



The summer of 2019 has been uncharacteristically lacking in wind – great for cruising, not so great for sailing. But our day on the new Dufour 520 Grand Large (GL) provided us with more than enough breeze to put this beamy cruiser through her paces.



The 520 – just a smidgen under 50 feet LOA – is the largest of the GLs to reach these shores and arrived here just in time for last year’s On Water Boat Show. The yacht had barely got off the ship and onto its keel before it

hit the water for display.

From the dock the 520 looks substantial. As well as that generous length (there’s a fixed prod on the bow for downwind sails; the hull length is 14.75m), it has a maximum beam of 4.80m, which carries well aft. This supplies plenty of room down below for the luxury of not only three double cabins but also three heads – and creates a roomy cockpit for outdoor entertaining.

The hull design’s by Italian Umberto Felci, who has collaborated with Dufour on the GL range since 2003. From a narrow bow, the hull broadens to a generous beam, with a chine in the aft sections to aid performance.

These yachts are unashamedly designed for cruising, with well thought-out features to make boat-handling simple even when short-handed (especially if one of those hands is holding a drink), but still provide enough sailing performance to make it worth hoisting up a bit of rag

when moving from anchorage to anchorage.

The new boat was unveiled at the 2017 Cannes Boat Show and collected the 2018 Boat of the Year award from *Cruising World* in United States in the 50-54 foot category, mostly because of her ‘pleasurable’ sailing performance. Those judges only got to sail it in 7–8 knots; we had her out in up to 20 and also enjoyed the lightness and responsiveness of the helm, the ease with which the sails could be handled, and the comfortable angle of heel and visibility from the helm stations.

There are two of these, each on a pod with a large racing-style Carbonautica wheel. On each side is a 12-inch Raymarine Axiom HybridTouch display screen for navigation and instrumentation, and on the starboard pod is a VHF and the controls for the 75hp Volvo with saildrive. This boat also has a jet bow thruster for ease of manoeuvring when docking.

To make sailing just as straightforward, all sheets are run aft to winches within arm’s reach of the twin helm stations, with ropes running in channels under the deck to keep everything clear underfoot.

The designers have thoroughly thought this through; there are under-floor lockers in the companionway for



review

Dufour 520 GL

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
**ROGER MILLS AND
SUPPLIED**

The essence of cruising





keeping control-line tails safely out of the way, and smaller spaces built into the cockpit coamings by the winches for keeping sheet tails tidy. The primary winches right aft, for the mainsheet, and the control-line winches on the cabin-top are all electric; the pair of smaller winches by the helms, for trimming genoas and gennakers, require the conventional elbow-grease.

The mainsheet is on a German system, with the traveller forward of the dodger then running forward to the mast, splitting and running down either side deck. The 53m² genoa is a 108% overlapper, and there is also the option of a gennaker or code zero, which we would have loved to try out but has not yet been ordered for this boat.

Sail control keyboards at the companionway are sheltered by the large dodger, and there's also a full bimini which can be extended from a frame aft to completely cover the cockpit from New Zealand's harsh sun. This makes the roomy cockpit a great space for relaxing and entertaining once the sailing part is out of the way.

Permateek synthetic decking underfoot feels great. There's a large central table with leaves that fold out and a built-in 39-litre drawer fridge in one end,

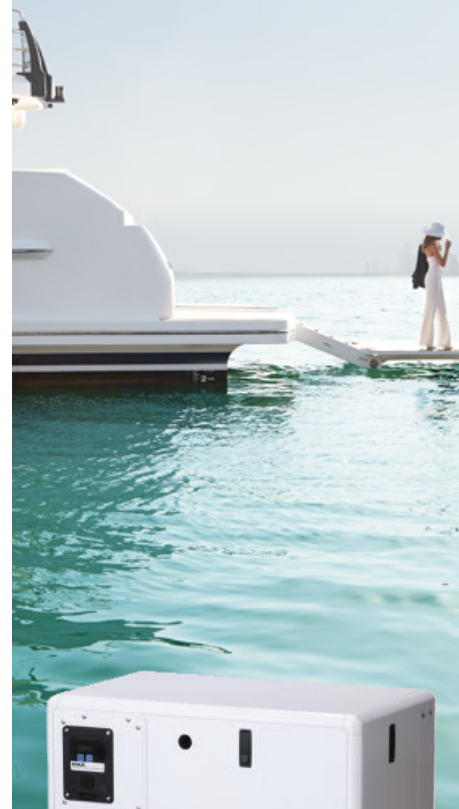


OPPOSITE TOP
All powered up – she's a feisty lady.

ABOVE & LEFT
Light timber finishes, clean detailing and plenty of light – they combine to make an elegant interior.

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There is a real feeling of space and plenty of room to entertain or cruise with family...

to keep cool drinks and nibbles handy. There is L-shaped seating down each side of the cockpit, and a removable squab creates an extra-long bench seat across the transom.

Underneath this seat is an electric barbecue and sink, which can be operated from the upper level of the massive two-level boarding platform created by the full-width, fold-down transom. One section of the transom seat lifts up to create a large walk-through, making this boarding/swimming/socialising platform easy to access. As the lower section folds down almost to the waterline, launching and retrieving tenders and getting gear and people on and off the boat when anchored up is a breeze, then the whole shebang just folds away and you're back in sailing mode.

Down below, the 520's interior is light and luxurious, with upholstery in cream macrosuede and pale oak joinery. The saloon is at the base of the wide companionway steps, with the galley forward, so it's like stepping into a lounge. To port is a square table which can be raised or lowered, with triangular leaves that fold out to double its size, with seating all around (the central settee can be moved).

Opposite, running right along the starboard side, is another large sofa. At the aft end of this is a small nav table, which can be pulled forward to create a separate forward-facing nav station with its own seat – or pushed back against the bulkhead to create a single seating area.

The galley runs right across the boat at the forward bulkhead,





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with three-burner cooker, sink, icebox and bench space to port, and more storage and a two-drawer fridge-freezer and more storage and bench space to starboard. The entire interior is well-served with natural light from large hatches above and through-hull rectangular windows above the settees during the day, and inset LED lighting and downlights at night.

In the bow is the master cabin, with a large double, plenty of storage, and separate shower and head compartments. Aft of the saloon are two more double cabins, each with its own ensuite head; the port-side cabin's facilities also include a shower and are accessible from the saloon too.

One of the notable features is the generous headroom throughout. There is a real feeling of space and plenty of room to entertain or cruise with family without everyone getting on top of each other.

There are just four of us aboard for our sail, so there's no risk of tripping over each other today. The breeze is already in when we motor out of Westhaven so it's sails up straight away and reaching off down the harbour. Hoisting (and dropping) the main is easy, thanks to the lazy bag on the boom and lazy jacks, and the electric winches. The jib is unfurled, and we are away.

The steering is light and the 520 cruises along comfortably – on a reach in 12–15 knots we are doing 9.5 knots. Soon we're out beyond Bean Rock, where we can put the drone up and put her through her paces.

Out here the southerly is a bit fresher, 15 gusting up to 20 knots, but the Dufour handles it like a pro as we come on the wind. Visibility forward from the helm station is excellent and the steering remains light even as we power up. Tacking is stress-free, too – the main looks after itself and the jib is easily handled, within easy reach of the helm. We're doing just over 9 knots upwind, and she feels very manageable.

All too soon it's time to head back up the harbour, so we head off reaching for home. It's been an enjoyable afternoon, sailing a large, comfortable yacht which behaves well and acts like it enjoys a bit of breeze. Chances are, if you were away cruising you wouldn't choose to go upwind in 20 knots very often, but it's nice to know that the boat is more than capable of handling it with aplomb. **BNZ**



Dufour 520 GL

PRICE AS TESTED
\$899,000

DESIGNER
Umberto Felci

MANUFACTURED BY
Dufour Yachts
www.dufour-yachts.com

HIGHLIGHTS

Her crisp, elegant interior

Oodles of cockpit space – especially when the transom's folded down

Enthusiastic performance – it doesn't take much to get her going

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 15.20m

lwl 13.67m

max beam 4.80m

light displacement
15,245kg

draught 2.30m

keel weight 4,042kg

fuel 440L

water 720L

engine 75hp Volvo with saildrive

sail area 100.80m²

mainsail 52.80m²

genoa 48m²

