

MOTOR BOAT & YACHTING

EUROPE'S BEST MOTOR BOAT MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE SEA TRIAL

PRINCESS 64

*EVERYTHING you ever wanted from a boat...
but were too afraid to ask for*



PRINCESS 64

While the immense space of the 64 will hit you as soon as you walk in, it's her smaller details that really make it a stand-out cruiser

Text: **Dave Marsh** Photos: **Lester McCarthy**





Lid to helmsman's right hides useful refrigerated box



Generous storage on flybridge: under seats, and in abnormally wide locker under sunbed



Simple mooring gear with big exposed cleats and capstans works extremely well



Separate upper and lower saloon windows mean a great view out for people sitting down, as well as those standing up

Sliding translucent screen means that galley (upper right) can be partially obscured from occupants of lower saloon



Imposing full-height fridge-freezer partially impedes helmsman's otherwise good view aft



Princess supply two bespoke stools to supplement dinette's fixed seats



Crockery storage ideally placed under dinette seat

You have to be very keen indeed on your boating to spend upwards of £1.4 million on a boat that in one of its guises has just three cabins. Yet it takes only a few minutes wandering around the Princess 64 to 'get it', to understand exactly what the point of spending that great wedge of cash is. And that is the amazing sense of space-to-spare that this boat has, instilling the feeling that you could spend weeks on board in close proximity to your guests with no danger of becoming a bunch of crotchety claustrophobes.

And this is how the boat felt to me in its more tightly packed four-cabin form. I reckon that in its three-cabin guise, with the study area at the bottom of the stairs replacing the fourth bunk-bed cabin, it's going to feel like a different boat again, with the open-plan study in effect creating a spacious lobby area leading onto the three principal cabins and the roomy day heads. All told, for that £1.4 million, I can't think of another similar flybridge cruiser that packs so much in, yet retains a feeling of such spaciousness in every department.

In part, Princess have achieved this by falling in line with the current trend to max out on the glazing. Thanks to subtle styling, the saloon windows don't dominate the superstructure as they do on some boats, yet from inside they do feel pretty damn big. In the saloon, they drop down to the top of seat-back height, so even when guests are sitting down they can still see the scenery outside. The archetypal full-beam midships master cabin also has a pair of large four-panel windows on opposing sides. Each has an opening port section that will permit owners the noise-free benefit of turning off the genny and air-con at night in favour of fresh air.

However, the room inside the 64 is far from illusory. Almost nowhere on the boat would two people struggle to pass each other. Headroom in the saloon is 6ft 7in (2.0m) and although there's four inches less at the lowest ceiling point in the owner's ensuite heads, in general it hovers closer to the saloon's generous dimensions. All the berths are larger than standard household-sized beds, even the pair

in the fourth bunk-bed cabin. The area where Princess could have cheated is inside lockers and wardrobes. It's easy to create the illusion of space by pushing all the door fronts outboard as far as they'll go, leaving little inside. Instead, Princess's lockers and wardrobes generally range from generous to extravagant. Plus, all of the under-berth stowage is in more accessible and useable drawer form, not the cheaper and far more annoying 'move the mattress, mess up your bedding, manhandle an uncooperative plywood lid, oops I've broken another nail, where's that third hand I need for this' form that some builders are still inflicting on us.

It's absurdly nerdy praising a detail as small as a fiddle, but for what it's worth, inside their lockers and cupboards Princess fit the best fiddles in the business. They comprise deep Perspex strips, so you can always see even the smallest odds and ends resting on the shelf, and unlike those silly chrome rods, nothing small can slide out from under the fiddle. Which is surely the whole point of a fiddle.

Just like the styling on their boats, quite a lot of the good detailing such as this is subtle and understated, hidden away even. For instance, as well as lashings of 3M's extremely effective Thinsulate sound insulation that's visible in the engineroom, Princess also employ a high-density sound-deadening material which hides beneath the carpet and the underlay. This helps explain why the 64 is so quiet. Likewise, it's easy to miss the five pairs of hinges that secure the wardrobe doors in the cabins. Still, you'll probably notice in five years' time because all your sag-free doors will still be firmly attached. What won't escape your attention is the biggest and best pair of chromed handles I've ever seen holding the fridge and freezer doors safely in place. Princess clearly abandoned subtlety for a day for this grand gesture.

Although Princess will probably argue that their joinery and woodwork has always been first rate, I reckon it has improved a notch or two over the last few years. Okay, you won't find high-class dovetail joints holding together solid teak drawers, and nor are you ever likely to unless Princess elevate their prices to Grand Banks levels. But it is difficult to see how Princess could improve any more on the external quality of their lacquered joinery.

You could spend weeks on board with your guests, with no danger of becoming a bunch of crotchety claustrophobes

For that £1.4 million, I can't think of another flybridge cruiser that packs so much in and yet still retains a feeling of space

Inside 64ft of voluminous boat, I couldn't find a single blemish worth mentioning, and the shut lines (the small but visible gaps between, for instance, doors and their surrounding frames) all seemed to be almost perfectly aligned. Behind the scenes too, in the places that never normally get exposed, I didn't discover any signs of penny-pinching, or of rushed assembly. And rummaging around in the bilges only exposed Princess's usual high-quality, hand-laminated glassfibre mouldings.

HANDLING AND PERFORMANCE

One danger all designers face these days – even the very best – is that this ever increasing space and accommodation, along with the ever burgeoning list of luxury goods that customers are demanding, pushes up a boat's weight, beam and height to the point where the handling suffers. But it seems that Bernard Olesinski had other ideas when he designed this particular boat. The result is a voluminous flybridge cruiser which is a delight to drive, or even to hurl around recklessly if you're so inclined, at any speed up to the 31.2 knots we reached with the 64's 'midway' engines, the 1,015hp C18 CATs.

In truth the 64 does not feel as agile as the amazing Princess 61 I tested almost a decade ago (*MBY* September 2002) but given how much bigger the 64 feels, inside and out, it's remarkable how close the two are. Certainly, the 64 still sits with the chosen few at the top of the handling pile. There are those who maintain that great agility and responsive steering are unnecessary qualities on a big flybridge cruising boat. And I'd agree – up to the point where the weather turns nasty. Then, the responsiveness of a boat like the 64 comes to the fore, imbuing the driver with a greater sense of control and confidence, plus the ability to manoeuvre more safely around the worst lumps and bumps.

Sadly, lumps and bumps were having a holiday during our test, a bright and chilly day in early November. We achieved our 31.2-knot top speed with a load comprising half tanks and the Williams 385 tender, but no cruising stores beyond our necessary safety gear. This was with CAT's 1,015hp C18 diesels, so expect another 2 knots more with the biggest 1,150hp CATs, and a similar theoretical 2 knots less

with the smallest 900hp D13s from Volvo. In all, the boat and the CATs gave a very easygoing performance. At any speed from 17 knots to flat out, with no trim tab applied the bow-up trim was a rock steady five degrees – this behaviour helps the 64 achieve a very wide range of cruising speeds. It's a quiet boat too, not so much in the cockpit which is so-so, but certainly everywhere else, and particularly at the lower helm which seemed to provide its own little oasis of calm, about 3dB(A) to 4dB(A) down on the typical readings we measured in the middle of the saloon.

Up on the flybridge, with the resident F3 hovering around 10°C, plus 30 knots of self-induced breeze combining to produce a wind chill of 4°C (it felt like -4°C), it was difficult to judge just how effective the wind protection really was, but the concave flybridge screens did seem to do a reasonable job given the challenge. The view from the flybridge helm is excellent, and in general the helmsman's lot is pretty good, with a simple, clearly laid out dash and adjustable seats.

Helmsmen often stand up when they're manoeuvring around the marina at close quarters, which is why I found the flip-up bolster such a big help, making it easy to rapidly switch between standing and sitting. At the lower helm, the view is okay rather than exceptional. The view forward is excellent, but there are two blind spots, one created by the full-height fridge-freezer just behind the helmsman, the other comprising the saloon cabinetry immediately forward of the flybridge steps to port. In the 64's defence, galley-up boats over 60ft often suffer in a similar way.

VERDICT

To describe something as a good all-rounder often implies a Jack of all trades, master of none nature. And though the 64 certainly is a great all-round flybridge cruiser, the idea that it might comprise a collection of pleasant enough but unexceptional features would be deeply misleading.

Most conspicuously, this 64 dishes up an exceptionally spacious interior that breathes very easily and is superbly roomy. That bodes well for those wishing to undertake longer cruises, perhaps with their full complement of guests on board. Also helping here is the 64's generous and exceptionally practical cabin



Owner's cabin provides a good balance of stowage split between wardrobes and drawers

Rear-most pair of windows are actually opening ports, essential for fresh air at night

Day heads (cum third-cabin heads) is surprisingly generous, almost as roomy as the owner's heads

In third cabin (as in all cabins) berths are all bigger than domestic-sized beds

Stock fourth bunk-bed cabin can be swapped for open-plan study area



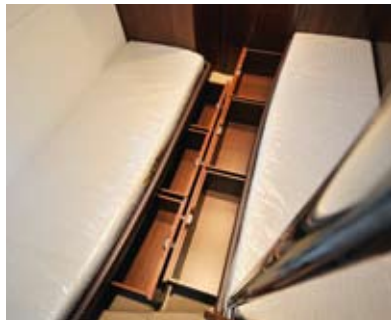
VIP cabin benefits from roomy ensuite heads with separate heads compartment



A CLOSER LOOK WITH DAVID MARSH

CREW CABIN

In the crew cabin, Princess have generously provided six easy-access drawers where they could so easily have opted for cheaper but more irksome top-opening cubbyholes under the berths



ENGINEERING

It's typically only the Flemings and Grand Banks of this world which enjoy such excellent fuel filter arrangements. Elevated positioning makes draining so much easier. Note the double clips on every hose



FOREDECK

Foredeck features top detailing such as double-skinned lids supported on gas struts, drains to prevent grime collecting in the hatch gutters, and a tap (in the port locker) for washing the anchor



THE ENGINE ROOM

Readily accessible installation boasts excellent detailing such as a long hose connected to a fresh water tap, a large emergency engine removal hatch overhead, drain sumps on fuel tanks, and lashings of Thinsulate sound insulation (which helps explain the low noise levels). I'd prefer to see rubber tread-plates (alloy is so hard on the knees) but this is still a first-rate installation



The 64 is a voluminous flybridge cruiser which is a delight to drive, or even to hurl around recklessly if you're so inclined



Princess now use LED navigation lights which have a much longer lifespan and are far less prone to blow

Having port and starboard cockpit steps leading onto the platform makes for easier stern-to mooring in the typical Med marina

A pair of well-positioned spring cleats (each side) makes handling the 64's necessarily heavy lines far easier

Large, standard issue, hi-lo bathing platform makes a great watersports platform

stowage, which would be difficult to improve upon without moving to a bigger boat.

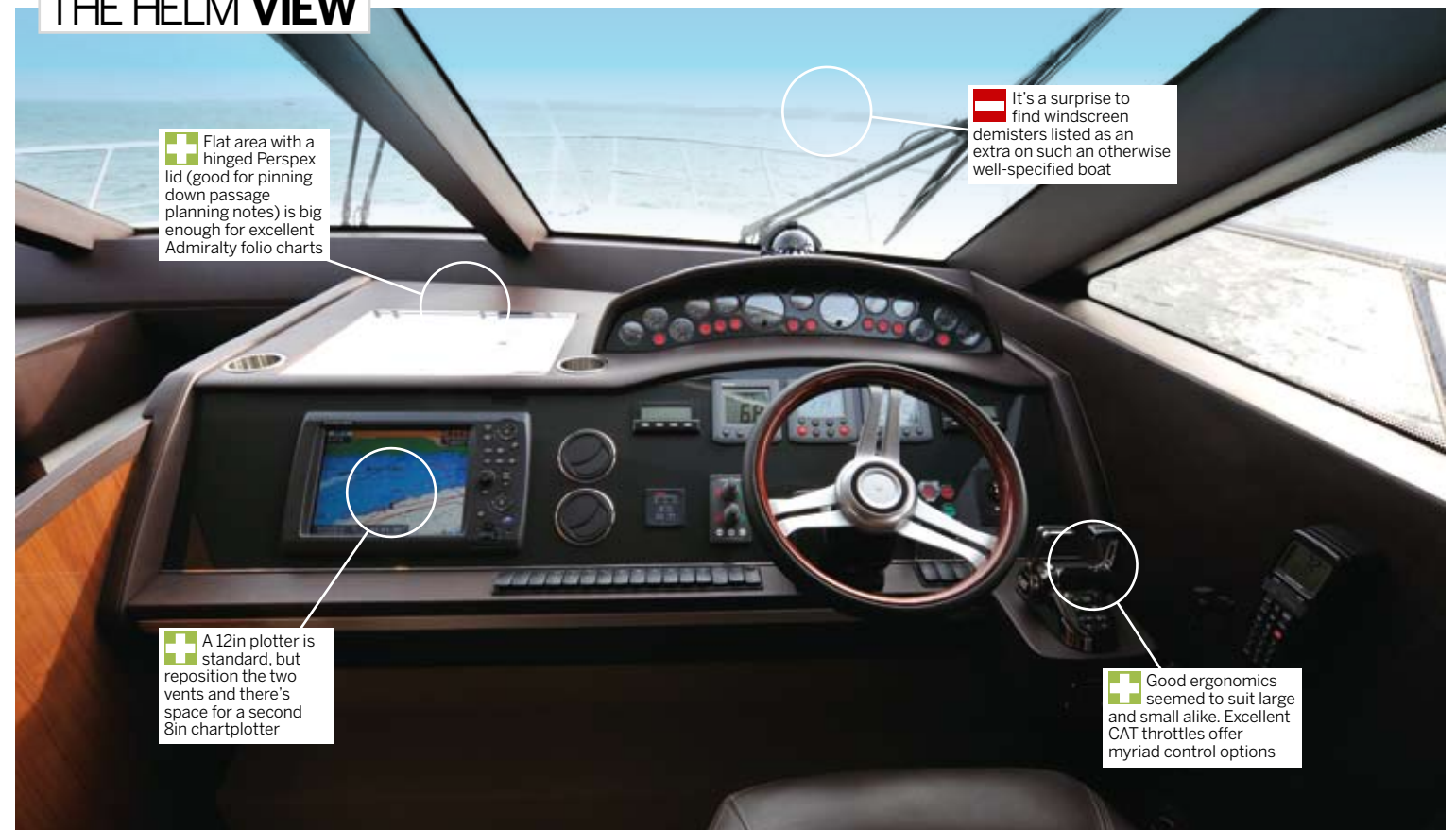
That impressive practicality extends into the engineroom and the lazarette. Seemingly simple at first glance, dig deeper and the engineering installation's subtle but canny detailing has clearly been designed by somebody who understands the everyday needs of serious cruising types.

Other qualities lend themselves to the idea of long-term or long-distance cruising: the generally low noise levels, the particularly wide range of speeds that the 64 seems happy to cruise at, and the effortless performance and excellent handling which can be such a comfort when the weather turns a little more testing.

Certainly, there are boats with more pizzazz than the confidently understated 64, boats that

lend themselves better to ostentatious display. But when it comes to the qualities that really matter, like if you want to use your boat as – guess what – a real cruising boat, there are few to touch the Princess 64. So a great all-rounder, yes. But a Jack of all trades master of none, absolutely not. **MBY** **Contact** Princess Yachts Tel: +44 (0)1489 557755 (sales) Web: www.princessyachts.com

THE HELM VIEW



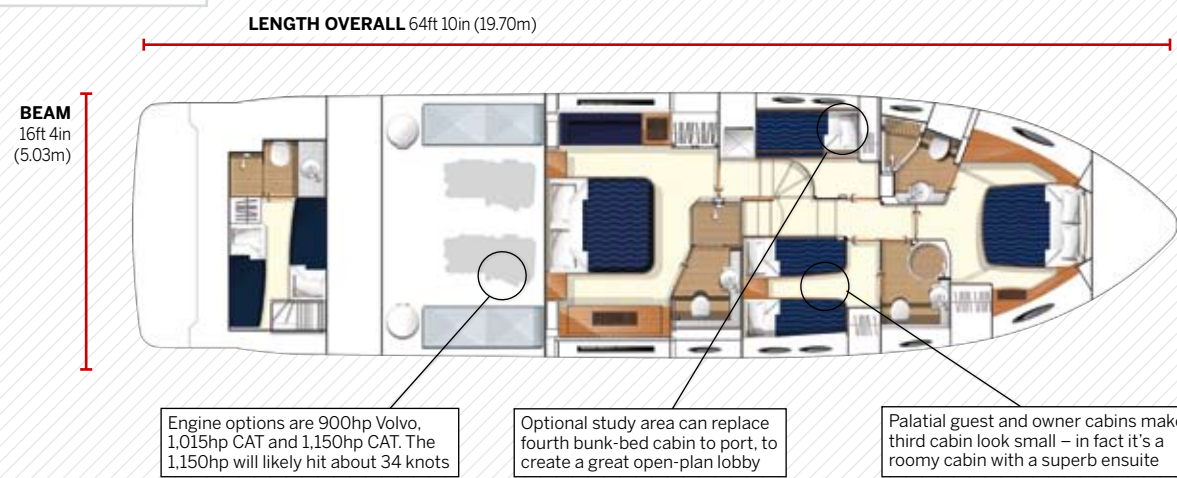
Flat area with a hinged Perspex lid (good for pinning down passage planning notes) is big enough for excellent Admiralty folio charts

It's a surprise to find windscreen demisters listed as an extra on such an otherwise well-specified boat

A 12in plotter is standard, but reposition the two vents and there's space for a second 8in chartplotter

Good ergonomics seemed to suit large and small alike. Excellent CAT throttles offer myriad control options

THE DATA



FUEL CAPACITY
750 imp gal (3,409 litres)

WATER CAPACITY
200 imp gal (909 litres)

DRAUGHT
4ft 9in (1.45m)

RCD CATEGORY
B (for 16 people)

DESIGNERS
Olesinski & Princess

DISPLACEMENT
26 tonnes light (empty)
30 tonnes full fuel & water

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Twin CAT C18, 1,015hp @ 2,300rpm, 6-cylinder 18.1 litre diesels

MBY TEST FIGURES	ECO	FAST	MAX
RPM	1,600	1,700	1,800
Speed	17.2	19.2	21.2
Trim	5.0°	5.0°	5.0°
GPH	36.0	41.8	51.9
MPG	0.48	0.46	0.41
Range	287	276	245

RPM	1,900	2,000	2,100	2,200	2,300	2,335
Speed	23.2	25.2	27.0	28.8	31.2	31.2
Trim	5.0°	5.0°	5.0°	5.0°	5.0°	5.0°
GPH	56.4	62.5	70.9	73.0	81.7	81.7
MPG	0.40	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.38	0.38
Range	242	228	237	229	229	229

SOUND LEVELS	66	67	69	70	72	73	75
Helm	65	66	67	69	70	72	73
Cockpit	79	80	82	82	82	83	84
Saloon	70	70	71	72	73	75	77
Flybridge	69	70	71	72	72	72	73

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from	£1.42 million (twin 900hp)
Price from	£1.49 million (twin 1,150hp)
Air-con 73,000 BTU	£29,040
Demist System (5kw Eberspacher)	£4,590
Aft (crew) cabin fit-out	£11,820
Teak-laid flybridge	standard
Teak-laid side decks	£11,886
Bow thruster	standard
Stern thruster 170kgf	£8,880
Hi-lo bathing platform (400kg)	standard
Passerelle (electro-hydraulic)	£17,100
Seakeeper Gyro stabiliser	£68,220
= Options on test boat	

RIVALS

FAIRLINE SQUADRON 65
Price from £1.6 million
Feels different to Princess 64 in so many ways, but biggest contrast is the flybridge set-up. **MBY tested July 2009**

AZIMUT 64
Price from £1.6 million
Packed with optional goodies like gyroscopic stabilisers. The tri-cabin 64 we saw at Cannes was beautifully finished.



Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauge; your figures may vary considerably. All prices include UK VAT. 50% fuel, 50% water, 5 crew + safety stores + Williams 385 tender, 10°C air temp, light chop, F3 for speed trials

DARE TO DREAM



PRINCESS 64

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PRINCESS

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