

RANGE X-TENSION

X-Yachts' new X4 aims to find the perfect balance
between performance and comfort.

Sam Jefferson reports

PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY



Seven years ago, when X-Yachts first launched the pioneering Xc range of performance cruisers, owner Niels Jeppesen must have thought he had cracked the market. The boats were lauded by almost everyone and sold like hot cakes.

But you can't please everyone, and some loyal X-Yachts customers must have complained that the Xp range wasn't comfortable enough, while the Xc boats were too slow.

After a bit of head-scratching, the answer has now materialised, in the form of the all-new X line of X-Yachts that sits bang in between the Xc and the Xp range.

The first of that line is the X4 – a 42ft (13.1m) cruiser/racer that goes right to the basic principles of X-Yachts: fast, comfortable, quality yachts that can be cruised or raced. So for the racers, you get a modest displacement of 8,850kg, a deep T-shaped keel as standard, rod rigging and vacuum infused epoxy construction with a hull that features a steel grid at its core and is also cured in a purpose-built oven for extra stiffness.

For the cruisers, there is slightly more volume than you'd get on an Xp, slightly reduced sail area, greater initial stability and a light, well-appointed interior. If you're wondering what that weird cubed sign is about, it's simply that when



X-Yachts launched the new range they started with the X4 and the X6 and then realised that gave them only one other option – an X5. The only logical solution was evidently to turn the name into an algebraic form (X4³).

First impressions

First impressions are extremely favourable. As always, her lines have been drawn by Jeppesen himself and he has always had an eye for a handsome yacht. What's more, this consistency in designer has allowed X-Yachts to develop almost organically

1 Lines run under the coach roof to chunky clutches

2 In speed mode, the cockpit table is shipped

3 This boat's 3DL sails complement her clean side decks

over the years and it's rarely a slave to short-lived fads. Nevertheless, the X4 looks thoroughly modern with her plumb bow and transom. There's the merest hint of a chine aft, modest freeboard and beam. The coachroof is low and sleek, making for a sharp, purposeful-looking yacht with those trademark triple blue stripes on a pristine white hull. The overall impression is of a yacht that is uncomplicated and unpretentious, with the emphasis being on keeping things simple and fun. Oh, and fast.

On deck, that theme continues. There's nothing earth-shatteringly innovative here, but the yacht is sensibly laid out and the blend of racing and cruising is everywhere; a bathing platform but also a backstay tensioner; rod rigging with the chain plates neatly covered so that you get a nice unbroken sheerline. The aft deck is open in the racing style, but there is an option for a double-width bathing platform that raises up to fully enclose you for an added feeling of security.

The deck layout is simple with the mainsheet track ideally sited for trimming directly in front of the helm. It runs across the cockpit just where out-and-out cruisers don't like it and racers stipulate it must be. The German mainsheet runs to the pair of primary winches that are ideally situated for the helmsman to operate.

The cockpit table can be unshipped and tucked away in the cockpit locker. For the first time on an X-Yacht, the jib cars have been shifted inboard onto the coachroof which gives you uncluttered side decks and an excellent sheeting angle for the headsail. Teak is standard in the cockpit and optional on the side decks and coach roof.



CARBON SPRIT

An invaluable extra is the carbon sprit that bolts on at the bow and carries an anchor roller. Other modular options include a bare anchor roller, a sprit with no anchor fitting or nothing at all!

On-deck storage is excellent, with plenty of storage aft of the wheel, cockpit lockers and also a deep locker just abaft the anchor locker that is ideal for dumping a gennaker into. It's a thoughtful touch on a 40-footer. A carbon sprit that slots over the anchor roller is also an optional extra that





● **3DI SAILS**
North's high-end sails are not standard, but help the boat point better and sail faster

● **RACE COCKPIT**
The mainsheet runs on a track in front of the pedestal and the backstay tension

● **TRANSOM**
Choose between an open racing transom or a more enclosed bathing platform

● **FOOT REST**
Popular on cruiser-racers, the fold-down foot rest makes a real difference to helping comfort on the heel

looks invaluable. A twin-spreader aluminium mast and boom come as standard, but you can upgrade to carbon-fibre if you fancy it.

Something beautiful

The day of the sail was the sort of crisp, luminescent early October

4 Dropping the bathing platform reveals the flat-pack ladder

'WE LEANT INTO THE BREEZE AND LET THE BOAT DO THE TALKING'

day that makes you wish you could spend your life following autumn around the globe. Ten knots of breeze ruffled the Solent's murky waters until even they gleamed. We hoisted a set of stunning North 3DL sails, leant into the gentle breeze and let the boat do the talking.

Now, you have to be careful with boat tests as they are naturally subjective; on this day the sun sparkled, the breeze caressed, the Solent unfurled glistening and inviting. Those North 3DI sails were unquestionably a handsome, albeit expensive, boon. One of life's rare pleasures is to feel that you are, at least in part, the author of something beautiful. Simply by lining up this

yacht into the breeze and sailing her in the groove, I felt that way. At that moment, the X4 was up there as one of the best yachts I'd ever sailed.

Now I know that's not really fair; the weather, my own mindset doubtless all conspired to make me hopelessly biased. What I can say is that I have sailed other yachts in 10kt of breeze and pristine conditions and come away glum. You need the right sort of tool for the job and the X4 is just that. I don't like twitchy out-and-out racing yachts as they often make me feel inadequate; I struggle with heavy cruisers – particularly in moderate breezes – because again, they make me feel inadequate. But the X4 was perfect: →



she tracked well and sympathetically; she carved past every other yacht out there with effortless insouciance. It was beautiful.

The boat made me feel like a decent helmsman rather than someone fumbling around trying to find the sweet spot.

She was not absurdly quick, but she was rapid, managing 6.5-7kt on the wind in 10kt of breeze. More than that, she was poised and reassuring to helm. Off the wind we unrolled a kite that was something between a Code 0 and a giant genoa and continued to trip light-footed across the water.

The further we sailed down Southampton Water, the longer I knew the beat back to the Hamble would be – and the happier I became.



ABOVE
X-Yachts has gone for a sensible, straightforward layout below, with the choice of two or three cabins and one or two heads

LEFT
The L-shaped galley has lots of storage, plus the usual oven with hob, fridge and sink

BELOW LEFT
Forward is the master cabin, with good storage beneath and hull light views

Light oak look

Head down below and the steep companionway steps give you a certain racer feel, but there are plenty of soft touches too. The light oak option on the yacht I sailed is a bit of a departure from X-Yachts of old, but it worked well. You're always limited in how much you can experiment sensibly with the interior of a 40ft yacht, and X-Yachts has worked realistically within those parameters. If there is a criticism, it is that the interior errs on the side of blandness.

There are twin cabins aft with the interesting feature of cot berths above the doubles, which is a useful feature that will go down well with either a racing crew or kids. There is a choice of four different layout arrangements with the choice of either one or two heads/shower compartments, the latter allowing for an en suite forward. Either way, the forward cabin is the master and is an extremely comfortable space. With the forward bulkhead moved aft to allow for an extra bow locker on deck, the forward cabin is much less tapered than is often the case on a yacht of this size and this means a couple can comfortably sleep with their heads in the bows.

Storage is good and the base of the bed hinges up on gas struts to reveal acres of space beneath. The interior is bright, comfortable and functional without being dazzling. →

‘THE LIGHT OAK INTERIOR IS A NEW DEPARTURE, BUT IT WORKS WELL’



SAM'S VERDICT

Just as the Danes did not invent the Danish pastry, X-Yachts did not invent the cruiser-racer (although it wasn't far off).

What X-Yachts has done is to spend years perfecting the genre. The X4 is a return to its roots and all the firm's wealth of experience is evident in her design. She is not spectacular in any one field but she is good where she needs to be good

and excels where she has to by sailing beautifully, effortlessly, life-affirmingly.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 42ft 11in (13.1m)

LWL: 37ft 1in (11.3m)

Beam: 13ft (4.0m)

Draught: 7ft 3in (2.2m)

Displacement: 8,850kg (19,511lb)

Ballast: 3,800kg (8,377lb)

PERFORMANCE

Sail area: 1,049sq ft (97.50m²)

Sail area/displacement: 23.2

LWL/displacement: 170

PRICE

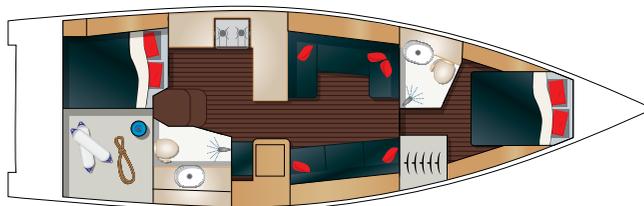
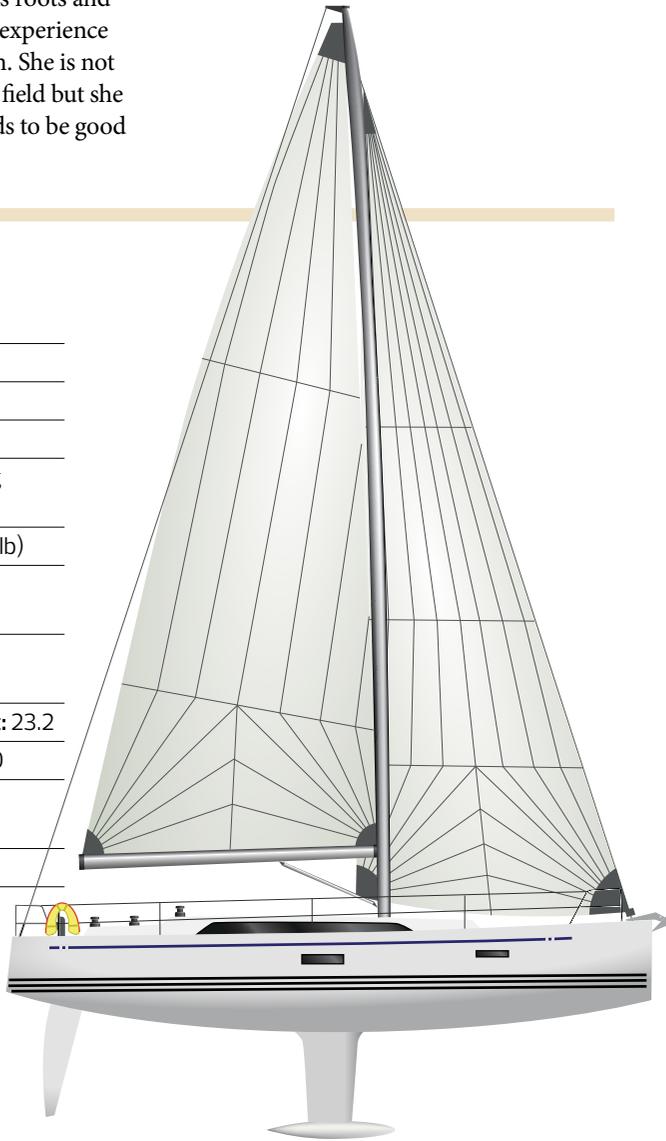
Base: £255,000

As tested: c£336,000

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For a fuller explanation of stability and performance figures see sailingtoday.co.uk

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ALTERNATIVE YACHTS



DEHLER 42

PRICE: £165,348

Dehler is another company with a rich pedigree in cruiser-racers and its latest line up is rightly lauded as a return to form. The 42 features somewhat more radical interior styling and similarly impressive performance.

craftinsure quote: from £889.41

inspirationmarine.co.uk



ELAN E4

PRICE: £103,000

Elan's E4 is a somewhat more radical design, featuring big aft sections, a chined hull and twin rudders. She's a joy to sail, particularly off the wind, and features surprisingly well-appointed accommodation.

craftinsure quote: from £430.45

elan-yachts.com



MAXI 1200

PRICE: £199,000

Pelle Petterson's latest design is another polished performer and also fits neatly into the Venn diagram shaped space between cruiser-racer that the X4 sits in. Beamy aft, with a generous sail area and quality interior, the Swede is a tempting alternative.

craftinsure quote: from £788.71

regattayachts.co.uk