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First UK test of a  
French favourite

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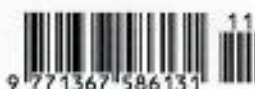
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# Bon voyage?

Dufour's latest mid-range cruiser offers a mix of Italian styling and French manufacturing techniques. Is that an appealing cocktail? Sam Jefferson finds out







An interesting fact to kick off this article; Dufour Yachts is now the biggest yacht manufacturer in the world – or

so I'm told. This is because they were recently acquired by French multihull manufacturer Fountaine Pajot. Between them, this formidable pair have gone from being major manufacturers to being huge manufacturers. The good news for fans of the Dufour marque is that, for now at least, it does not seem to have altered the DNA of the yachts. Dufours have always occupied a rather intriguing middle ground between the giants of the industry (I'm thinking particularly of the Jeanneau and Beneteaus) and smaller, more quirky manufacturers. To my mind, its boats have always seemed to be slightly apart from the run of the mill while remaining thoroughly conventional and sensible. Which brings me to the new 430 Grand Large. Measuring in at 43ft, this is a crucial yacht for any manufacturer as she sits in the size bracket that is going to make her a big seller in both the charter market and for private owners.

So what have we got here? Well, she's designed by Umberto Felci, who has been penning the lines of all Dufours for the past few years. Felci is an Italian designer who cut his teeth designing Mini Transats –



**ABOVE**  
Powerful, aggressive lines make the 430 imposing on the water

**BELOW**  
The chine aft allows for greater internal volume and provides a bit more grip going to windward

so this is a designer that knows all about designing yachts for speed. If nothing else, this is reflected in the general styling of the 430. Her lines are aggressive and muscular; all hard angles and sporty looks that make her look like she's moving fast even when she's tied alongside the pontoon. In common with almost all production cruisers these days, she features ample beam (4.3m to be precise), which is carried well aft. There's a plumb bow with a virtually upright transom, combined with more than a hint of a chine

on her aft quarters. Felci has gone for a single rudder and there is a relatively deep fin keel. The rig is modestly powerful, with the mainsail offering most of the drive, and this is married to a smallish headsail that has the option of being a self tacker. This configuration offers extreme ease of handling but does mean you lose a bit of performance off the wind. It is therefore very useful to have a big reaching sail you can set. Dufour, in common with most manufacturers, is now wise to this and a fixed bowsprit for a Code 0 or gennaker replete with an integrated anchor roller now comes as standard. Freeboard is fairly substantial, but this is meted by the low coachroof.

### On deck

Dufour labelled this range Grand Large, and they did it with good reason. All that beam aft makes for an immense cockpit and, although it is very wide, it feels quite pleasantly enclosed, thanks to lockers built into the aft end of the cockpit, which double up as seats. Between these is a short bridge deck which can be raised to allow you to walk through when the bathing platform is dropped when in port or at anchor. This gives you a slightly narrow gap through to the bathing platform on the starboard side, but allows





for extra storage. Dufour provides the option for a barbecue, fridge and sink area built into the locker, which is viewed as something of a *pièce de résistance* on its yachts, but is perhaps something that will be more of a hit on yachts heading to warmer climes. Drop down the bathing platform and there is a good storage area beneath the cockpit sole.

Despite these lockers eating into the volume of space in the cockpit, it does feel like a really roomy area. Dufour has stuck with a single, centrally located cockpit table, rather than double cockpit tables to port and starboard with a walkway between that you see on some of the 50ft-plus models these days. The running rigging set-up has been established in the Dufour range for some time now and features a pair of primary winches well aft and within easy reach of the twin wheels to port and starboard. These are augmented by a pair of smaller

winches on the coachroof that are used for controlling the mainsheet. This, in turn, is set forward of the cockpit on a traveller. In this respect, Dufour has bucked the recent trend found on Hanses, and also some Beneteaus and Jeanneaus, to have all the running rigging led aft to a double bank of winches set to port and starboard and within reach of the helmsman. The latter set-up is arguably easier for singlehanding but, quite frankly, there are pros and cons to both set-ups. The big plus of this system is that there are fewer ropes emerging right in front of the helm, so less potential to get muddled.

There is a track for a self-tacking headsail, but this is an option that you can choose to take – the boat

**ABOVE**

The 430 felt a good deal more enclosed aft than many of her rivals thanks to lockers located aft of the twin helms

**BELOW**

Masses of room in the cockpit

I tested had a slightly larger 105% overlapping headsail, which gave the boat a bit more power off the wind.

Head forward along the relatively narrow side decks and you'll note the jib cars – which can be adjusted from the cockpit – are tucked in nice and tight against the coachroof, while all the main control lines run in channels beneath the coachroof, keeping things nice and tidy, always helpful in avoiding tangles.

Something that sets the Dufours apart from their rivals is the very low gooseneck with the boom canted upwards as it runs aft. This not only lowers the centre of effort slightly, it also makes accessing the mainsail that bit easier when raising, lowering and stowing.





## Down below

The sense of light and space on the Grand Large range is truly impressive. This is certainly the case on the 430, which undoubtedly feels substantially larger than her 43'. Part of this is down to a plethora of skylights and portholes, combined with a nice, light oak finish. In common with all of her production sisters, the interior does feel a tad bland, but it is in no way an unpleasant space. On this model, Dufour has opted to move the galley forward and I have always found this works well – arguably not so much if you are doing an ocean crossing where the bow is generally a little bit more prone to bumping and thumping with the waves. For cooking at a quiet anchorage, however, there is a splendid feeling of involvement and connection between the chef and the rest of the crew. This is often not the case on yachts with galleys set aft. In terms of layout, there are two double berths set aft that share a heads/shower compartment set to port. Forward, there is a large master cabin with ensuite shower and

heads. There is an optional variation on this layout that features the galley set well forward but running fore and aft down the starboard side, with an extra bunk room set to starboard. This arrangement would mean that, using the drop down saloon table as a double berth, you could – at least in theory – sleep 10 people. In other words, this is an arrangement that will likely appeal only to those who are thinking of chartering out their yacht.

Aside from that, the quality of the finish was good and the access to the engine was adequate. What more can you ask for, essentially?

## Under sail

So what about out on the water? Well, we had a good day for it, with a 10kt breeze building until it topped out at about 18kt in some of the more vigorous puffs. We were on Southampton Water, so there was nothing more than a few wavelets crisping its pristine waters on the day of the test. She handled well under power – as all these modern

**ABOVE**  
The galley is located forward and this makes the saloon a convivial space.

**BELOW**  
The forward stateroom is suitably spacious and includes an ensuite.

yachts do, to be fair – and we were soon trucking along under sail. In the conditions, it was very hard to fault the boat, to be honest. She was rapidly trucking along in the high sevens and she rarely fell below that pace. The steering had good feel and there was very little weather helm right up until the point when we seriously overloaded the boat beating into one of the 18kt puffs of breeze with no reefs in. At which point she entirely understandably rounded up and we shook the squall out of her before continuing on our way. It was at this point that we decided it was time to turn tail and, with the building wind now on our quarter, we continued to make good progress. With the wind abaft the beam, it would have been nice to unfurl a gennaker but, alas, the boat did not carry one, so we were obliged to make do with white sails and continue with our excellent progress at a steady and serene 8kt. In terms of handling, this was all very easy with the lines well placed and logically laid out. In fact, she was a joy to sail. →



## ALTERNATIVE YACHTS



### BENETEAU OCEANIS 46.1

A radical departure from the French giant that follows on from the success of the trailblazing Oceanis 51.1. As such, she's chined forward, which boosts internal volume at the bow while not detracting from her performance. Beyond that, she's modern, stylish, fun to sail and has proved a hit on both the charter and private markets.

[beneteau.com](http://beneteau.com)



### BAVARIA C45

The C45 is part of Bavaria's new C-Line and is definitely smarter and flashier than her predecessors.

Perhaps her biggest boast is that Bavaria has somehow managed to crowbar in a dinghy garage, which is rather extraordinary on a 45ft yacht.

[bavariayachts.com](http://bavariayachts.com)



### JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 440

One of the latest Jeanneaus to be developed and, although somewhat toned down compared to the radical Beneteau Oceanis 46, utilises the same hull form to boost internal volume forward. A versatile performer that has already sold strongly.

[jeanneau.com](http://jeanneau.com)



## SAM'S VERDICT

Dufours are not wildly innovative yachts but they do stand out a little from their other mass produced sisters. I can't place my finger on why, but I guess the styling must be just a tad more individualistic. In common with all of her production sisters, this is a yacht with a sensible layout, both on deck and below, that it is hard to fault or, conversely, heap praise upon for being innovative. When it comes

to sailing, you really couldn't fault her either – she was fast fun and very hard to fluster. To me it is indicative of the top end of the industry now that there is so little to find fault with on a basic level. It comes down to a few individual quirks if you pick this over one of her mass produced rivals.

COMFORT: ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

## THE SPEC

**LOA:** 43ft 4in (13.24m)

**Hull length:** 41ft (12.5m)

**Waterline length:** 38ft 3in (11.69m)

**Max beam:** 14ft 1in (4.3m)

**Light displacement:** 20,950lb (9,500kg)

**Draught:** 6ft 8in (2.1m)

**Engine power:** 50cv (60cv Opt)

**Sail area:** 990sq ft (92m<sup>2</sup>)

**Main sail area:** 559sq ft (52m<sup>2</sup>)

**Genoa sail area:** 430sq ft (40m<sup>2</sup>)

**Broker:** [universalyachting.com](http://universalyachting.com)

**Price (base):** £190,000

**Price (as sailed):** £216,000

