

## Boat test

# Xp33

The latest model from X-Yachts is their first with a retractable sprit for an asymmetric, **Rupert Holmes** took the Xp 33 out for a spin

X-Yachts has always had a good reputation for well engineered performance cruiser-racers and the latest model from the stable follows this pattern, but with considerably more emphasis on the performance aspect. The Xp 33, for instance, is almost 20 per cent lighter than the older X-34 design, although still 600kg heavier than the more modern rival JPK1010. At the same time, the Xp 33 interior has been simplified, which both helps to reduce weight and fits with the performance nature of the design.

### Concept



The Xp 33 is the first boat from X-Yachts fitted with a retractable pole for asymmetric spinnakers. Hull shape is very much of the modern style, with a plumb bow, fine entry, relatively narrow maximum beam and wide after sections that promote easy planing. The static waterline is short enough to reduce friction in very light airs, but will extend to the full length of the boat at speed, and there's a small

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Hull length</b>	9.99m
<b>LWL</b>	8.86m
<b>Beam</b>	3.21m
<b>Draught</b>	1.9m
<b>Ballast</b>	1,700kg
<b>Displacement</b>	4,300kg
<b>Mainsail</b>	33.8sq m
<b>106% genoa</b>	28.3sq m
<b>Asymmetric</b>	109sq m



chine high in the topsides aft to aid stability. In addition, slightly flared topsides that increase the beam above the waterline helps to move crew weight further outboard when hiking.

X-Yachts has eschewed twin rudders for this model on the basis that they add weight, complexity and resistance compared to a single rudder. Similarly, while fashion has dictated that most boats of this size are wheel steered, the arguments for tiller steering are compelling, including reduced weight, complexity, expense and maintenance. And the downsides don't stop there – to see the luff of the genoa clearly on a wheel steered boat with a broad transom you either need a huge wheel, which of course gets in the way, or twin wheels. While the latter works well on larger boats, it adds unnecessary weight and complexity to a vessel of this size.

X-Yachts says that many of the enquiries for the boat have been from prospective owners primarily interested in doublehanded sailing, a use for which the boat is clearly very well suited. Our test boat, however, was set up in a more conventional fashion for fully crewed inshore racing, with a large-roach mainsail, S2 and S4 symmetric spinnakers, plus a small A3 asymmetric, set from the bow, rather than using the retracting pole. The boat has been campaigned hard this season, under the direction of multiple world champion Jochem Visser, winning IRC Class 2 in the Warsash Spring Series and IRC Class 1 at the Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta. Against stiffer competition at Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week, she finished fifth overall.

In terms of construction, compared to earlier X-Yachts models, the Xp series has dispensed with the galvanised frame that was previously used to distribute loads from the rig and keel. Instead there is a fibreglass framework with carbon capping, which together with the vacuum infused foam cored hull, provides a significant weight saving. Solid laminate is provided in way of the keel, rudder and sail drive. Some of the interior furniture modules are also designed to provide local stiffening, instead of this being achieved with additional frames or stringers.

### Deck layout and rig



Our test boat had very few tweaks beyond the performance upgrades on the options list, ▶





**1** There has been considerable interest from doublehanded sailors **2** The Xp 33 also carries a conventional spinnaker and pole **3** The interior has berth space for up to eight **4** The navigation is well-appointed **5** The galley is practical, with deep fiddle surrounds **6** An aluminium rig is offered as standard, with carbon option



“Downwind it’s clear that given even quite small waves we would have seen a lot more speed”

**RIGHT** On our test the Xp 33 was nudging 10 knots under S2

which makes it easy to specify and equip the boat for exactly the type of sailing that each owner intends to do. These options include upgrade kits for asymmetric and/or symmetric spinnakers, the latter including a carbon pole. There are also jib barber-haulers, a powerful mainsheet fine tune (in addition to the standard 6:1 purchase), and a 32:1 stripped Dyneema backstay.

Most halyards and other controls are already Dyneema as standard and in other respects our test boat was a basic boat, with an aluminium rig and no teak decking in the cockpit. As standard a double-spreader 9/10ths fractional aluminium rig is fitted, with twin swept back spreaders and rod rigging, while a carbon rig is an expensive option.

While below-deck furlers have become popular on many cruiser racers, they have drawbacks, notably that the forestay must be aft of the bow, thus reducing the J (foretriangle base) measurement. X-Yachts has taken a different approach, with the option being an ultra-low profile Facnor above deck unit. Our test boat, however, was simply fitted with a Tuff Luff headstay foil.

The deck layout is set up to minimise friction in a neatly thought-out arrangement that works well, eschewing deck organisers in favour of leading lines as directly as possible to clutches or jammers. Winches are from Harken's Performance range, with our test boat having the upgrade to 40s with speed rings on the coachroof and 46s for



further aft when racing fully crewed. Coarse and fine mainsheet controls, traveller and backstay are all easily reached from the helm when sailing short-handed.

The cockpit has good foot chocks aft, as well as one for the mainsheet trimmer in the aft end of the cockpit seats, although an additional pair further inboard may be useful when you're standing up to helm downwind. There's a moulded toe rail with space outside of it to hike comfortably. It's full height to meet the ISAF regulations forward of the chain plates but aft it's a lower profile to make

light on the helm, while in the stronger puffs the rig controls make it easy to blade out the mainsail to depower.

Turning downwind we tried the S2 spinnaker first, with the wind was soon hitting 20 knots in the strongest puffs. Even sailing deep in flat water the boat took off with the speed hovering between 8 and 9 knots and occasionally nudging 10 – it's clear that given even quite small waves we would have seen a lot more speed.


We then changed down to the cut-down A3 to sail at hotter angles, at a similar speed, with the helm remaining light even with the apparent wind on or slightly forward of the beam. It does, however, load up rather quickly in a broaching situation, giving a lot of feel and plenty of warning. The rudder is well tucked under the boat, clear of turbulent water, and on being centred quickly regains a lot of grip, making it relatively easy to get the boat back on its feet.

While our test boat was set up for fully crewed racing, with the addition of a decent pilot it's clear that it would also be very suited to short-handed racing, without making any major changes and with a lot of confidence that the pilot would be able to handle strong winds and very exciting boat speeds without worry.

#### Accommodation

★★★★★☆☆☆

This boat is definitely more racer-cruiser than earlier models from X-Yachts, with a more compact and largely open interior than other recent models. In theory there are up to eight berths, so it's certainly possible to sleep a full crew on board – but in reality what this means is there are enough berths to sleep a smaller number of people very comfortably in large bunks.

Aft of the main bulkhead the interior is 

“It's a good balance for those who don't want to drag too much elaborate interior joinery around the course”

the primaries. Standard features also include towable genoa cars and flush hatches.

Unlike many designs there are no keel options – just the standard 1.9m draught T-bulb with a cast iron foil and lead bulb. While the Xp 33 will not be a one-design class, this has the advantage that boats will be more closely matched when racing under IRC. The rudder stock is connected to the tiller via a drag link, enabling the latter to be positioned right at the back of the cockpit. This is an enormous help in positioning crew when racing with a full crew, allowing the helm to sit around one metre further aft with plenty of space for trimmers further forward, and there's still room for a navigator to sit

hiking more comfortable. There is a pair of lazarette lockers for fenders, lines and such like, which also give easy access to the drag link for the steering. There's also a gas locker aft, but no dedicated on-deck stowage for a liferaft, although there's space for one to be stowed on the cockpit floor right aft.

#### Under sail

★★★★★☆☆☆

Our test took place in a very gusty west-north-westerly varying from less than 10 knots to gusts of more than 20. We started off sailing upwind with the J3 blade and only five people on board. In 10-13 knots of true wind, the boat was very nicely balanced and



**LEFT** The tiller is situated aft, allowing for plenty of crew working space in the cockpit **BELOW** The saloon table is removable



largely open plan. Headroom at the foot of the companionway and in the saloon is less than 1.8m, although you get a couple more inches when you step down into the galley and nav station areas. There's a white finish with enough joinery to look good and feel comfortable, while optional removable modular furniture facilitates changing modes from a reasonably comfortable and very fast cruiser to full-on race mode.

Right aft are a pair of generously sized double quarter berths. Forward of these on the port side is the galley – on our test boat this was relatively simply fitted, with a two burner gimbaled hob and single sink. There's a useful area of worktop, with a commendably high fiddle, while options include pressurised hot and cold water, as well as a fridge that fits under the chart table. The navigation station, on the opposite side of the boat, is unusually good for a new design vessel. It's a full traditional set up, with a dedicated forward-facing seat, proper chart

table and ample space for stowage and for mounting instruments.

The saloon has a pair of settees either side of a table that can be removed for racing. The seatback cushions can be removed to make the berths wider and there are optional cabinets that can be installed under the side decks. There's a spacious full-width heads compartment forward of the main bulkhead. There are then two options for the forepeak – on our test boat it was open plan to the heads – a large area reserved for sail storage and handling. However, it can also be fitted out as a separate cabin with a large double berth that can be removed for racing.

The sprit obviously intrudes into this area, although it's in a fabric enclosure and doesn't take up a great deal of space. The arrangement was ideal for our test boat, although if you plan to have the forepeak fitted out as a cabin my preference would be to have the pole in a glassed in tube that ensures this area will stay dry.

Overall the interior provides a sensible compromise for a boat of this style, offering adaptable accommodation with adequate space without adding any more than necessary to the boat's weight, freeboard and coachroof height.

### Verdict



The Xp 33 is a very appealing boat that's more racer-cruiser than cruiser-racer. It promises to be a lot of fun to sail and has the potential for good results under IRC. Our test boat has been racing this season with an IRC rating of 1.018, but there's clearly scope to reduce that, especially if sailing short-handed.

Although more limited than some boats of this size, there's also enough accommodation and sufficient facilities to be able to spend time on board in comfort. It's a good balance for those who plan to sail fast offshore, but don't want to drag too much elaborate interior joinery, or unnecessary spare bedrooms, around the course. □

## COMPARISONS



### JPK1010

French design with notable IRC successes on both sides of the Channel. Options for both twin rudders and bulb keel.

<b>LOA</b>	10.0m
<b>LWL</b>	8.76m
<b>Beam</b>	3.39m
<b>Draught</b>	1.98m
<b>Displacement</b>	3,800kg
<b>Ballast</b>	1,650kg



### J/105

Archetypal asymmetric racer-cruiser, with greater hull length but smaller accommodation.

<b>LOA</b>	10.5m
<b>LWL</b>	8.99m
<b>Beam</b>	3.35m
<b>Draught</b>	1.98m
<b>Displacement</b>	3,515kg
<b>Ballast</b>	1,542kg

## ANSWER BACK

### From: Niels Jeppesen, X-Yachts Design

We are exceptionally pleased with the worldwide sales of the Xp 33 (38 to date), and while there are no initial plans for one-design racing we are confident there will be pockets of class sailing very soon. The yacht sailed in Cowes Week was set up for fully crewed windward-leeward racing, and as such had no dedicated reaching sails. For future race events with similar reaching legs, a worthwhile addition would be a Code Zero to fill this gap. Something new we are working on with numerous owners is the optimisation for doublehanded sailing. With her high ballast ratio, she is ideally suited for the short-handed sailor. Although the Xp 33 is X-Yachts' first retractable bowsprit sportsboat, she is also set out to be able to satisfy the cruising owners, hence offering an anchor locker as standard with the facility to fit an electrical anchor winch.