

# XC35



Fun to sail, well thought out, with good performance, the XC35 should be a great coastal cruiser. But is she? Graham Snook takes her for a spin to find out



PHOTOS: GRAHAMSNOOK.COM

*A great all-rounder: fast enough to be fun, relaxed enough to remain in control*

Size matters, so my wife tells me, then again she also tells me she's right 99.9% of the time. So why should I worry about a few millimetres here or there? Most of the time I don't, but looking around the Danish built XC35 my eyes kept coming back to the fiddles and their thickness. On other boats with that quality feel, the fiddles are thicker; thick means strong, strong means quality. It's a simple equation that has served me well through my life, but it doesn't mean I'm right. The galley fiddles might look thin, but while the crew on deck were bracing themselves in a nasty squall that sent the toerail under in seconds, I grabbed the first thing to hand to stop my sideways lurch. I'm happy to report that both fiddles and I remained in one piece.

*'The XC35 strikes the right compromise between performance and comfort'*

## Performance

The morning started as beautiful summer's day – force 4, warmth and sunshine – but by lunchtime the day deteriorated to squally showers. Beating up Southampton water with the flood tide, she was most comfortable at 28-32° to the apparent wind, keeping the log reading between 6.2-6.7 knots in 18-23 knots of breeze. At 60° in 14-16 knots, her speed was 6.5-7.0. At 90° in 12-18 knots

she logged a healthy 6.6-7.7 knots. With the wind aft of the beam at 120° – the apparent wind now around 10 knots – her speed was 6.6-7.0 knots and between 5.1-6.1 knots at 150°. We finished off making 5 knots goose-winged downwind.

## At the helm

I found the helm seats, aft of the twin wheels, too low to sit comfortably and steer. With thick cockpit cushions, or with the autopilot on, it would be a different story. There are handy glassfibre foot blocks on the sole for bracing. The mainsheet is taken to a 40ST winch, which is located forward, but within reach of the wheel. The 46ST genoa winches are out of reach further forward. Both sets of winches are outboard and recessed into the high coaming. The winches on our test boat were Andersen, but standard spec for this model is Harken. When you sit on the coaming the visibility forward from the helm is good and your rear end is kept a good height from the deck.

## Design & construction

Under the saloon sole is a chunky galvanised steel sub-frame that takes the loads from the keel and keel-stepped mast. There is a lifting point in the frame, and a removable panel in the coachroof above it, for single-point lifting. The GRP foam-sandwich lamination looks vacuum-infused, but in fact it's hand laminated and very neat – even where it takes a torch to see.

## Sailplan

Her sail area of 65m<sup>2</sup> is quite generous for her size, but even when pressed she behaved herself. Our test boat had North Spectra SRP tri-radial sails: a battened 107% jib and a fully-battened mainsail with single-line reefing that uses low-friction rings rather than blocks on the



*The cockpit works well, although the helm seats are a little too low for a good view forward*

*If you enjoy coastal cruising, you'll enjoy it more in this boat – she really is a delight*



sail. There is an eye on the optional bowsprit for the tack of larger headsails.

The mainsheet is forward of the companionway and has no traveller. Instead, it is controlled from the winches at the helm and a powerful kicker.

### Deck layout

The stout bowsprit, hard screen, cockpit table, Andersen winches, windlass and coachroof handrails add greatly to her look and practicality, but all are optional. Yes, you read correctly, coachroof grabrails are optional. And with all the halyards led beneath the deck, if you were to forget to tick the box for grabrails there would be nothing inboard to hold on to – a poor decision by X-Yachts, I feel they should be standard on a cruising boat.

The rest of the boat is great. A sheltered cockpit, deck stowage aplenty, a vast cockpit locker held open with a gas strut and large lazarette lockers – one with enclosed gas bottle stowage. The pedestals for the wheels rise from the aft of the cockpit seat, reducing their length,



**The fold-down transom is neat, but the bathing ladder needs a handhold**

but the curved coaming corners forward make up for this.

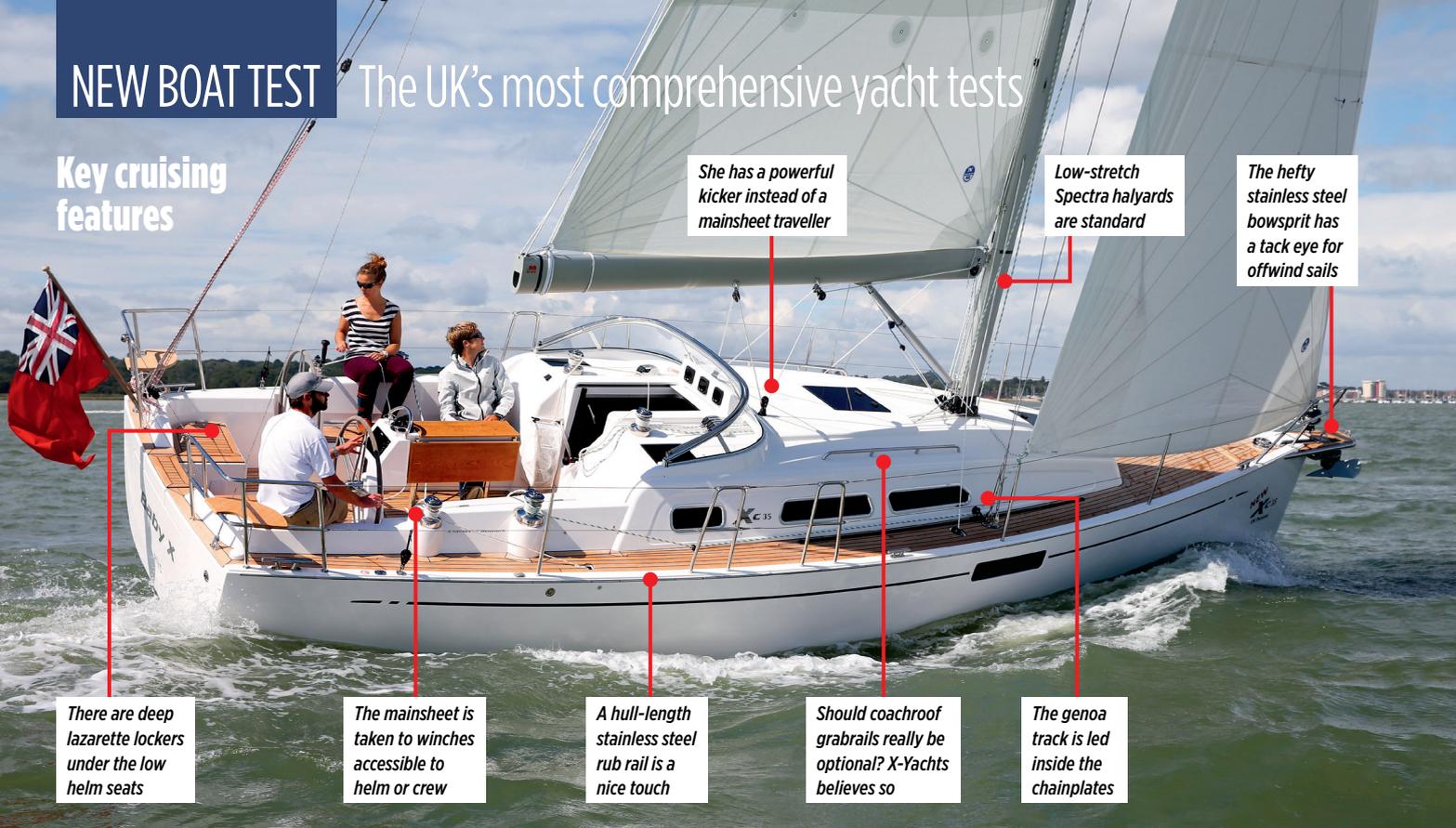
There is liferaft stowage forward of the fold-down transom – I would have liked to see quick-release pins on the hinges to aid access from the water, or if inverted. One hopes, like the liferaft, they would never need to be used.

### Living aboard

The first thing I noticed about the saloon was the table and the 37cm (1ft 2 in) square column that supports it. The port leaf (1.07m long and reduces from 49cm to 0.42cm wide) is fixed on half of the column, the fiddled starboard leaf stows on top of it. When opened, the fiddles are underneath with the tabletop flat and it requires no supports: very tidy. The only downside is the 28cm (11in) legroom if you're sitting astride the column. The column has drawers, but only the lower two are accessible if the table is open.

There is an L-shaped end cushion on the 1.86m (6ft 3in) port seat, which, if its removal was needed for sleeping, would be a chore to stow. Outboard of the long seats (starboard 2.0m, 6ft 7in) on both sides are neat shelves and adjustable book stowage – a stainless steel brace slots into holes on the horizontal surface. Above these are the large (75cm x 12cm/2ft 5in x 5in) hull windows. Small lockers sit either end, their top surrounded by a fiddle, making handy storage for small items. ➔

## Key cruising features



She has a powerful kicker instead of a mainsheet traveller

Low-stretch Spectra halyards are standard

The hefty stainless steel bowsprit has a tack eye for offwind sails

There are deep lazarettes under the low helm seats

The mainsheet is taken to winches accessible to helm or crew

A hull-length stainless steel rub rail is a nice touch

Should coachroof grabrails really be optional? X-Yachts believes so

The genoa track is led inside the chainplates



The fold-over leaf of the saloon table is a simple, elegant solution that makes good use of space

Above these are full-length steel grabrails.

Ventilation is good when you open the coachroof windows. The aft cabin berth has a good space above it before your head hits the cockpit moulding. It's a big berth, but an awkward shape: 2m (6ft 7in) long on one side, 1.5m (4ft 11in) on the other.

In the forecabin is a hanging locker with a cut-away in the base of the locker beneath it, to allow longer clothes (1.2m) to hang freely. Of course this only works if the locker below is empty at that point. Fiddled shelves run forward at shoulder height on either side; a thin stainless steel rail boosts the height of restraint and adds a touch of class. There are also handy fiddled areas by the head of each berth.

The heads has access to the cockpit locker and a decent hanging locker – with well-labelled through-hull fittings inside.



The chart table is a nice size, and offers separate stowage for charts and clutter

The mirror angle reflected my flab rather than my face, but the shower had a deep sump, which is a useful feature.

### Chart table

4cm (1.5 in) deep fiddles surround the chart table, but they're cut away where the soft, squishy cushion holds its occupant in place. The table is large and can hold a 61cm x 90cm chart with ease. Inside, it's only 4cm deep – fine for charts, anything else can be stored in a lidded, 4cm deep locker outboard. However, this locker did have an annoying pop-up catch that would pop up when I was using the chart table. There's 17cm deep stowage outboard of the navigator's seat, which is forward-hinged with stowage beneath. Access to behind the instruments is excellent.

### Galley

For a boat so good, I was surprised to see a lack of dedicated workspace in the L-shaped galley. Food can be prepared on the sink top chopping boards, it's true, but where to put the ingredients if you're using the other sink or opening the fridge? There is a small area next to the aft bulkhead, beneath which are five drawers of varying depths, but it's not enough. Stowage is reasonable; there's a line (1.2m x 13cm) of lockers behind the stove. Above are three larger lockers; none with shelves, although there is pegged stowage in the forward two. There's no splashback panel behind the sinks, but there's a gash bin in the locker beneath them. The two-burner Eno stove gimbals well, but I'm not a fan of metal handholds above cookers.

### Maintenance

Access around the engine is good, thanks in part to a large, removable GRP panel in the aft cabin, and access from the heads.

# XC35



GRAPHICS: PATRICK MORRISSEY/MAXINE HEATH

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Price** (as tested) £213,000
- **LOA** 10.36 m (34ft 0in)
- **LWL** 9.6m (31ft 6in)
- **Beam** 3.52m (11ft 5in)
- **Draught** 1.9m (6ft 2in)
- **Displ** 6,450kg (14,219 lb)
- **Ballast** 2,150kg (4,739 lb)
- **Ballast ratio** 33.3%
- **Sail area** 65.4m<sup>2</sup> (704sq ft)
- **SA/D ratio** 19.2
- **Diesel** 165 lit (36gal)
- **Water** 245 lit (54gal)
- **Engine** 30hp
- **Transmission** Saildrive
- **RCD category** A
- **Designer** Nils Jeppesen
- **Builder** X-Yachts
- **UK agent** X-Yachts (GB)
- **Tel** 023 8045 3377
- **Website** www.x-yachtsgb.com



*There is plenty of stowage, but little work surface in the galley. Thin fiddles are stronger than they look (inset)*



## OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

### What's she like to sail?

The XC35 strikes the right compromise between performance and comfort – fast enough to be fun, relaxed enough to remain in control. When the apparent wind piped up to 25 knots, although overpowered she just heeled and showed no tendency to lose grip. I tried to make her misbehave, but lost my footing before she did. There's no traveller, but the double-ended mainsheet is taken to the winch next to both helm positions.

I found I really had to sail her through a tack, rather than throw the helm across and hope for the best. She benefits from a gentle hand – tack too quickly and she gives you the lack of enthusiasm you deserve. Tack her well and she'll reward you by maintaining speed before accelerating away.

Off the wind she positively romped along. Feedback from the Jefa steering was firm and precise, with just the right amount of weight. The helm seats are too low to sit on comfortably and steer from. Thick cushions would improve matters. Sitting out is a joy – to windward or leeward with your bum hooked over the coaming, it's comfortable and visibility forward is good.

### What's she like in port and at anchor?

If you opt for a bowsprit, you'll get a single bow roller with resident anchor, so moorings strops would need to be taken directly to the bow cleats. Not ideal, but a full-length steel rub rail protects the hull. She handles as expected under power, so once in port it's time to relax. The cockpit seats are a bit short at 1.6m, but this is a minor detail.

The galley workspace was on the frugal side – unless one of the sink-covering chopping boards is employed – and the lack of a splashback an oversight. A cutlery drawer in the galley would have been nice, but using the second drawer down in the table pedestal is an option (the top drawer is inaccessible if the table is open). Everything else was how I expect and wish to see things. The saloon is light, the mix of stainless steel and teak is stylish and well thought-out, and the whole boat has good ventilation. The heads is a good size and little things like a sump in the shower make living on board that much better.

Her fold-down transom is a good size, but in a rough anchorage it may be awash and its bathing ladder lacks a handhold.

### Would she suit you and your crew?

If you enjoy coastal cruising, you'll enjoy it more in this boat – she really is a delight. I'd love to take her off around the UK tomorrow. Okay, coachroof grabrails shouldn't be an option and there are many other options that it would be hard not to go for (the bowsprit, toughened glass windscreen, guardrail gates and windlass for example), which in turn would increase the price. She could, however, be cruised without most of these.

It's refreshing to sail on a mid-30ft yacht that feels like she was designed by sailors who have the owner in mind, rather than a charter operator. She's a great all-round package.

It speaks volumes that my only real niggle was the thickness of the fiddles. In my book, 'quality' looks and feels thick and strong, like the steel sub-frame hidden beneath the floor. But the rest of the boat was so good that I'd happily live with thin fiddles.

**Would she suit your style of sailing?**

**CREEK CRAWLING**  
★★★★☆

**COASTAL PORT-HOPPING**  
★★★★★

**OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING**  
★★★★☆

**TRADE WIND VOYAGING**  
★★★★☆

**HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE**  
★☆☆☆☆