in (1.25m)
Displacement (loaded): 23 tonnes (50,706 lbs)
Test engines : Twin 480hp Volvo Penta IPS650
Top speed on test: 28.2 knots
Cruising speed: 20 knots
Fuel capacity: 1,600 litres (352 gal)
Water capacity: 500 litres (110 gal)
Fuel consumption: 137lph
Cruising range : 187 miles (inc. 20% reserve)
Noise : 69dB(A)
RCD category : B for 14 people
Design : Absolute Yachts