

FLEXIBLE, FUNCTIONAL ... FANTASTIC

The real test for any boat is whether it fulfils your personal watery lifestyle needs. Before the Absolute 56 Fly debuted at this year's Cannes Yachting Festival, we jumped aboard the model's first unit in Hong Kong, where it appeared to cover all the bases for most owners due to its remarkable versatility.

WORDS GUY NOWELL PHOTOS ABSOLUTE





Asia's first Absolute Fly on the run around Hong Kong, where the Italian builder is represented by Absolute Marine; the cockpit (below left) has a clear aft balustrade



Among Absolute's two world premieres at this year's Cannes Yachting Festival, the 56 Fly is a new offering from a company that lives halfway between Lake Garda and Genoa, and a long way from any navigable water. Never mind. Absolute has been producing quality motor yachts with a dash of that much-vaunted Italian flair since Sergio Maggi and Marcello Bé founded the company in 2002.

Each Absolute learns from the model that went before. This is very apparent in the appearance of the boats, and the 56 Fly is no exception, developing its pedigree from both the Fly and Navetta lines, and presenting something that is both 'new' and grounded in experience.

Step aboard, either via the slide-away passerelle or up the steps from the swim platform and there's much to explore on all three decks, while there's the option of driving from either the lower helm or the flybridge.

On the move, the 56 Fly proves to be an exceptionally well-mannered boat. We were in the Tat Hong Channel on a beautiful calm and blue-sky day, so the biggest waves to contend with were our own wake, which we crossed and recrossed without even noticing, pushed along by a pair of Volvo D8-IPS800 engines.

In a tight turn, the boat shows no inclination to slip or slide. From a standing start, the boat planes at a little over nine knots, which translates into remarkably good fuel consumption. Absolute quotes 8.3 litres/nm at an optimum cruising speed of 19 knots and 2,500rpm.

For travelling in and around any of the regular near-metropolitan cruising areas in Asia, you'll never suffer from range anxiety. Coastal cruising over longer distances is achievable too when your range is 550nm at 10 knots.

SUN AND SHADE

Starting with the outdoor areas, the cockpit is a big social space, with modular and movable furniture than can be configured as you wish, while it also benefits from the clear aft balustrade introduced on other recent Absolute models.



The flybridge has modular seating aft, a covered wet bar, dining table and C-shaped sofa, plus an L-shaped sofa and large sunpad next to the helm

The next space to explore is the flybridge, which seems to offer everything. There's modular movable seating aft, a grill/galley/bar unit immediately forward so that you won't have to go too far for a refill, a covered table and sofa seating to starboard, even more sofa seating adjacent to the two-seat helm position, and forward sunpads, too. There are at least 15 places to sit or lie on the flybridge alone.

It's hot today, so we head down, step inside and soak up some cool! The galley is immediately inside the saloon, properly positioned to serve both the cockpit and the lounge and dining areas, and is fully equipped with name brand appliances, and even a wine fridge under the pilot seat.

The driving position provides excellent visibility for both helmsman and co-pilot, and there's immediate deck access via a side door to starboard.

Social space on the foredeck has become an ever more popular

feature on motor yachts. Once the province of the crew and the anchor windlass, the foredeck is now 'usable space' and constitutes a valuable contribution to onboard functionality.

The pointy end of the Absolute 56 Fly offers sofa seating, casual dining and convertible sunpad configurations, with a shade sail that can be erected in mere moments.

In fact, if you count the all the seating and sunpads in the four social areas – cockpit, saloon, foredeck and flybridge – there are at least 30 seats and places to park yourself, and that's just sitting or lying down. This boat could happily host a 40-guest function without even thinking about it, so it's a party boat, too!

MASTERFUL CABINS

Right beside the helm is the companionway to the accommodation, and we are really unsure which is the master suite and which is the

Modular seats arranged as three two-seat sofas, as opposed to the two three-seat sofas pictured on facing page





The interior has an aft galley with excellent storage, plus great views all around the saloon

VIP. They are both sufficiently big and luxurious.

In fact, the full-beam master is in the bow, where it's apparent that the vertical stem design is not merely fashion; it is practical, too, allowing the suite to go 'all the way' forwards where a swept bow would have reduced the available space. The master suite is the main beneficiary of the boat's enormous hull windows, making the space the opposite of dark-and-poky, and there are opening ventilation ports as well.

The VIP suite is also full beam, with a practical separate shower/toilet arrangement, and in the space between the two suites is a further twin cabin and a third bathroom.

The décor in the lower deck is restrained and elegant, with both dark and light wood tones echoing the finishes of the surfaces and bulkheads. The effect is delightful and stylish.

Absolutely every available space has been turned into storage, so

bring luggage! A weekend on board could involve swimming, hiking, lazing, cocktails and formal dinners – and Mademoiselle can be 'best dressed' for every occasion!

DESIGN THEMES

Interestingly, interior spaces, including the suites and cabin, are designed on an uninterrupted flat surface. There are no steps, meaning you'll never stub a toe, nor will you 'miss a step'. It's an important design feature, and very much understated.

There's no doubt that Absolute build good-quality boats. You can tell by touch – the touch of the surfaces, and the touch on the helm. They are built using Absolute's Integrated Structural System, or ISS, which is a custom optimised modular process that ensures superlative quality control at all stages of construction, from hull to fit-out to interiors.



The saloon has a full C-shaped sofa and a facing two-seat sofa behind the twin-seat helm, which benefits from the breeze and access offered by a side door



The guest cabin and full-beam VIP suite midships

The exterior design of all their boats is highly distinctive, unlike many brands that use multiple designers. The oversized hull window panels are echoed in the saloon windows, which drop down to really "let the outdoors in". The bulwarks have been replaced with railings which make the sides more visually transparent, and the cockpit sides are perforated for a similar effect.

At the end of the day, so much is a matter of taste. Ask yourself, 'what do I want to do with my boat?' because there's no such thing as 'perfect'.

Sure, there are certain criteria that must be met – floating and moving are two of them – but if you're looking for a day out on beautiful beaches, a coastal cruise, a weekend or overnight marine glamping experience, a party boat for sunset cocktails with umpteen friends, or even a quiet dinner venue – social or business – then look no further. And the Italian style is included! ☺

www.absoluteyachts.com

DECKS & SPECS

Length overall 17.64m (57ft 10in)	Engines 2 x Volvo Penta D8-IPS800 441kW
Beam 4.79m (15ft 9in)	Range 550nm at 10 knots
Fuel capacity 2,600 litres (686 US gallons)	Accommodation 6 guests & 2 crew
Fresh water capacity 650 litres (171 US gallons)	Category CE B



Situated forward and up a couple of steps, the master suite has a desk to port, a hanging wardrobe starboard and a large en-suite in the bow