

MOTOR  
BOATS **TESTED**

# Aquanaut Privilege

Dutch steel cruisers have found their curves. We take this new blend of the contemporary and the traditional for a spin on the English Channel

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON

BOAT REPORT  
**AQUANAUT PRIVILEGE**

“With most boats pushing for high speeds, never forget the virtues of life at seven knots”



**FACT FILE**  
Aquanaut  
Privilege 1250  
LOA: 41ft 4in  
(12.65m)  
PRICE: £208,147  
TOP SPEED:  
9 knots





Saloon seating and the open-plan forward sections work well

**T**oday's steel cruisers are about much more than pottering along rivers. Thirty-knot speeds and the kind of onboard wizardry that can make a GRP craft look positively yesteryear are all good for business, demonstrating the possibilities of this most flexible of boat-building materials.

Flexibility has always been a factor below decks, with any number of layouts and finishes available to cater for owners who aspire to selling up and leaving it all behind. The steel fraternity's newfound fondness for curves now means that they can do this aboard a boat that looks every bit as good as it works.

Mixing some Dutch tradition into the contemporary line of the aft cabin cruiser, the Aquanaut Privilege model range is a fine example and also throws some exciting claims about sea-keeping and standard specification into the bargain. We took the 41ft 1250 version out into the English Channel to put it through its paces.

### Design and build

Based on the more traditional lines of the Drifter model range, the Privilege sets out to be a more capable craft, all be it a very pretty one.

The only sharp edge you are likely to find on this boat is in the galley's cutlery drawer. Smooth designs roll across the topsides and upperworks of the boat, a reverse sheer line draws up to the bow and a very shapely stern, complete with curvaceous quarters. Further up, the coach roof is again rounded and tucks neatly into the superstructure. For the purists, rope fendering and a mast are all present and correct.

The steel work across the boat is impressive, both in execution and quality; the epoxy paint finish that covers it all was faultless on our test boat. The one-piece helm console is a good example of the high-level fabrication achieved by Aquanaut, its seamless intricacy an impeccable show of craftsmanship and far more durable than some laminate dash cover.

This is a hand-built boat and the idea that it takes two skilled fellows a whole week to roll and offer up those curvaceous stern quarters is both humbling and gratifying.

The good sea-keeping claims come virtue of a multi-chine, bilge-keeled displacement hull, a design which, as the name suggests, is made of a series of angled sections which deliver a softer, more stable ride over a standard displacement hull. An option on most steel boats, this more sea-kind hull comes as standard on the Privilege.

On interior fit, the Dutch ideals of 'having what you want' hold firm here. The basic premise is that you keep the fore and aft engine bulkheads where they are, and pretty much do what you like with everything else. An inner helm comes as standard, but you can choose to lose it in the name of more saloon space. At each end of the saloon you then have the sleeping quarters, one master suite aft with one, or perhaps two, guest cabins forward.



'Cruising' layout delivers a useable galley, complete with standard fit oven



Breakfast here will be a great way to start the day, or you can opt for more cabins

With so much variety, it is helpful that importers, Bray Marine Sales, offer up a considered layout depending on your use. Our test boat's below decks dinette and galley is seen as the ideal cruising option, keeping the saloon free and clean to socialise and relax in. For long distance, live-aboard owners the dinette makes way for a larger galley.

Behind the scenes, insulation includes 5in of cork to the superstructure sides, with a 2in void inside the deck head, insulated above and below. An optional insulation upgrade is available, adding high-density foam to the equation. This will cut down on noise and also be of use if you plan to cruise through the winter. Stainless steel tanks for fuel, water and waste are standard fit. The window frames are of a fairly standard bolted-in aluminium, but the rubber seals look good. Digging deeper, the finish inside the cabin

lockers does waver slightly with some raw or roughly painted bases, but the overall quality is good.

✓✓✓✓✓  
Curvaceous looks and an upgraded hull shape

### Accommodation

Discussing the interior of a steel cruiser may be rather like discussing the length of the proverbial piece of string, as the sheer variety and flexibility on offer can negate almost any rights and wrongs. However, this choice can create its own issues, the most likely being utter confusion.

It is with this in mind that the UK importer put together these considered layouts. Of course, if you wish, you can start with a bare hull and even name each section of timber, but for most of us, it will probably pay to utilise the years of experience that these people have amassed.

Our test boat's satin, cherry wood cabinetry looks a good place to start. Its ability to be both contemporary and warmly traditional is a real plus, and, if we have learnt any thing over the last 10 years, it is that cherry wood works on boats. Like the exterior, there is rounded style to the cabinetry, and practicality is allowed to shine, with fiddled edges to every counter top.

With so many windows afforded to them, a steel cruiser's saloon usually cannot help but shine either. In this case though, the windows not only let in light but plenty of ventilation, with forward, side and aft frames sliding open – just the job on long summer inland jaunts.

A large, U-shaped sofa is joined by a smaller bench to port – an ideal and very sociable facing layout, able to look after (at least) the eight people this boat can potentially sleep.

As the least likely to be messed around with, the aft master suite is suitably spacious and deserves to remain so. The six portholes and neat, cherry-framed hatches lighting the island double berth are superb, and for storage, a full set of his'n'ers cabinetry is laid on.

The only questionable area is the positioning of



Great natural light and a wonderful view out for the owner's suite, plus you get his 'n' hers cabinetry



Separate toilets and showers fore and aft



The classic steel boat forward guest cabin

### Exterior

For all the beautiful form that the deck level offers, it is the steel boat's simplicity and safety that stand out most. 18in across, the side decks are excellent, guarded by chunky stanchions, but the foredeck really impresses, thanks to its take on minimalist deck artistry. Protected by a decent wedge of gunwale, it is a great place to work from.

Where Aquanaut has tried to mix things up on deck, it gets mixed reviews on test. In place of the traditional ladder up from the bathing platform, a spiral stairwell can be optioned. It certainly looks the part – the transom, scalloped in shape, with one side given over to the stairs. The trouble is that it cuts out alongside access to the bathing platform, while the journey up feels a bit tight too. We think the standard ladder works best and keeps the bathing platform far clearer.

Up on the aft deck, two large stowage boxes-cum-seats were included on our test boat. Something like this will have to be specified to cope with general deck stowage. For helm seats, you can opt for the pedestal

the en suite facilities. The shower room is placed in the companionway, forward of the panelled cabin door and the loo inside. Reversed, the layout would provide a day loo and better privacy after a shower. In this 'cruiser' layout, the below-decks dinette can also be easily turned into an occasional berth, with the saloon's six-seater U-shaped sofa also converting.

There are other nice touches, such as the rounded cabinetry that separates the two portholes. The galley is the standard U-shape again, and looks capable of serving a full crew with its standard Smev gas hob and cooker.

Stowage lockers are round and, unless you are planning on seasonal rather than weekly cruising, you will need nothing more. In live-aboard guise, a full beam galley would, clearly, be of domestic proportions and could easily

accommodate a small seating area as well. Other options would include a third cabin in place of the dinette.

✓✓✓✓✓  
Nothing new, but generally impressive

Steel boats offer the greatest level of flexibility for customising hulls

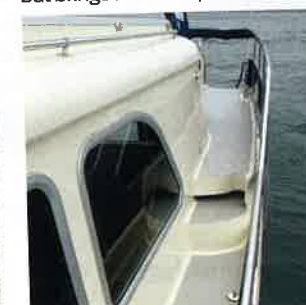


## BOAT REPORT

### AQUANAUT PRIVILEGE



New spiral stairwell looks the biz but brings new compromises



Smooth styling, seamless finishing and utter practicality

chairs, (shown here) for their better support, or perhaps, go for a box seat to add yet more stowage space?

Courtesy lights around the helm sole, and a good quality canopy above, do their bit. The canvas system is quick to break down or pull out, while the screens around the helm will drop to minimise air draught.

✓✓✓✓  
Clean and simple seems to work best on this boat

#### Engine options and access

Aquanaut offers any number of single or twin diesel installations, from Volvo Penta, Yanmar or Dewt, but our single Perkins M135 is a good bet. At 6lts, this in-line 6cyl normally aspirated diesel is an under-stressed engine, perfectly suited to the job in hand, happy to potter around rivers, while that

Deck stowage like these £3000 teak topped boxes must be added



Clean and serene: the foredeck is a winner. The tensioned mast will fold forward easily

6lt capacity offers some torque, low-down muscle, to push through offshore conditions. Access and engineering is of a high standard, but it is the extra thought that really impresses. Aquanaut's policy is to drill all of the mounting and cable holes prior to painting; the idea is to ensure maximum protection, but by default, this system means that every boat is prepared to take equipment, such as a generator, even if it is not specified on the options list. This makes it a much cheaper, easier task to retro fit later on.

This good sense is mirrored on the fuel system, where the two stainless steel 55gal fuel tanks run into a central reservoir system. One feed runs out for the engine but another three spare outlets are left for connections to generators or other diesel-powered ancillaries. A UK specification sandwich ply, layered with high-density insulation across the whole sole, aids soundproofing and insulation. For daily service checks, the raw water strainer is

✓✓✓✓  
Quality and thought combine to great effect

raised up to just below saloon sole level, so there's no excuse for not checking it.

#### Performance and handling

Out at sea, it did not take long for the first real test to present itself. Running down Southampton water, a pilot boat surged by, a huge wash built up and... the Aquanaut moved about a gnat's eyeball. We had already set up a meter to record any roll: the gauge showed around 7°, taking the wash fully on the beam. The hull, backed up by its 14-tonne displacement and the low position of tanks and batteries, steadied immediately and felt quite composed. First test passed with flying colours.

Running out to sea, the boat takes on a rhythmic and pleasant ride quality, pitching only slightly, and very softly, over the waves. As you would expect there is a bit of spray, but sat at the helm, boating life has rarely felt so comfortable. With most boats pushing for higher speeds these days, it is worth remembering the virtues of life at seven knots.

On performance, this boat's maximum hull speed appears to be nine knots, with very little increase in speed over the last 300rpm. This means that a cross channel tide of around three knots can be dealt with, although if you are planning to run through the Straits or around Cherbourg, where the rip can get up past eight knots, you would need to check your Almanac

carefully, as you would on any displacement cruiser. In reality, the Aquanaut is far happier running a couple of knots slower. At seven knots and 1600rpm, vibration and noise levels all but vanish, while range is significantly increased.

To maximise economy, running the Perkins at around 1200rpm will deliver close to a 100hr, 500-mile range, but if it is serious long-distance cruising you are after, then your best bet is to look at the fuel tank capacity options. The upgrade from the standard tanks fitted here is an 88-gallon installation, but as with the rest of the boat, it is more a case of what the builder can squeeze into the bilge, and we understand that is quite a bit. One buyer has recently requested a

1100gal capacity, delivering a range of around 1000hrs and 5000 miles – a fill up every 20 years for most!

#### Value for money

With a long extras list, the 'kid in a sweet shop' mentality can overcome us and spoil a great starting price. So, it is no bad thing that this UK importer has bundled together an impressive UK specification on top of an already useful Dutch one, to create some kind of cruising template. Included are such items as electric toilets, holding tanks, heating and a bow-thruster. This kit could set you back around £10,000.

There are some gaps in the standard option list – you need to factor in such basic items as helm seats – but if you can do without the inner helm, you get a useful £1289 credit. As long as our test boat's price of just under £250,000 does not need

much addition, this specification, together with impressive build quality, is a strong combination.

## Verdict

Aquanaut has returned with an impressive, and attractive, line up of cruisers, and the Privilege is right up there with the best of them. The 1250's offshore ability, with its effective standard specification, makes a highly capable all-rounder. **8/10**

MBM rating ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓

## Aquanaut Privilege technical data

### specifications

BUILD	Steel
RCD	Category B
LENGTH OVERALL	41ft 4in (12.65m)
HULL LENGTH	40ft 10in (12.2m)
BEAM	14ft 4in (4.1m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 6in (1.1m)
DISPLACEMENT	14 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	110 gal (500lt)
WATER CAPACITY	110 gal (500lt)

### key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDEDECKS	18in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 7.5in (2.02m)
AFT-CABIN BERTH	4ft 11in x 6ft 4in

### performance

Engines	single Perkins M135
Configuration	6cyl 6lt 135hp @2400rpm
conditions	SW Force 3 sea state slight
Load	fuel 50% water 25% crew 2

Rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1100	5.5	0.9	4.5	5.5	480	65
1400	6.5	1.4	6.5	4.6	400	66
1600	7.2	1.8	8	4	350	68
2000	8.1	3.0	14	2.7	240	70
2200	8.7	3.8	17	2.28	200	71
2400	9	4.6	21	1.95	170	73

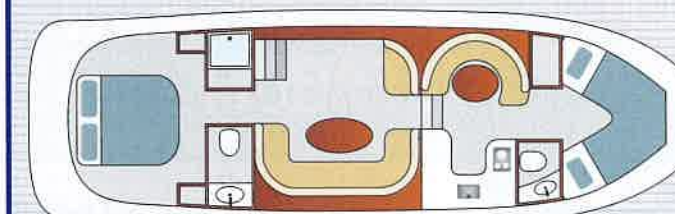
Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in saloon.



### prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with 135hp Perkins Diesel	£208,147
WEBASTO HEATING	standard
BOW-THRUSTER	standard
AFT DECK CANOPY	£1982
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£1053
HOLDING TANK	standard

BOAT AS TESTED £248,760



ENQUIRIES  
Bray Marine Sales,  
Bray Marina,  
Monkey Island Lane,  
Bray Berks, SL6 2EB  
Tel: 01628 773177  
www.thamesboatsales.co.uk

### the rivals



**STEVENS VLET 1200**  
From £229,000  
The boat the Aquanaut has to beat. The Vlet has the same attractive looks plus a superb quality of build, but the final costs may be higher.  
Tel: 01932 243 722  
www.boatshowrooms.co.uk



**LINSEN GS410**  
From £265,000  
Classy Dutch builder and a high quality option. The final price will surpass the Aquanaut's, but you need to see this ship before deciding.  
Tel: 01590 673 312  
www.berthongroup.co.uk



**BROOM 42CL**  
From £217,900  
Something in plastic, sir? The UK king of aft cabin cruisers offers plenty to mull over, less flexibility on price but more in the way of speed.  
Tel: 01603 712334  
www.broomboats.com