

Linssen GS 43.9

Dutch builders have tried every trick regarding liveaboard layouts but Linssen has thought long and hard about how to make life brighter and easier REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

"Linssen adds many practical and homely details to its boats"



The brief...



I've checked out plenty of boats suitable for long-term cruising but when I hopped aboard the 43.9 at the 2010 Southampton Boat Show it went straight to the top of my list.

Unfortunately, my request for a proper year's trial were turned down, so a Solent test would have to suffice. Mark

LOA: 45ft 6in (13.90m)
PRICE: from €398,700
TOP SPEED: 8.2 knots
BUILDERS: Linssen Yacht BV
ENQUIRIES: Tel: 01590 616316
www.kingsyachts.com

If you're looking for comfortable cruising tucked in the slow lane – with extended forays into European inland waters being the ultimate goal – there are a good few boats that will do the job (including over a dozen different models from Linssen). However, in some respects a huge choice can make the task of finding the right one for you a bit daunting. Choosing what length vessel fits the bill is one of the hardest things to nail, let alone what optional extras and furnishings to go for.

What is needed is a sharp mental picture of life afloat. There has to be sufficient room

– in terms of space and cabins – to comfortably liveaboard without feeling cramped or hemmed-in, as well as maintaining a reasonable level of privacy once family and friends descend. On the other hand, you don't want a boat that is too much of a handful when it comes to manoeuvring and finding a mooring or too much of a chore to keep shipshape.

When we stepped aboard the 43.9, a careful balance of liveaboard comfort versus size struck us immediately. We said, "We'll take it..." but unfortunately only for the day, and not across the Channel and into France as we dearly wanted too.

Design & build

The 43 is part of this Dutch manufacturer's '9'-series, which means it is built along production lines rather than the pricier Mark II boats that benefit from a custom, hand-built interior and a more shapely and costly to build multi-chine hull. However, that doesn't mean the 43.9 doesn't have a choice of layouts – there's a three-cabin version (as shown here) and a two-cabin arrangement that boasts a larger saloon complete with a neat desk/office area. The only real difference on the '9'-series is the joinery – it only comes in cherry and is much more standardised. The build process

doesn't allow for much customisation aside from preferences chosen from the options list. Having said that, this off-the-peg approach must not be confused with down-market – the '9'-series comes with leather upholstery and Corian work surfaces as standard and Linssen has managed to amass a huge amount of practical and home-comfort detail into its boats as a matter of course.

When it comes to size we're not saying a 43-footer is all you need for liveaboard cruising but the 43.9's allure has more to do with some sound design work, which begins with elevating the galley and adjacent dinette (usually set down) up to almost saloon level. We say 'almost' because the galley is still a step down from the

main lounge seating – creating a natural break – but it results in one highly sociable, easy-to-use open-plan living area that has great views out thanks to the deep window line. Hiking up the dinette in this way also frees up space below for a decent twin-berth cabin. This, and the usual forward cabin, share ablution facilities but to make things easier the shower cubicle is totally separate to the toilet compartment – making it quicker, especially in the morning, for those sharing to get freshened up.

The aft cabin has its own en suite, which also boasts a proper, decent-sized shower stall and a wardrobe of walk-in proportions. This lot takes up

PHOTOS: WILLIAM PAYNE

the port-hand side but then, rather than site the extremely generous double in the middle of the remaining space, it has been shunted over to starboard. This might not seem a big deal but it means you don't immediately encounter the bed when entering the cabin and ensures there is plenty of room to get in and out the toilet compartment and get clothes in and out of the wardrobe with ease. This discerning eye for what works best in terms of ergonomics runs through the whole boat, as does 6ft 6in (1.98m) headroom.

Nice homely details abound too, like the bookshelf let into the aft cabin's transom bulkhead, and the fact that there is a dedicated recess in the forward shower compartment to have a washing machine fitted. The only thing missing from the well-executed joinery was the complete lack of fiddles on flat surfaces. We defy any boat,

even in the most protected of waters, not to rock sufficiently when another boat trundles by sending items on to the cabin sole.

The only other slight grumble is that while the steps to and from the aft deck are easy to negotiate it would make life even easier if the sliding hatch was a bit more generous – there seems to be plenty of coachroof space to make it a tad longer.

The U-shaped aft deck seating shown here is an optional extra, as is the all-over canopy, and the other thing you may want to consider if you're a big dinghy user is the factory's neat davit system on the bathing platform. It's worth noting that the

platform is actually fabricated from stainless steel rather than the mild type used for the hull and superstructure. Linssen takes the view that the platform is likely to get a bit bashed and chipped and by using stainless it won't be

beset with unsightly rust spots.

The hulls of '9'-series boats are of single chine construction, so the underwater shape is constrained by the amount of curvature that can be rolled into the plating.

A no-nonsense full-length keel is therefore important for directional stability – it also supports and protects the sterngear in the case of a single engine installation. The keel is retained where twin engines are fitted.

“The side decks are free of obstructions with solid rails and deep gunwales”

Performance & handling

Although Linssen has done a grand job on the layout and handsome styling there is one thing that remains de facto – this displacement vessel's maximum hull speed is 8 knots. But then speed isn't what this boat is all about, it's about taking in the surroundings rather than pushing past them and for the most part 1800-2000rpm, giving 6.5 to 7 knots, is just fine.

More importantly, when it comes to this type of craft, is how manoeuvrable the boat is at tick over/slow speeds. The German-built Steyr engine seems a suitable match for the hull, with plenty of revs to ease back on while giving plenty of grunt to stop, start and push the bow round when required.

The other important point when spending a good few hours a day motoring concerns

noise and sidekick vibration. Linssen has had the measure of these for years and frankly neither gets much of a look-in thanks to some serious sound deadening. The yard always builds a sand-filled box into the hull by way of the propeller to dampen vibration, as well as insulating the sole from the steel structure by bedding it on foam.

The only other thing to consider is the benefits of going down the twin-engined route. Dismiss any notion that the boat is going to achieve anything more by way of speed but better manoeuvrability and the security of two engines over one are still worthy reasons if you don't mind parting with the hefty premium. However, unless the boat is destined for much sea work, where two engines are a definite comfort, a bow and stern thruster option covers the nip and tuck of mooring much more economically.



From the helm

Generous angled console for electronics

The skipper gets a comfortable **adjustable seat** which gives a good view of proceedings but if you want some company on passage you'll need to get out a director's chair or two or specify a more generous seating arrangement from the outset. To a certain degree this depends on how you envisage using the boat and while loose seating is fine for inland work, something more steadfast is really required when venturing out to sea.

The days of simply finding a vertical spoked stainless wheel and ignition switch on this type of boat have long gone and the 43.9 benefits from a **proper console** that has been given a black anti-glare, non-slip finish. The angled portion of the fascia is plenty big enough to take the full complement of nav electronics and there is the usual, useful array of ready-use switches.



Exterior

Wide, safe decks offer excellent mobility

Boats of this ilk need to have decent, safe, accessible side decks, plus hopping on and off to tend lines should be just that, a mere hop without the skip and the jump. Not surprisingly the 43.9 has these practical elements all sewn up.

The 17in **side decks** are free of any obstructions, bordered by a deep gunwale and solid rails, and a drop down gate in the latter operates as a midway step between the deck and pontoon. The only slight drawback in this arrangement will

be if you're coming alongside a quay that is higher than usual as the **gate** could foul it – a vertically hung ladder and a step set in the topside would cover this scenario.

Up at the bow a central hawse pipe runs through the stem so that the

anchor sits tidily out the way but the electric windlass is an optional extra.

The top of the coachroof has been provided with a non-slip finish rather than a smooth and slippery one and the mast, as well as being easy to fold back to aid bridge

clearance, has been designed from the outset to take antennas.

Back on the raised aft deck there is a gap between the two halves of the relaxed **U-shaped seating** to access steps that drop down to the bathing platform. There is a modicum of

storage here but large lockers set within the seat bases provide the bulk of the on-deck stowage. However, you won't want to fill all of these up with fenders so it might be worth adding a couple of baskets across the stern rails.



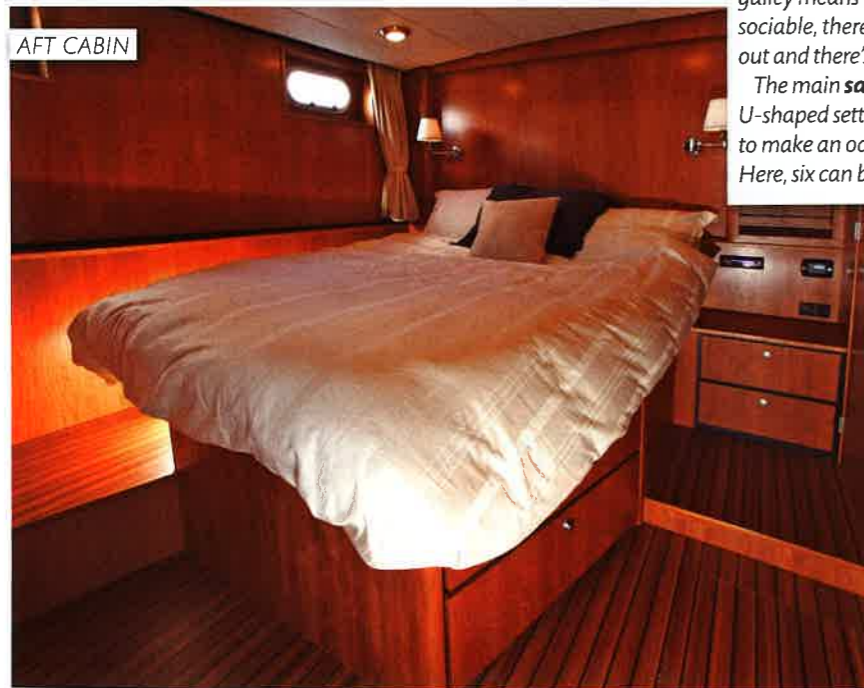
SALOON



SALOON



FORECABIN



AFT CABIN

Interiors

Everything you need to liveaboard

Raising the level of the dinette and galley means the layout is more sociable, there's always a good view out and there's loads of daylight.

The main saloon has a large U-shaped settee that can be pulled out to make an occasional double berth. Here, six can be accommodated

around the table but most of the time this is going to be used for lounging rather than dining as the TV is neatly housed in the sideboard opposite, while tucked under the companionway steps is a pull-out cocktail cabinet.

The dinette across from the galley seats a comfortable four but if there is passage planning or paperwork to do the yard has even managed to work in a handy desk area towards the end of the sideboard. This is a great idea, and one that shows the boat's high

credentials as a liveaboard, because it means you can leave work in progress rather than tidy it up once it is time to eat or put your feet up.

The galley is well equipped with a large fridge, hob and oven along with a decent-sized sink. Stowage isn't bad either, especially as there's a massive storeroom for bulk items behind the steps that lead down to the forward cabin area. Less abundant is countertop space – although there is

always the dinette table adjacent. It would be beneficial if something more useful could have been made of the narrow shelf that runs outboard – a deep fiddle to house hands-on items like mugs, tea and coffee perhaps.

Third cabins on this size of craft often feel a bit squeezed in and there is the feeling the builder shouldn't have bothered but the 43.9's is rather inviting. The two berths are a good

length and the cabin enjoys plenty of light thanks to an overhead skylight. Stowage is a bit on the sparse side if guests reckon on unpacking a week's worth of clothes, so any overspill might have to be accommodated in the forecabin.

A huge drawer under the forecabin's large central double will swallow up masses of gear and the occupants of this cabin probably won't need it as it is already furnished with plenty of cupboard space and a large, easy to fall into wardrobe. The cabin benefits

from direct access to the toilet compartment with its proper, full-sized basin, while those in the third cabin will have to nip across the lobby. However, to avoid queues in the morning the teak-seated shower room is totally separate.

Back aft the master cabin has all you need for endless nights afloat – a generous 7ft by 5ft berth, side tables, a walk-in wardrobe with shelves and hanging space – and its own en-suite facilities with an enclosed shower stall.



MIDSHIPS CABIN



POP-UP TV UNIT



COCKTAIL CABINET



FORWARD SHOWER STALL



AFT EN SUITE

Specification & value

Although '9'-series boats are standard in terms of layout, you can customise to your heart's content off the options list. At first glance, the standard spec'd boat (£340,000) looks pretty comprehensive – with heating, leather upholstery and some electronics – and aside from a bow thruster, what else do you need?

The Deluxe pack (including a bow thruster, antifoul and a 2kW inverter with extra batteries) adds a further £15k, while the Traveller pack (includes liveboard luxuries like a generator and an all-electric galley) is another £25k. You may also want to think about cosying up the aft deck with some seating, a canopy and teak decking. Without much effort that's £100k of extras clocked up, which comes as quite a surprise when the standard boat seemed reasonably spec'd – so it would be unwise to expect much change from £400,000.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	steel
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	45ft 6in (13.90m)
HULL LENGTH	42ft 9in (13.05m)
BEAM	14ft 3in (4.35m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 11in (1.20m)
AIR DRAUGHT	9ft 8in (2.95m)
DISPLACEMENT	19.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	185gal (840lt)
WATER CAPACITY	97gal (440lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	17in (43cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in (1.98m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 5ft 0in (1.98 x 1.52m)
AFT-CABIN BERTH	7ft 0in x 5ft 0in (2.13 x 1.52m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	single Steyr 120hp diesel
Configuration	6cy, 3.2lt, 120hp @ 2500rpm
Conditions	wind SW'ly, Force 3, sea calm
Load	fuel 60%, water 100%, crew 2

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1000	4.3	1.1	5	3.91	579	60
1500	5.9	2.2	9	2.68	397	61
1800	6.6	2.9	13	2.28	337	63
2000	7.2	3.7	17	1.95	289	65
2400	8.2	5.8	27	1.41	209	68

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 in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	Inc VAT
with single Steyr 120hp diesel	€398,700 (£355,350)
DELUXE PACKAGE	€17,255 (£15,400)
TRAVELLER PACKAGE	€29,750 (£26,560)
BOW THRUSTER	Deluxe package
HEATING	standard
AFT DECK SEATING	€7800 (£7100)
AFT DECK TEAK DECKING	€14,600 (£13,250)

BOAT AS TESTED €523k (£467k)

Base price includes shipping to UK and is calculated at an exchange rate of €1.12 to the pound.



Enginebay

Linszen offers a 90hp twin-engine 43.9, as well as the single 120hp installation featured here. Normally we suggest owners look at the twin option because, just like toilets, two is usually better than one, but when we saw the price difference between twin 90hp engines and a

bow thruster option – the thick end of €50,000 no less – twins seem somewhat extravagant.

The enginebay is readily accessed via a good-sized hatch in the saloon sole and steps aid your decent to the treadplated bilge. The engineering is every bit as tidily executed as the rest of the boat and the engine(s) and auxiliaries proved to be easy to get at for general servicing.

THE VERDICT

This boat is much more than a steel hull filled with the requisite number of settees, toilets and berths. It has been meticulously thought through and built with lots of care. The result is an extremely inviting boat to be aboard – make that liveboard – and I was hard pressed to extricate myself from the wonderful open-plan saloon and give the keys back. On my way home I risked all and bought a lottery ticket.



Meet the family



Grand Sturdy 45.9AC from €461,500

LOA: 47ft 4in (14.45m)

The three cabins stay much the same but the saloon gains some extra seating opposite the galley. Twin engine option is a must.



Grand Sturdy 40.9AC from €347,100

LOA: 42ft 2in (12.85m)

This model is available in the same three and two-cabin layouts as the 43.9 – the main area that loses out is the saloon. No twin engine option.

The rivals



Aquanaut 1300CS from £310,000

Two good-sized cabins with en suites with the more usual galley down layout. Comprehensive standard spec.

Tel: 01628 773177 www.thamesboatsales.com



Jetten 44 AC RS from £266,800

A new model with updated, smoother styling from this competitively priced yard that is happy to customise.

Tel: 01189403211 www.valwyattmarine.co.uk