

X-Yachts X4



She is more 'cruising' than X-Yachts' Performance range but more 'performance' than its Cruising range, so who is she for? Graham Snook takes her sailing to find out



ALL PHOTOS: GRAHAM-SNOOK.COM

Fold-up footblocks make it more comfortable to steer standing up, and also allow you to brace your feet when sitting down

I was so engrossed in the telltales and the speed at the helm of the new X4, from Danish builder X-Yachts, that I failed to see the two-inch-high display showing our rapidly reducing depth. Luckily I wasn't alone and the voice of Stuart Abernethy, from X-Yachts GB, managed to infiltrate my world – sparing me the embarrassment of going aground.

Rarely are boats so enveloping; there is usually a distraction, no matter how small, that diminishes and distracts from the experience. But on the X4, nothing. On a grey October day with light winds and a chill in the air I'd found my utopia.



The genoa sheets and genoa car control lines are both led aft under the coachroof

Performance

It was blowing Force 3-4 and when it did occasionally increase, her speed swiftly followed suit. Our test boat's owner has treated himself, and her, to North Sails 3Di one-piece composite membrane sails, which added quite a lot to her overall cost, but they were beautiful and a joy to use.

I could wax lyrical until I ran out of adjectives about how good the helm felt. Not only did it have the right weight, balance and gearing, it also made the X4 behave beautifully. I'd love to get her out in a bit more wind to see what she can really do. Under gennaker she made 6.7 knots in 6.5 knots apparent, at 70° off the wind. When we powered her up a bit more to around 55° apparent, it felt great.

With her four-cylinder diesel purring smoothly at 2,000 rpm, the two-blade folding prop pushed her along at 6.3 knots.

At the helm

The twin wheels are set well aft so she feels longer than her 41ft (12.5m) hull length. There's no raised coaming to sit on outboard, so you run the gauntlet of getting a wet bottom if any water

X-Yachts X4 – Performance on test

Point of sail	Apparent wind angle	Apparent wind speed	Speed through the water
Close-hauled	26°-30°	12-15 knots	6.0-6.8 knots
Fetch	60°	10-12 knots	6.5-7.5 knots
Beam reach	90°	7.0-9.5 knots	5.6-7.1 knots
Broad reach	120°	8.2-10 knots	5.9-6.9 knots
Run	180°	5.2-5.6 knots	4.2-4.5 knots

runs along the deck. Soggy bums aside, the helmsman is well looked after with hinged foot blocks to stand on, or brace against, and mainsheet winches to hand.

I did find that the single backstay cuts quite far forward, so it gets in the way when moving between wheels.

If you're sailing with crew, you'll probably stay behind the wheels, but when you're short-handed you can sit comfortably just in front of them with the mainsheet to hand and quick, easy access to the forward section of the cockpit.

The engine controls are low down to

With minimal sheets and lines visible all attention is focused on her modern but elegant design



starboard, so to operate the lever you have to sit down with legs astride the wheel, which restricts your view forward from the helm when coming into a marina.

Design & construction

As with all X-Yachts, beneath the floor you'll find a substantial galvanised steel sub-frame to take the loads from the keel and keel-stepped mast. The hull itself is foam-cored, vacuum-infused epoxy, post-cured to 70°C. The deck uses polyester resin and again is foam-cored, with aluminium and plywood backing plates. The hull has a flange inside the broad, solid toerail where the deck is bonded in place with structural adhesive.

Her hull has more volume in the forward sections than her racier sisters in the Xperformance range, while her aft sections sport a subtle, soft chine.

Sailplan

She has a fractional, two-spreader Seldén rig with discontinuous rod rigging. The chainplates are recessed into the toerail to help keep the deck clear. The genoa tracks are set on top of the coachroof, well inboard of the shrouds, which makes



The side decks are clear and wide. She has a solid, 'big boat' feel when you're walking forward

Sitting forward of the wheels, the helmsman has the mainsheet to hand and access to the rest of the cockpit is easy



The sail and chain locker forward are good, but there is no bow roller for a mooring

tacking a stress-free affair. Off the wind, a third genoa sheet can be taken to the toerail to open up the slot. Our test yacht had single-line slab reefing.

The genoa is on a through-deck furler. The reefing line on this boat suffered some friction, but she also had an electric winch nearby to help.

There's an optional, fixed carbon fibre bowsprit, which can take a Code Zero-style gennaker close to the stem or a fuller asymmetric kite further forward.

Deck layout

Her decks have an elegant sheer and are wide, flat and wonderfully encumbrance-free. All lines, where possible, are run below deck. They disappear beneath the coachroof at the mast foot and reappear aft of the recess for the sprayhood. The genoa sheets are also led out of view below deck and even the genoa car adjustment lines vanish into the coachroof.

With so little clutter on deck and such solid build quality under foot, when you walk forward she has a 'big boat' feel. There are handrails on the coachroof, but they're short and stop at the aft end of the

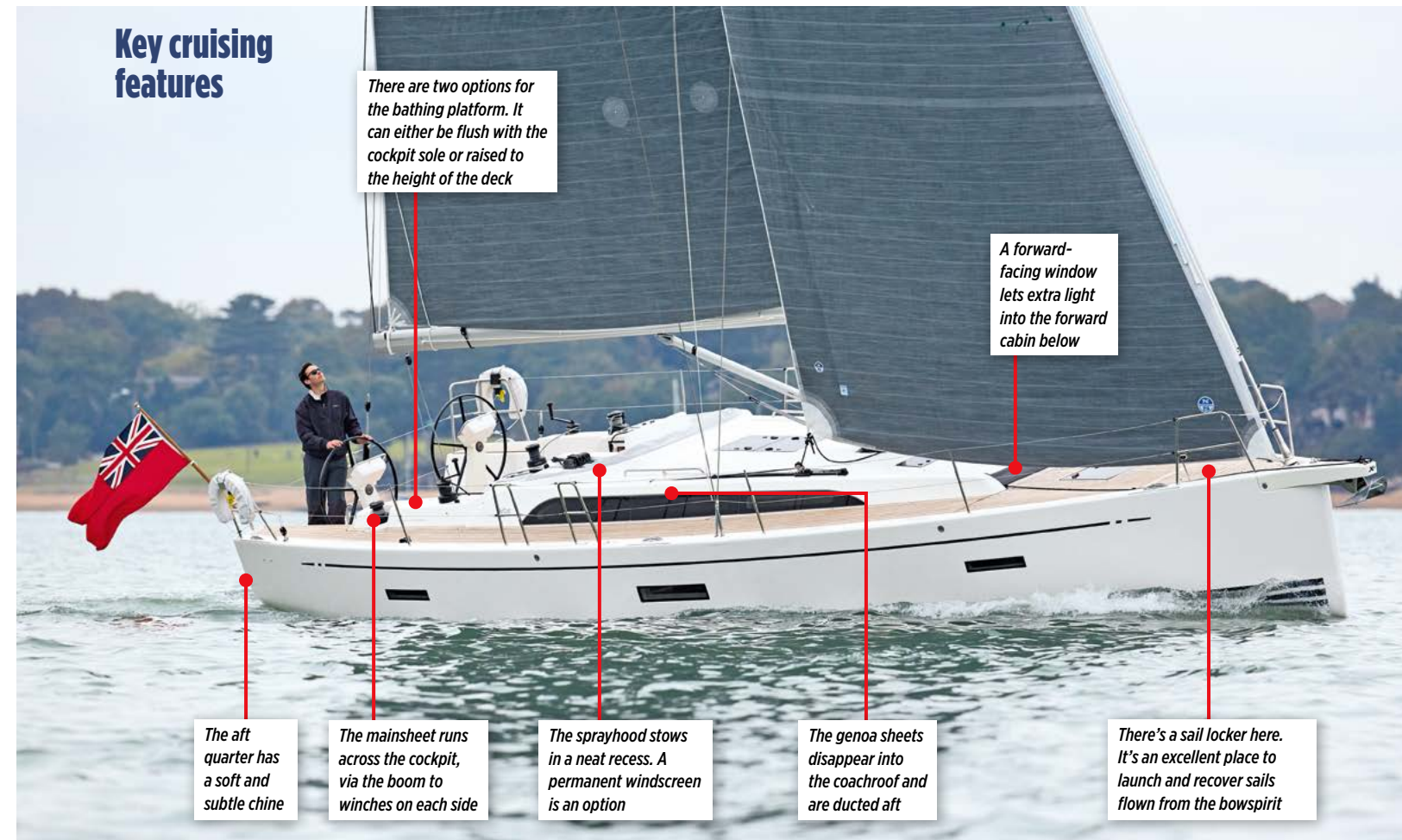
genoa track, a long way aft of the mast.

The mainsheet and genoa are controlled by four Harken Performa 46.2 self-tailing winches, two on either side of the cockpit. From each mainsheet winch, the sheet is led into the coaming, down through a locker and out again to a traveller recessed into the cockpit sole just forward of the wheels, then up to the end of the boom, back to the traveller and up via the same route to the winch on the other side. It's a neat, direct system that works well.

The deck stowage is excellent, although I'd prefer the sail locker in the bow to have an automatic bilge pump rather than letting water into the bilge via a tube, even if it does have a seacock on the end. As well as the hull-depth sail locker in the bows she has two small, sole-depth cockpit lockers, and two large lazarettes underneath the helm positions.

All locker lids are supported by smooth-operating gas struts. If water accumulates on the lazarette locker lids, or in the recesses of the footblocks, it will drain into the locker and onto whatever gear you have in there – a blot on her otherwise impressive copybook.

Key cruising features



There are two options for the bathing platform. It can either be flush with the cockpit sole or raised to the height of the deck

A forward-facing window lets extra light into the forward cabin below

The aft quarter has a soft and subtle chine

The mainsheet runs across the cockpit, via the boom to winches on each side

The sprayhood stows in a neat recess. A permanent windscreen is an option

The genoa sheets disappear into the coachroof and are ducted aft

There's a sail locker here. It's an excellent place to launch and recover sails flown from the bowsprit

Living aboard

At first glance, the X4's Alpi veneer might look similar to what you'll find in cheaper brands of yacht, but look closer and you can't fail to notice the difference in quality and finish. Oak veneer is another option.

Where she really shines, though, is in the small details. The light switches are small, bevelled circles of anodised aluminium with an illuminated red ring, the grilles for ventilation and speakers and the corners of the cabinetry are made from solid oak and the surround of the vast saloon table is laminated. Pleated Oceanair blinds are recessed into the pelmet of the window surrounds; it's all very neat.

With a heavy tint on the saloon windows and overhead hatches, it's a bit dark in her main cabin without the LED strip lights – and I'd want the optional lights under the line of bottom-hinged lockers just below deck level. But LEDs are frugal in their power consumption and she is lovely and bright inside when you switch them on.

The large saloon table sits on a stout central plinth and folds in half, serving the C-shaped seating on the port-hand side of the boat when it's folded up. The plinth has two drawers inside, one containing a six-bottle wine rack, and a fiddled area on top. The table is hinged on the centreline and when unfolded, it's fully supported by the central column.

Looking up from the 15cm (6in) thick cushions in the forward cabin, you can't

help admiring the detail of the optional roll-bottom doors of the lockers that run the length of the berth on each side. There were some rough edges, alas, in the headlining by the owner's bed – the only thing that's remotely untidy on this boat, and the owners will see it every time they wake up on board! This is only the second hull out of the moulds; one would hope future boats will be neater.

The forecabin is smart and stylish, although I thought the hull windows were set a bit low and too far aft for a good view out. The en suite heads compartment is a good size, but it does very slightly hinder access to the port side of the large 1.52m x 2.02m (5ft x 6ft 7in) island bed. There is a massive, quartered stowage compartment under the aft 1.04m (3ft 5in) of the bed. It's hinged forward and supported by two gas struts, but with bedding on top they seemed to struggle.

There's good, useful stowage outboard to starboard with hanging space, shelves and drawers, which, like all cupboards and drawers on board, benefit from high-quality soft closures.

Access to the starboard aft cabin is via a dual-use door for the shower and heads compartment. In the cabin there's an optional sea-berth outboard – a well-padded and neat pipe cot – with the 1.45 x 1.96m (4ft 9in x 6ft 5in) double berth beneath. The head space for the inboard occupant is a bit restricted due to the



The L-shaped galley is easy to work in, with good workspace and ample stowage

access panel for the engine and calorifier. The port aft cabin is a mirror image but without the heads compartment.

Chart table

There is an option for a larger, forward-facing chart table if you plump for a single aft cabin. On this boat it was aft-facing. At the back of the chart table is a recess for odds and ends, which may reduce your working space if you put too much in it. There is some stowage around the



The saloon has a wide walk-through. When the table is open, it serves the seats on both sides

table, but nowhere to put something as big as a pilot book or almanac, other than lying them down in one of the lockers that run the length of the saloon.

Space for mounting instruments is also a bit limited, thanks to the fold-down switch panel facing you at eye level, and a recess above that with a stainless steel fiddle rail. It is possible to hide smaller instruments away in the lockers above and outboard; that's where the stereo was on our test boat. There's also a handy line of three drawers in the chart table's support.

Galley

There's a really well-designed area at the aft end of the galley. The cupboard has a pull-out drawer for a coffee machine and stowage around it. The work surface at its base is a good place to prepare food, right next to the cooker hob. Under the work surface are four very useful drawers. The two top are 28cm wide and 8cm deep, but reach 57cm (1ft 10in) under the worktop. Below them are two shorter but deeper drawers. Under the twin stainless-steel sinks is a nice pull-out bin compartment

and next to it, inboard, is the optional front-opening fridge.

You can lean on the companionway steps to cook if you need to, but it would have been better if the L-shaped galley had a small return to brace yourself against while using the galley at sea.

There's an annoying inspection hatch in the galley sole, which rattles when stood on – and it's right where you stand to cook, wash up or prepare food. X-yachts will now be moving it, and the filter it gives access to. The only other glitch I found on our test yacht was the gas pipe: on this boat it was too short and stopped the stove gimbaling fully. It also rubbed on the bottom of the cooker on starboard tack – far from ideal.

Maintenance

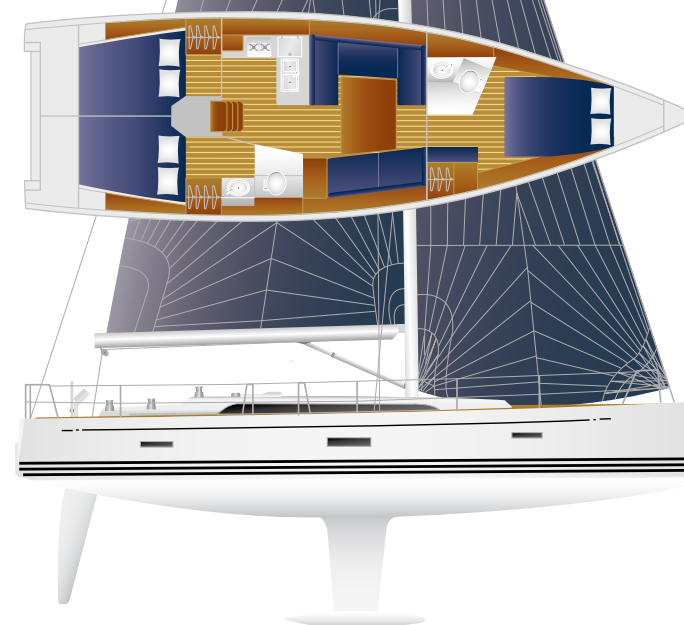
There's good access to the grey Raymarine boxes of electronics on the underside of a hinged bunk board beneath the starboard aft cabin berth. To get the floorboards up, you use a suction cup. The boards are kept apart by plastic spacers, which also do a good job of collecting dust.

The four-cylinder, 45hp common rail diesel fills the engine compartment, but it's easy to get at all service points with the access panels removed.



The forecabin is a bright and nicely styled, with stowage under the aft end of the berth

X-Yachts X4



GRAPHICS: MAXINE HEATH

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Price £397,000 inc VAT as tested; base price £288,000
- LOA 13.09m (42ft 11in)
- LWL 11.31m (37ft 1in)
- Beam 3.95 m (13ft)
- Draught 2.20 m (7ft 3in)
- Displacement 8,850 kg (19,510 lb)
- Ballast 3,800kg (8,378 lb)
- Ballast ratio 42.9%
- Sail area 97m² (1044sq ft)
- SA/D ratio 23.1
- Diesel 200 litres (44 gal)
- Water 340 litres (75 gal)
- Engine 45 hp HPCR saildrive
- RCD Cat A
- Designer X-Yachts design team
- Builder X-Yachts
- UK Agent X-Yachts (GB)
- Tel 02380 453377
- Website www.x-yachtsgb.com

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

The X4 is a dangerously fun boat to sail. She is so engaging and enjoyable to helm that it's easy to forget about the constraints of things like draught – as I did. I could of course blame the position of the chartplotters on the binnacle in front of each wheel – which were only really visible if standing behind the wheel – or I could just admit the truth, I was totally absorbed in the X4 and loved the feel from the Solimar steering: smooth, precise, responsive and up there with the best boats I've sailed.

She's an easy yacht to sail short-handed, or even solo with an autopilot. While the cockpit is wide it's also quite short, and not designed for a full race crew. Lines and sheets can be managed easily by one person without feeling like they've run a marathon around the deck. The 106% genoa is a doddle to tack and when you sit forward of the wheel, the mainsheet winch is to hand and the cockpit is easily accessible. There are some boat tests where I never want the sailing side of it to end, this was one of them.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

With genoa tracks on top of the coachroof and all lines (including genoa sheets and car adjusters) led under the deck, the only things to catch an unwary toe are two lines going across the foredeck and two flip-flop turning blocks by the genoa winches – that's it! While the seats in the cockpit are only 1.47m (4ft 10in) long, with the wonderfully clutter-free deck you could lie down and stretch out almost anywhere else. The winches do impinge on elbow space on the coaming a little when you're relaxing.

No part of her ground tackle or windlass are above deck, so the deck has the best hope of remaining free of muck from the anchor. The anchor lives in the bow roller under the optional bowsprit. There is no second bow roller and the hull has minimal chafe protection around the fold-down mooring cleats (fixed cleats are standard), which are quite far aft, so you'd have to rig up your own anti-chafe solution for nights on swinging moorings. Below decks she has options of twin or single aft cabins and you can choose to have one or two heads compartments.

Would she suit you and your crew?

If you see yourself as a sporty cruiser, or someone who like sailing fast but also doesn't want to compromise on their comfort, the X4 could be what you're looking for. And if you enjoy sailing, you'll love her. She's a real connoisseur's boat and quite simply a delight on the helm. I know looks are subjective, but X-Yachts have put in a lot of effort to keep her lines and decks clean and I think she looks great.

She may have a base price of £288,000 inc VAT, but there are many lovely details that are options, like the bathing platform, hull-coloured carbon fibre bowsprit and fold-down cleats. Ticking these three boxes would increase her cost by more than £10,700 inc VAT, but that's not to say these items are overpriced. I mention it as a caution – you really should make allowances for some box-ticking in your budget.

However much you do spend, it will be a distant memory once you get the wheel in your hand and start looking at the telltales. Just remember to keep an eye on the depth...

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING
★★★★★

COASTAL PORT-HOPPING
★★★★★

OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING
★★★★★

TRADE WIND VOYAGING
★★★★★

HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE
★★★★★



The chart table is good, although it lacks stowage for larger books