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Double vision

What difference does five or so feet make when it comes to selecting a yacht? Everything and nothing – as **Sam Jefferson** discovered when he tested the Dufour 460 and 412 Grand Large

Boat testing can be a hugely rewarding and enjoyable pursuit but there are times when it can lead the protagonist to slump into a spell of existential angst. This generally coincides with indulging in too much of a good thing. I must confess I may have reached that point; in the last month I have tested two Hanses, three Beneteaus and one Dufour. I now sit here trying to write this epistle with a growing sense of impending doom and my main issue is that they were all simply rather too good



at what they did. What you're looking for when testing a yacht are obvious defects and the problem, these days, is that yachts simply lack that: it's not like in the 1970s and 80s where, once in a while a manufacturer would come up with a yacht so unremittingly bad that it was embarrassing. CAD design has taken the random factor out of design and economics dictate that the manufacturing giants simply cannot afford to build a truly bad boat. The result is unremitting consistency of quality. That's good news for you, the consumer, but liable to precipitate a nervous breakdown in a reviewer.

Anyway, just to make things even trickier for myself, the decision was taken to run a comparative test between the Dufour 460 and the Dufour 412: two yachts which, if observed by the untutored eye, might be deemed identical. I confess I have a tutored eye, but certainly on first viewing of the pair had some sympathy with the untutored one. Of course, it's perfectly natural that two yachts in the same range should bear more than a passing resemblance. What I was really looking for here then was how great a benefit it was to choose the 460 over the 412. Or

vice versa. What set them apart? In theory it should have been more than met the eye, as the 460 Grand Large is a brand new design, while the 412 is a sort of MkII of the old 410. The addition of a fixed bowsprit and a few other refinements being the main difference. So she's actually a couple of years old now; a different generation to the 460 - at least in theory. In practice, both look strikingly similar, having both been designed by Umberto Felci. Both feature a similar hull shape which features remarkably broad hindquarters (maximum beam is a substantial 13ft 9in on the 412 and 14ft 4in on the 460) combined with a hard chine to provide simply acres of space aft. Both feature a decent amount of freeboard, plumb bow and straight transom. Although the chine aft is starting to fall out of favour again in some circles, neither look dated and, although both are definitely out and out cruising yachts, there is a certain sportiness to their looks compared with the equivalent Jeanneau or Beneteau. On closer inspection I found that the 460's greater hull length (44ft 2in compared to 39ft 3in for the 412) meant that she carried off her high freeboard slightly better, but in all honesty, there wasn't much in it.

On deck

Step aboard and you immediately understand why Dufour labelled this range Grand Large. All that beam aft makes for an immense



● **HEADSAIL**
The 412 has an overlapping jib as standard while the 460 has a self tucker

'Step aboard and you immediately understand why Dufour labelled this range Grand Large'



1



2



3



● **ANGULAR LINES**
The 412 and 460 were designed by Felci and he has penned an angular, purposeful set of lines

● **MAINSHEET**
Dufour has opted to locate the mainsheet on the deckhead in order to keep the cockpit clear

● **BIG BEAM**
Broad aft sections and a hard chine give both the 460 and the 412 ample volume

Dufour 412

1 The cockpit feels very large for a 41ft yacht. Dufour has opted to retain some of the running rigging controls on the deckhead

2 A decently dimensioned forward cabin features good headroom and ample storage space

3 A thoroughly conventional interior layout featuring drop down table and chart table provides yet more berths down below

cockpit on both yachts. In contrast to many yachts of this ilk, the cockpit also has a nice enclosed feel on both models, with lockers built into the aft end of the yachts to starboard.

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 doubtless a nice touch for cruising in warmer climes when outdoor living is highly desirable and the cook can feel rather isolated and get rather overheated down below. It's a luxury, but gives you an idea of how much space is available out here

and Ed Miliband would doubtless also concur that two kitchens are vital unless you are trying to win an election. Drop down the transom and there is a good storage area beneath the cockpit sole where you can tuck in a liferaft or deflated dinghy.

Despite this reduction in space, the cockpit still feels big and roomy – obviously this is proportionately more so on the 460, however both feel huge and very similar. The cockpit table is a big, substantial structure which helps break up the immense width of the cockpit which is important when heeling over as you end up feeling a little vulnerable otherwise. Both share the same

running rigging controls too, with a pair of primary winches well aft and within easy reach of the twin wheels to port and starboard which are augmented by a pair of smaller winches on the deckhead which are used for controlling the mainsheet which is set forward of the cockpit on a traveller. In this respect, Dufour has eschewed a recent trend which has been to have four winches aft with all running rigging going to them via channels set in the cockpit coamings. This means that it is even easier to singlehand, but it does lead to a lot of ropes emerging in the same place and there is an argument for splitting the controls over two separate areas. →



The biggest difference between the 460 and the 412 in this respect is that the 460 comes with a self tacking headsail as standard, although this is certainly something you could request is retro fitted on the 412.

All the main control lines run in channels beneath the deckhead, keeping things nice and tidy on both boats. Sprits upfront are becoming the norm rather than an option these days and that's the case with both the Dufours. It's something that undoubtedly makes setting your gennaker that bit easier and having the anchor further outboard away from the plumb stem is always a boon, although it is pleasing that Dufour opted to retain the stainless steel sacrificial strip along the stem as this will take much of the stress out of raising and lowering the anchor.

As you'd expect from a cruising yacht, the deck stepped rig is fairly modest, particularly on the 412, which features 71m² of sail compared with 99.8m² for the 460. This seems like a disproportionate increase in sail area for the 460, so perhaps a little extra drive was deemed necessary. Something else 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 easier when raising, lowering and stowing. Anyone who has spent much time wrestling with those awful fold up mast steps will confirm this feature is a real boon.

Down below

Now, I'd have to say that so far I was struggling to see the benefits or even a huge amount of difference between the 412 and 460. Yet, as soon as I stepped down below, there was a very tangible change in the feel. Don't get me wrong, both were extremely roomy, while generous skylights and a light oak finish made both feel very light and pleasant on a bright, sunny day. Yet the 460 definitely had a distinct edge - at least in my opinion - over her smaller sister. She felt huge down below for starters and clearly a lot of thought had gone in to creating a really pleasant habitable space. While the 412 has a traditional L shaped galley aft and to starboard, the 460's cooking area has been shifted forward so that it is just abaft the forward cabin with the cooker and sink set to port and the fridge to starboard. This not only makes for a nice compact and practical cooking space, but it also opens out the broad aft section to make for a truly roomy living area. It works really well, and my only minor reservation was that the sink/worksurface was a tad narrow. The standard layout on the 460 featured



'Clearly a lot of thought had gone in to creating a really pleasant habitable space'





● HULL

A decent amount of freeboard is offset by a low, sleek coachroof

● SAIL PLAN

A self tacking jib is standard on the 460 but an overlapping genoa is an option

Dufour 460

1 The 'second kitchen' perched on the transom is an optional feature on both boats

2 The 460's reverse layout saloon was arguably the most notable difference between the 460 and 412 and created an even greater feeling of space

3 The contrast between the master cabin of the 460 and 412 is also interesting, with the 460 feeling substantially roomier

two cabins aft with a shared heads compartment and a roomy forward cabin with ensuite heads. Yet there was also the option of three cabins/ three heads and even four cabins and four heads. The 412 featured two cabins in the standard version with a single heads compartment aft. There was the option of twin doubles aft with an ensuite forward too.

Under sail

Conditions on both test days featured disappointingly light breezes that only grudgingly nudged ten knots at best. Perhaps this was fortuitous in its own way, as I have been told that the Dufours are strong

performers in heavier breezes, and I was intrigued to see how sticky she would be in the light given that their aft sections are so broad. Felci has certainly drawn up a sporty enough looking hull, yet the 412 displaces 8,940kg and the 460 10,760kg, so neither is exactly a lightweight flier. Thankfully, both proved to be competent performers despite the extremely modest conditions and I was able to coax a good 5.5 to 6kn out of each close hauled in some of the better puffs of breeze.

In the light stuff, I can't say I felt a significant difference between either in terms of performance and I imagine it is only higher up the

Beaufort scale that the 460's greater potential for speed – by merit of her longer waterline – becomes evident. Both behaved very well under sail and neither felt sluggish despite the fickle breezes and the helm had very good positive feel. The addition of a bowsprit and the ease with which one can now set a Code 0 is also a bit of a game changer for cruisers as it makes setting a substantial sail almost effortless and transforms light air sailing. In addition, one would imagine that in more boisterous conditions, both the 460 and 412 would be a really strong performers off the wind as their hull owes something to the IMOCA 60s. →

SAM'S VERDICT

Dufour never set out to revolutionise the way cruising yachts are designed with its Grand Large range. What it has done is produce a really voluminous cruising range that is smart, modestly sporty and very comfortable. You may say that all the other big manufacturers are capable of that too, so your choice will come down to the little differences and nuances. As an example, I particularly liked the feeling of space you got on the 460 compared with some of her rivals. In terms of what you get when you choose between the 460 and the 412 I must confess this isn't hugely obvious until you head down below where suddenly all that extra volume becomes immediately apparent. Other than that, it is more about a selection of incremental benefits such as a slightly more powerful rig, marginally bigger cockpit and so on. →

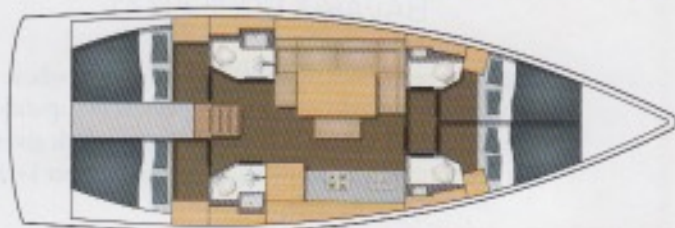
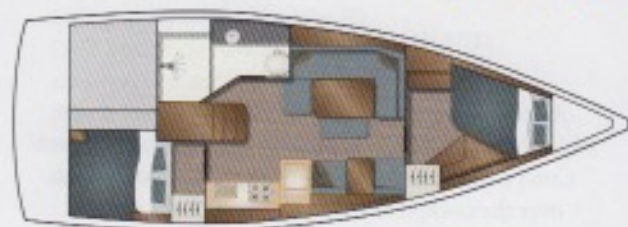
460
 PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
 COMFORT: ★★★★★
 BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

412
 PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
 COMFORT: ★★★★★
 BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

412



460



THE SPECIFICATIONS

460	412
LOA 46ft 5in (14.15m)	LOA 40ft 6in (12.4m)
LWL 41ft 1in (12.54m)	LWL 36ft 6in (11.2m)
Beam 14ft 4in (4.37m)	Beam 13ft 9in (4.2m)
Draught 7ft 2in/6ft 4in (2.2m/1.95m)	Draught 6ft 10in (2.1m)
Displ 23,722 lb (10,760 kg)	Displ 19,668lb (8,940kg)
Sail area 1,074sq ft (99.8m ²)	Sail area 860sq ft (80m ²)
Water 530l	Fuel 200l
Fuel 250l	Water 380l
Engine 55 hp Volvo	Engine 40hp
Designer Umberto Felci	Designer Umberto Felci
Base price £184,000	Base price £137,000
As tested £239,000	As tested £165,000
	Dealer Universal Yachting universalyachting.com 01243 697274

Alternative boats for the 460



HANSE 455

PRICE: £161,000

Another manufacturer unafraid to pump up the volume has been Hanse and its 455 is a proven performer both in the private and charter market. This Judel/Vrolijk design looks suitably purposeful out on the water, but is also chock full of creature comforts.

inspirationmarine.co.uk



BENETEAU OCEANIS 45

PRICE: £186,000

A popular model from the French giants and one which boasts plenty of cruising refinements. The Finot/Conq designed 45 features the very distinctive arch over the cockpit and a modern and light interior.

beneteau.com



JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 449

PRICE: £186,000

Another smart and purposeful cruising yacht from the drawing board of Philippe Briand. The 449 has been around for a while now, but remains a strong performer with a decent turn of speed when required.

jeanneau.com

Alternative boats for the 412



JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 419

PRICE: £133,000

This Philippe Briand design looked way ahead of her time when first launched, but arguably her angular lines are starting to feel the test of time. Nevertheless, she's a polished performer with a proven track record, not to mention a highly competitive price tag.

jeanneau.com



BENETEAU OCEANIS 411

PRICE: £145,000

Just like the Dufour, the Oceanis 41.1 is a revamp of the Oceanis 41 with the addition of a few refinements. The mast has been moved slightly further aft and the interior has been given a refresh.

beneteau.com



BAVARIA CRUISER 41

PRICE: £122,000

A proven performer from the German giants whose ability to turn out a decent cruising yacht is indisputable. The Cruiser 41 is also available in 'S' spec which gives you the option of a slightly bigger rig and deeper keel.

bavariayachts.com