

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Windy 44 Chinook

Performance, build and accommodation are the three cornerstones of modern boat design. Will the new tri-cab Chinook from Windy create the perfect sportscruiser triangle?

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON



“As the sea state worsened I prepared to enjoy the ride. But then something strange happened”

FACT FILE
Windy 44
Chinook
LOA: 44ft 5in (13.54m)
PRICE: from £475,224
TOP SPEED: 37 knots

Windy may have a reputation for building 30ft boats that you can drive as fast as you like, for as long as you like, but recent launches suggest it has its eye on the larger, more accommodating, end of the sportscruiser market. The 52 Xanthos and 48 Triton both deliver impressive and very practical versions of the hardtop genre and,

being 50-footers, they also offer lots of interior options too, which is where this new, three-cabin 44 Chinook looks to make its mark. Outside of the peripheral Elan 42, is there another 40ft tri-cab sportscruiser around? Or has Windy managed to completely outflank this 40ft market in one go? We went to Norway to find out more.





Impressive levels of stowage are found throughout, together with neat under-sole compartments

Design & Build

Based on the old 43 Typhoon, the deep-vee Hans Jørgen Johnsen hull has been broadened in the beam and given more topside to allow for its new three-cabin interior. But these are mere details, more importantly is that the end result is a beautifully aggressive looking boat – think Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft, all lip gloss and guns.

Windy has had to come around to the idea of taller topsides to deliver more accommodation but a happy side-effect of this is a low and menacing hardtop design that is every bit as sleek as the Princess V45, but which manages to include a solid sliding-roof with inset skylights in place of the V45's canvas.

Good Windy design reassures you the moment you step onto the bathing platform with a row of

concealed fender lockers along the transom, while the boat feels solid everywhere you tread. It is worth noting what you are treading on, as it could well be the new ash decking that Windy is currently trialling (see Coastal News for more).

Beneath this fabulous skin, vacuum infusion has been used for the lay up on Windy boats for the last five years. The perfectly distributed resin gives a very reliable build, as well as a lighter, overall displacement, which is good for strength and

Design & build

Beautiful looks hide three-cabin luxury



performance. Within the bilges there are perfect compartments, bordered by equally neat stringers, dropped in and bonded onto the hull as part of a grid system build process.

Accommodation

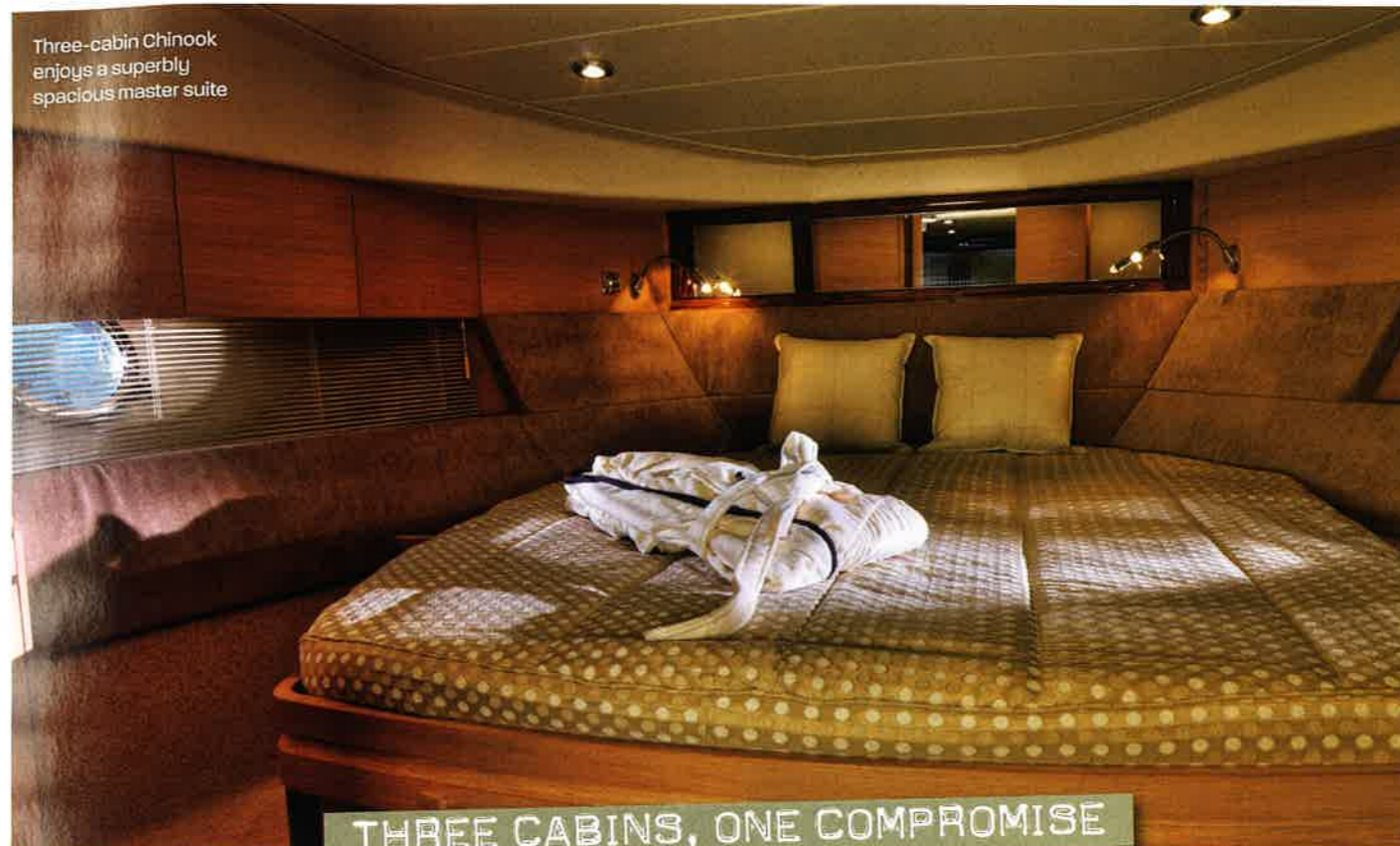
So far, so good when it comes to the underlying build, but once you've got your head out from the bilges your eye is left to wander over the rest of the interior and this is where you may start to become confused. Your eye does not have far to wander, the numerous screwheads into the timber sole are an immediate disappointment. Our test boat is, in effect, hull number one from the production line but its state of finish is more R&D than ready to go. Roughly cut and disjointed cabinetry is very rare in today's digitised production world and on a Windy it is virtually unheard of, but that is what you get here. Similarly, Windy isn't the first builder to fall foul of the emptiness that the current preference for light oak and minimal styling can induce. Builders such as Fairline and Sessa get around this by packing out their interiors with deft style and ergonomic touches, but Windy's usual eye for detail has deserted it here. Given the price, buyers may find this blandness unforgivable. Or rather they might have done had the Windy design team not leapt into action the moment these defects were pointed out. The boat was immediately lifted and sent straight back to the factory whereupon an interior refit began and production ceased until it was put right. Having looked at the post-production Chinook in the yard it is clear that Windy is still very capable of building a 44 to its own high standards but we

“The end result is beautifully aggressive – think Lara Croft, all lip gloss and guns”

will have to wait to see the finished product to be absolutely sure.

What is certain is that the small saloon needs to be improved upon. As the first thing you see on entering the interior, it is imperative that the seating and cabinetry welcomes you and makes you glad you made the trip down below. Bizarrely, Windy has already shown that it can deal with the saloon seating issue on the Triton 48, adding an extending arc out across the saloon sole, a feature that would also add a lot to the detail and form that is missing here on the 44. There are moments where usual service resumes, such as with the overhead skylight and textured entertainment pillar that curves into the saloon, but more is needed.

The two guest quarters running aft off the saloon both offer comfortable, relaxing interiors, especially the twin-bunked starboard cabin with its larger entranceway and seat. Each berth is surrounded by upholstered panels, which break up the oak and light vinyl. You also get two of the chunky port lights per



Three-cabin Chinook enjoys a superbly spacious master suite

THREE CABINS, ONE COMPROMISE

Three cabins means more privacy and greater cruising options, but on a 40ft boat three can also mean a crowd, or rather one area being overcrowded and in this case it is the saloon. There is no doubt that the cabins themselves work well. Thanks to the larger hull dimensions and the IPS or

sterndrive installations - the engine room bulkhead being pushed that bit further back – they each enjoy an impressive level of space and design. However, Windy's decision to site the galley over to port means that the saloon seating must share its starboard floor space with a toilet

compartment. On a two-cabin boat of this size, the midships guest cabin would usually include an en suite toilet, here the second toilet compartment has nowhere else to go, squeezing the saloon's seating area. Windy will point to the vast cockpit seating arrangement as the

Chinook's natural social centre, but there is no getting away from the compromised lower saloon. Perhaps the only way round this is to simply call it a below decks 'snug', perfect for a couple to curl up on and watch the flat screen TV mounted across the companionway.



Starboard guest cabin is perfect for kids while the smaller portside cabin's double will suit older crew



The pinch is felt in a saloon hemmed in by the day heads

cabin, although the OceanAir blind that hangs in front could do with a border for it to sit within to help keep the light out. When it comes to berths, best of all is the forward master suite whose proportions show no sign of being pinched. The clearance at the foot of the bed is deeper than most two-cabin boats of this length.

Accommodation

Tri-cab layout is let down by poor interior finish



Exterior

Windy has decided to keep it big and simple in the cockpit with a vast stretch of seating set behind a wide three-seat helm station. Set around a glossy folding table, (which hopefully will be changed to a more practical teak variant), the cockpit seating will easily accommodate six adults and it also converts to a large sunpad; the table drops down at the touch of a button with two infills stored in a port side

recess doing the rest. This layout delivers a very social set-up and leaves plenty of clear deck area to move about on. The only omission is the complete lack of handrails to help you move safely from the transom gate forward, although this could be easily remedied by running a rail along the wetbar moulding to port.

Deck access is very good. The low hardtop means you can get arms and shoulders above the roofline as you walk along the side decks, aided by a decent toerail to keep you on the



Poor finish dotted the 44's interior as with the disjointed cabinetry (top pic) and scruffy linings



The galley is well stocked but could its space have been put to better use?



Vast expanse of cockpit seating allows aft guests a place in the sun and relieves pressure on saloon space

straight and narrow. Part of the Chinook's allure is its long, powerful foredeck and here the accompanying sunpads can be lined by equally long and very beautiful teak and stainless steel guardrails – I say 'can be' because you need to

cough up £2326 extra to make it happen. The same goes for the optional teak or ash decking to the cockpit and bathing platform, which many builders will lay on as standard.

Exterior

Great decks deserve more dressing up



Engine options & access

With IPS 600s and 370hp sterndrives available – both using the same Volvo Penta D6 block – the enginebay has to shift its layout and twin fuel tanks position to suit. Our test boat's sterndrive installation offers the best overall layout. Even with the twin fuel tanks and generator sited forward there is plenty of space in front of the engines and excellent access between the two Volvos,



Raw finish to the wet-bar housing

thanks to stainless steel treadplates that cover much of the bay. For the IPS drives, the tanks are pushed outboard with the genset moved aft

Engine options & access

Sterndrive set-up works best



Performance & handling

A top speed of 37 knots says plenty about this boat's abilities, but the competition isn't far behind. In fact, the sterndrive-powered V45, already mentioned, hits 34 knots with the slightly smaller D6-350 engines and enjoys similar (though still lower) cruising economy in spite of being some two tonnes heavier. It's also worth noting that the Princess is a very easy, intuitive boat to helm, whereas the Chinook demands more of you. Push the legs out to +2 and the hull snaps like track racer, rather than a mannered saloon. Both skipper and boat are far happier and



Alluring foredeck deserves these optional teak rails

“Part of the Chinook's allure is its long, powerful foredeck”

more relaxed when the drives are pulled in to -1 or -2. Keeping them there means you don't have to bother with Volvo's leg trim controls, which appear to be so advanced they have a mind of their own. Sadly it's a very argumentative one.

As we pushed out into more open water the sea conditions built up. I prepared to enjoy the ride, (after all this is what Windys do best), and romp over waves at a fantastic rate. But something odd happened, the hull returned something approaching a slam. As already pointed out, Windys don't slam, they romp. But this boat's ride was certainly harder than I was expecting. I have a theory about this, and it's not to do with the boat's added beam or height, which may, of course, have some effect. Boats like a bit of weight, some force to carry them through the water and deaden the relentless assault of the waves. I have been out on a fair few boats laid-out using the vacuum resin infusion method and many of them have appeared louder, less cultured



With no tender garage, the smart engine bay excels

if you will, across the water. It could be that the lighter build, the thinner – albeit stronger – lay-up, allows more noise and feedback to make its way up to the helm? Certainly up at the Chinook's helm the feeling was that we were fighting with the conditions more than was usual. It was still a good boat, just a different Windy ride.

The helm seat on the test boat was not adjustable but Windy assured me this would be changed to a fully adjustable jobby, complete with a rather snazzy elevating steering console to allow skippers, or at least their heads, to drive al fresco.

The long sweep of dash means you can have pretty much any instrument layout you want. It can easily site two 15in screens as well as about 100 engine gauges if you so wish. Here the

Performance & handling

A good boat, but an average Windy. Economy still good



standard-fit eight gauges are sited in pairs to starboard. Paired instruments are best for monitoring engines but here their location, under the glare of the side screen, made reading them hard.

Specification & value

There is no easy way to approach a 44ft sports cruiser costing half a million that has shown up so many obvious, though in the main easily rectified, shortcomings. Windy will smarten the interior, I have no doubt. Perhaps it could also

Specification & value

Top end price tag needs more specification



include at least some of the optional extras as standard. For starters it can start with those long foredeck guardrails and some of that superb ash decking in the cockpit.

Verdict

This boat needs work. It needs to be upgraded to a level where normal Windy service can resume. There's no doubt it can happen, but the trouble is premium products must deliver instant results and a pretty face alone is never enough when it comes to being a genuinely good boat. The irony is Windy knows this better than anyone, having built up its entire brand on these simple boating facts.

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Windy 44 Chinook technical data

specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	Category B
LENGTH OVERALL	45ft 7in (13.93m)
HULL LENGTH	44ft 5in (13.54m)
BEAM	13ft 1in (3.98m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 6in (1.1m)
DISPLACEMENT	10.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	242gal (1100lt)
WATER CAPACITY	67gal (305lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	9in (24cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in (2.0m)
MASTER CABIN BERTH	5ft 3in x 6ft 6in



performance

Engines	twin Volvo Penta D6-370
Configuration	6cyl 5.5lt 370hp@3550rpm
conditions	wind westerly, force 3, sea slight
Load	fuel 50%, water 100%, crew 6

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
3500	37.7	148	33	1.14	220	82
3300	35.8	126	28	1.27	243	80
3000	31.7	96	21	1.50	291	79
2700	26.6	72	16	1.66	319	79
2500	23.1	60	13	1.77	344	78
2300	19.8	50	11	1.8	348	78

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 at the helm.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with Volvo Penta D6-370	£475,224
with Volvo Penta IPS 600	£507,626
ANTIFOUL	£4230
BOW THRUSTER	£5275
GENERATOR	£11000
TEAK/ASH COCKPIT SOLE	£7130
COLOURED HULL	£3493

BOAT AS TESTED £506,352

ENQUIRIES Berthon Tel: 01590 679222
www.berthon.co.uk
e-mail: windy@berthon.eu

the rivals



FAIRLINE TARGA 44
From £393,625
Deluxe two-cabin sports cruiser with IPS and a level of detail that the Chinook needs to match. Serious price tag but you can see where your money goes.
www.fairline.com



PRINCESS V45
£344,716 OTW
Sterndrive rival though again only two cabins. Matches the Chinook on style and, dare we say it, beats it on performance if not overall economy. Superb value package.
www.princessyachts.com



JEANNEAU 50S
From £395,745
If you need three cabins how about this imposing 50ft cruiser for less money? Impressive cockpit and vast interior though Chinook's cabins arguably work better.
www.jeanneau.com



Chasing a 48 Triton: the helm position is good and it will get even better



Stunning hardtop design