

Yachting Yachting

YACHTS

LITTLE BIG YACHT

Absolute's Navetta 52 is a fresh, compact makeover of a classic Italian design.

BY **Michael Verdon** POSTED April 25, 2016



Courtesy Absolute Yachts

Spacious, stout, sophisticated and stylish are just a few of the words that describe this midsize but mighty cruiser.

The Navetta is an Italian design that has been adapted to suit the world's yachtsmen during the past 30 years. The United States has trawlers, but navettas tend to have longer, more elegant lines, with topsides designed around functional simplicity. Navetta translates from Italian into "little ship," but the name also implies that the owner's comfort should be right up there alongside seaworthiness. These displacement-hull designs usually range from 75 to 90 feet. Absolute has moved in the opposite direction with its **Navetta 52**, concentrating the liveaboard lifestyle into a smaller, faster planing hull.



Courtesy Absolute Yachts

Twin 435 hp D6 Volvo Penta diesels matched with IPS drives push the 52 to a top speed of 24 knots.

INITIAL IMPRESSION

The first thing I noticed was a flip-up panel at the transom with an electric grill and sink. This option might seem over the top, but it showed how Absolute focused on every inch of available space in a practical way. The chef can cook from the 4-foot-by-9-inch-wide hydraulic swim platform without cluttering the cockpit. I saw many similarly practical, comfort-inducing details all over the boat: a 21-inch-wide door to the head; 6 feet 7 inches of headroom in the shower; a 56-inch flat-screen TV in the main salon. Those numbers mean a lot when you're on board. The designers thought about the minutiae that improve the cruising lifestyle.

TOUGH STUFF

Absolute's Navetta 52 has a shiplike presence with her vertical bow, protected side decks and beefy-looking hull. She appears as if she could easily handle an angry Poseidon. The hull design, with a sharp forefoot and planing-hull form, tackled the Atlantic's 4- to 5-footers off Fort Lauderdale with a decisiveness I hadn't expected. I thought the high-riding flybridge would feel like a swinging pendulum in those conditions, but the 52 remained steady in the chop, running up-sea with minimal pounding and running true down-sea. She turned without hesitation in the confused seas. The ride was solid.





Courtesy Absolute Yachts

Lounge space abounds on the flybridge.

SPEED TOO

Twin 435 hp D6 Volvo Penta diesels matched with IPS drives push the 52 to a top speed of 24 knots. She has a cruising speed of 14 knots, at which the diesels consume just 1.76 mpg. Absolute designed the planing hull to reach mid-20-knot speeds because many owners might want a traditional navetta's roomy interior, but quite a few shy away from the design's displacement hull. An IPS joystick can be used to steer at speed or around the docks, though this Navetta 52 had an optional bow thruster. The centerline flybridge helm, with twin 12-inch Garmin displays on either side of the steering wheel, offers excellent visibility.

FAVORITE SPOT OUTSIDE

Abaft the flybridge helm are two lounges, and to starboard are a large, U-shaped lounge and table. These are great spots to take in the view while underway. A wet bar with sink and fridge, as well as a second grill, make this area excellent for alfresco meals or social gatherings. The after end has more open space for the tender, which can also be stowed on the swim platform.

Oak soles, leather sofas and 360-degree views from the salon.

VOLUME AND STYLE

Maximizing space is the goal belowdecks. The vessel's beam doesn't pinch, so the 52's master suite feels full-beam with an en suite head, walk-in closet, desk with vanity, and large hullside windows. As in the rest of the interior, canaletto walnut joinery works well here with the oak soles. Canaletto walnut is also used in the master suite's bedside tables, bed frame and cabinet doors. Absolute added some luxe touches like an ivory-colored sofa (all lounges are leather) and a dark leather headboard. The two other staterooms use the same materials, with an equal level of fit and finish.

THE RIGHT ANGLES

The first V-berths, most likely dating back to cramped Viking sailing ships, were wedged up against the bow. Most yachtbuilders have followed that design, sometimes at the cost of functionality. Absolute came up with a clever idea for its forepeak VIP, placing the queen-size berth at a 45-degree angle against the portside bulkhead. It gives guests a great view through the hullside windows, and it creates a true walkaround berth. A flat-screen TV is built into the cabinet on the opposite side. This layout makes the 52 seem like a much larger yacht.

The cozy, protected leather helm.

FAVORITE SPOT INSIDE

Sitting in the salon, I could see how owners might spend months on board. Sight lines and ocean views are excellent thanks to 360 degrees of windows. The 6-foot-10-inch headroom, low cabinets and smart positioning of the galley aft enhance the sense of space. The galley has a full-size fridge, stove, dishwasher and specially designed drawer for cutlery. This space is close to being a chef's sanctuary, especially with the frost-glass partition on an electric lift that can separate the galley from the salon.

ALL-WEATHER HELM

The lower helm offers good visibility and access to wide side decks through a heavy-duty door that seals weathertight. Between the galley and helm are an 8-foot-long leather lounge and table (extending to 56 inches), with a 5-foot-long lounge just across. Overhead are several stainless-steel grab rails inset into the headliner, offering a place to steady yourself during rough passages. By itself, that feature is notable, but Absolute took the design element a step further by wrapping the grab rails in white leather, making them functional and decorative.

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