

FIRST TEST

X4⁰

Light winds don't usually make for fast or enjoyable boat tests, but most boats tested aren't like X-Yachts' new X4⁰. Graham Snook heads to Denmark to put her through her paces

Words & pictures **Graham Snook**

SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE/ MODEL
X-Yachts X4⁰

PRICE FROM
£319,920 inc VAT

DESIGNER
Niels Jeppesen

BUILDER X-Yachts

The new yacht in X-Yacht's XRange is not a 40-footer. Let's get that out of the way now – she's 37ft 8in. She's great fun, and has the nimble feel and speed that most 40-footers can only dream of, but don't think she has the accommodation of a 40ft yacht; the 40 in her name is her length overall, including her bowsprit. Her interior is stylish, practical and well put together, she's easily handled by a couple and can take you cruising in speed and style.

With that clarified, I can start telling you all how good she is and, oh my, she is good. It's rare I'll find myself having a great sail in less than 10 knots of breeze. To be fair it's also rare to sail a 40ft, sorry, 38ft, yacht with Technora sails and a carbon fibre mast and boom and a 2.40m draught. But sailing south from Aarøsund in Denmark in 9 knots of breeze, we were having a blast and she was romping along going to windward at over 7 knots.

X-Yachts has long been a brand of proper sailing boats, thoroughbreds born to be sailed, not just comfortable yachts with masts and sails. Its boats are well-mannered →



LOGBOOK

TESTED BY:
Graham Snook

WHERE: Aarøsund,
South East
Denmark

WHEN:
11 July 2019

WIND: Force 3
150° (SSE)

SEASTATE: Smooth



and sail fast; with its heritage in racing, even X-Yachts' cruising range has a good turn of speed.

X-Yachts currently build three ranges of yachts; Xc for cruising, Xp for performance, and the latest XRange. The boats in each may be similar lengths, but each are different from the keel up. The new X4° is not just the comfortable interior of the Xc38 crammed into the sleek hull of the Xp38. The hull design characteristics on all three ranges are different: the Xc hulls have more volume to support the extra clobber required by the extended cruising sailor; the Xp are narrower with much slimmer bow sections; and the X4°'s hull has more rocker than the Xp while its broader forward sections give more space for the owner's cabin and wider aft sections with a soft, subtle chine, giving more volume aft.

While X's Xp yachts have gained a more cruiser-friendly interior over time, they retain weight-saving features, less joinery (although, don't for a minute think they are stripped out racers) and a carbon-reinforced subframe. The XRange, in contrast, carries over some of the Xp's sporty handling while keeping features reassuring to cruising sailors: lots of useful deck stowage, good headroom and a galvanised steel sub-frame beneath the sole which spreads the loads from the keel and mast.

With the average size of yachts gradually increasing to over 40ft, it is easy to become accustomed to their way of sailing. There's nothing wrong with the feel but, like the freedom



of an empty winding road after being stuck behind a tractor, sailing the X4° is a reminder of how good a sub-40ft yacht can feel. She strikes a lovely balance of nimbleness and control without being twitchy. Leave the wheel and she will veer off course, but the helm is so enjoyable you won't want to leave it.

The test boat was fitted with a B&G hydraulic autopilot ram. In the past, when manufacturers have blamed the autopilot for heaviness to the helm, I've asked for it to be removed – and the autopilot wasn't always the cause. On this occasion, without the ram fitted the wheel had the unrestricted preciseness I have come to expect from Jeffa cable steering, and it felt instantly lighter.

FAST BUT NOT FURIOUS

Even with the ram attached, the helm was light and nicely balanced. As the wind went to abeam and then aft, the weight did increase a little, but this was hull number one, and there is still a bit of fine tuning before the model goes into full production. If the feel of the helm and handling wasn't already enough to put a smile on my face, her speed would have. It might have been a grey day, with less than 10 knots true wind speed for most of the test, but she was sailing like there was sunshine and at least 15 knots. At an apparent wind angle of 24° she was making 6 knots effortlessly. Take it down to 27° and she was making over 7 knots. She benefited from being unladen with a clean hull, carbon fibre Axxon racing

ABOVE: The cockpit is long with supportive coamings. Genoa winches are optional

LEFT: Lift-up foot blocks give the helm more security



The fixed table support has stowage for six bottles



Beneath the forward berth there is lots of easily accessible stowage



The small, round light switches are inconspicuous and are illuminated blue at night



The roving bilge pump in the heads will reach every locker down below



The companionway doors open into recesses that make up rope lockers for the coachroof lines



Space around the helm is excellent, allowing the helm to sit forward, astride of the wheel

A self-tacking jib is standard. The genoa and fittings are optional

It was a flat, grey day, but she was sailing like there was sunshine and 15 knots of breeze



The Nordic oak used for the interior woodwork exudes quality and warmth

fill the aft end with cabins. There's a sail locker aft of the chain locker in the bow and a good sized cockpit locker, which houses the fuel tank and holding tank but still has lots of room. There are also lazarette lockers beneath the helms, a central gas locker beneath the sole too and there's a short fold-down transom (a larger one is optional). The only omission was lack of dedicated liferaft stowage, which would need to be stowed in a locker or on deck. One feature I think we'll be seeing a lot more of are the hinged washboards that open into recesses on each side of the companionway, behind which are deep rope bins. It's a very neat solution.

SCANDINAVIAN STYLE

In the same vein that her sailing reminded me how much I'd missed the handling of sub-12m yachts, seeing the grain detail of her beautiful Nordic oak interior brought back how much I'd missed seeing natural grain, rather than composite veneer, in yachts of this size. Many builders are using Alpi, or woods with a uniform grain pattern (like teak or mahogany), and there's nothing wrong with that, but the oak in the X4° raises the bar considerably.

Not only does it look good and exude warmth, the detail of the grain patterning around the boat and the way it matches from locker front to locker front highlights the quality of these boats.

The design is clean, stylish and has a typically Danish feel about it; white panels surrounded by horizontally-grained golden oak. It's all very tasteful.

The galley, at the base of the companionway, had a white Corian top with the corners of fiddles rounded, which will make cleaning and wiping it down a breeze; likewise, there's a low fiddle on the work surface outboard of the double stainless-steel sinks, a small thing but it stops any run-off making a beeline for the surround of the top-opening fridge.

The fridge wasn't the biggest, but there is space and the option for a front-opening fridge. Without it, there is a vast aft-opening locker inboard. There is also good locker space and stowage outboard and a handy line of soft-closing drawers aft. Above these is a locker just the right size for a coffee machine.

Opposite the galley is the chart table. Although it's a little shallow at 4.5cm, it has a line of drawers in its support and is a good rectangular size (56cm x 82cm/1ft 10in x 2ft 8in) and shape. Outboard is a decent-sized bin locker and there are a couple of bottom-hinged lockers above the switch panel.

There were a few areas where I'd have liked to have seen solid wood – just on the corner posts of the saloon table – so it matches the cabinetry of the forward cabin and as they will get battle-scarred, but also because I didn't like the little strip of veneer on the top (although as this boat was the prototype, it

BELOW: A soft chine in the aft sections helps make the hull more powerful

mast and Elvstrøm Epex Technora sails, no doubt, but even so, making over 8.5 knots in 11 knots breeze with the asymmetric was truly delightful.

Space around each wheel was good; there is plenty of room aft of the helm without feeling penned in by the pushpit and there's room to sit astride or forward of the wheel.

The mainsheet traveller is forward of the wheels, with the Harken Performa 40ST mainsheet winches deeply recessed into the coaming. The sheet runs from the winch to the mainsheet traveller – on the cockpit sole – then up to the boom to and down to the same setup on the other side. It's a neat system that

works well, but because the mainsheet is shorter than the traditional German mainsheet system, the sheet will tend to wear in the same place.

A self-tacking jib is standard but this boat had the optional genoa and winches, as well as tracks on the coachroof. The sheets run along the edge of the coachroof – outboard of the moulded recess for the sprayhood – to Harken Performa 46ST winches on the coaming.

The deck and cockpit of this boat were covered with Flexiteak rather than real wood, which still looked good and gave reassuring grip underfoot. Deck stowage is good, too, if you can resist the urge to

PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close-hauled	24-27°	13-15 knots	5.7-7.2 knots
Fetch	60°	10-12 knots	7.0-7.5 knots
Beam reach	90°	8.2-8.9 knots	6.0-6.7 knots
Broad reach	120°	5.4-6.0 knots	5.0-5.5 knots
Run	180°	4.0-4.4 knots	4.9-5.2 knots

1800rpm 6.3 knots (40hp); two-bladed folding propeller
*APPARENT WIND ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED



The heads compartment aft is long and spacious, although headroom aft is low



Thanks to a pair of overhead flush-mounted hatches, a forward-facing window and hull windows, the forecabin is beautifully light



The berth in the aft cabin is wide and long, while the cabin gives good engine access

may still change). That said, these really are small details, which shows that there wasn't much else I could find to disagree with. Quite the contrary, in fact, there was lots to like: small, neat round illuminated light switches, the white-framed BSI windows (two of which open on each side to give drip-free ventilation) that can be covered with recessed Ocean Air blinds, and the lovely laminated fiddle around the saloon table when it's closed; when it opens the top is fiddle-free and is supported on the table column without the need for hinged supports. In the column you'll find stowage for six bottles that are held in the bottom-hinged door. It's all of a high standard.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

There's also much that can't be seen. The hull, for example, is a vacuum-infused foam-cored epoxy (which has been post cured) and the bulkheads are laminated in place. All the skin fittings are recessed into the hull, as is the keel. It's a T-shaped keel and has a lead bulb with an iron fin – the whole assembly is encapsulated in fibreglass matt and resin then faired. Inboard, the keel is attached to a large galvanised-steel frame, complete with a single-point lifting attachment.

The saloon has L-shaped seating (and the water tank) to port, while to starboard is a 2.0m long seat. Behind the seabacks is a small amount of stowage, while above them is a fiddled top and a line of optional four bottom-hinged lockers, all with gas struts and the grain of the wood running horizontally

along them. There are speaker grills at each end of these, and the two central lockers lose a little space to the chainplate structure outboard. Hull windows bring light into the saloon, but they are a little low to get a good view of the horizon out of.

The mast is keel-stepped, so you'll have an aluminium mast in your saloon if you don't take the £54,220 (inc VAT) option of the gorgeous shiny black carbon one. The inboard leaf of the saloon table is fixed, and with the mast blocking the forward end of the seating it is a bit of a shuffle in and out of the forward seat. The support for the saloon table has a deep-fiddled section in the top; this works well as a handhold as well as a storage area. At deck level there are stainless-steel grab handles on the starboard side, and wooden handles are an option.

Headroom throughout is 1.88m (6ft 2in) or more and the only exception is the forward cabin where it's still 1.80m (6ft). Going into the forward cabin there's an X-Yacht emblazoned tread plate. The cabin is light, thanks to the large white headboard, a deck hatch above the berth, a second further aft as well as the forward-facing window on the forward end of the coachroof, and a hull window on either side. Above the hull windows are a line of four lockers like those



ABOVE: The chart table is a good size with plenty of handy stowages around and beneath it

BELOW: Vacuum-infused epoxy makes the hull lighter and stiffer than an equivalent polyester hull



Room around the engine can be increased by removing panels in the aft cabin, making access very good

in the saloon. There are also hanging and shelved lockers on either side of the door, with a bottom-hinged locker beneath and a good fiddled area too. All the locker doors have a decent 2mm edging strip, which contributes to the quality feel onboard. The headlining is neatly moulded throughout the boat, and in the saloon it hides LED strip lights.

Beneath the aft end of the 2.0m x 1.5m (6ft 7in x 4ft 11in) berth is a large (77cm x 88cm x 38cm) stowage area (with a central partition) that's accessed by lifting the aft half of the berth, with the weight taken by gas struts and the berth cushions hinged midway to make access easier, there is more stowage under the lids beneath this, but forward space was taken up by the retractable bow thruster on this boat.

IN THE DETAILS

Moving towards the stern, there's a good-sized aft cabin with a hull window and deep, fiddled shelves. The berth was wide, even with a box 20cm x 28cm (8in x 11in) taken from the inboard foot end. It would have been nicer if the corner of this was rounded, just to make it more shin-friendly.

At the forward end of the berth, the engine is accessed via removable panels, which, along with those in the heads, gave good all-round access. Unusually, access to under the engine was excellent and a moulded tray area beneath was designed to capture any stray oil.

The heads compartment creeps under the cockpit moulding giving it a deceptively large feel, though headroom while sitting on the heads (with the Tecma electric toilet) was 92cm (3ft), which if you were any taller than me (1.78m/5ft 10in), might be a little low. It was nice to see a porcelain hand bowl, and the yard is changing the mirror so it is properly angled when standing up.

You'll discover the shower compartment at the entrance of the heads compartment so, if it's been used, you run the risk of soggy socks and wet footprints through the saloon if you're next in line for the heads.

There is a fold-out partition to stop the rest of the heads compartment getting a dousing from the shower, and a moulded GRP bench seat outboard. Lift the lid of this and you'll discover a roving bilge pump with a hose long enough to reach even the furthest forward bow compartment housing the bowthruster, which is a rare and pleasing detail.



X-YACHTS X4⁰

THE TEST VERDICT

There is no doubt that X4⁰ is one of my favourite production boats; everything about her just seems right. Of course, for a boat of this quality you pay handsomely for it and this boat did have more than £100,000 of extras added. No doubt these improved her performance, and it would have been nice to see how good she was without the carbon rig and with her standard 2.1m draught keel.

As she was, though, not many boats of her length can rival her, given the comfort and build quality that's down below and, of course, the speed you'll be sailing.

This two-cabin layout worked well and provided plenty of stowage. A three-cabin layout will be available, but you'll lose the chart table and much of the spacious heads compartment; given it's the only heads on board, it is a compromise you'd want to weigh up carefully. The three-cabin layout works better on the larger X4³ where less compromise is needed.

Boats to rival her are few and far between, though she sits between the more expensive Faurby 396 and the Arcona 380. While all three of these boats sail well it would be unfair to just look at the bottom line as each yacht has her own merits. Which would I choose? That is a very tough decision and one I am loath to commit to with so few words to pontificate with.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

At 38ft, the X4⁰ squeezes in under the 12m mark, meaning that sails, loads, berthing and costs are all kept within bounds. The size of the yacht and her sails feel less intimidating than those on a yacht above 40ft.

If you've enjoyed racing in the past and still feel the need for speed, but now want a little more comfort – and you have the funds available – this boat is a good choice. She's a high-spec cruiser that is hugely rewarding and fun to helm, with a very comfortable, stylish interior.

It's very rare for me to give gushing praise of a yacht. Boats as good as this don't come along that often, but when they do, I feel like I have the best job in the world.

PROS

- Nimble handling
- Danish quality
- Attention to detail

CONS

- Headroom over toilet
- No dedicated liferaft stowage
- More solid wood could be nice

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE AS TESTED
£489,624

LOA 12.09m (39ft 8in)

HULL LENGTH
11.50m (37ft 8in)

LWL 10.40m (34ft 1in)

BEAM 3.81m (12ft 6in)

DRAUGHT
2.40m (7ft 10in)
(Std 2.10m/6ft 11in)

DISPLACEMENT
7,800kg (17,196 lb)

BALLAST
3,070kg (6,768 lb)

BALLAST RATIO 39.4%

DISPLACEMENT
Length 194

SAIL AREA
84m² (904sq ft)

SA/D RATIO 21.7

DIESEL
200 litres (44 gal)

WATER
300 litres (66 gal)

ENGINE
40hp (Std 29hp)

TRANSMISSION
Saildrive

RCD CATEGORY A

DESIGNER
Niels Jeppesen

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