

# Grand Soleil: Covering all the bases

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With a lot of comfort and a lot of major trophies already under their belts... now Grand Soleil are also offering a (luxury) home away from home.

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Grand Soleil Yachts is a brand best known for building elegant, high-performance cruiser-racers – it has launched more than 4,500 of those over the last five decades. But in recent years, the Italian marque has expanded its repertoire into new territory with the Long Cruise (LC) series, translating its traditional brand values of contemporary style, sweet handling and sailing performance into its first-ever range of pure cruising yachts with remarkable success straight off the mark.

In 2015 the first yacht in the series, the 46 LC, won the luxury cruiser category in the European Yacht of The Year Awards. A 52-footer followed suit and now there's another new Long Cruise yacht in the pipeline, this time a smaller one due to launch later this year: the 42 LC.

A main ingredient in the Long Cruise recipe for success is an all-Italian three-way design partnership between Cantiere Del Pardo's inhouse technical team, naval architect Marco Losuzzi and Nauta Design, which does the styling, interiors and ergonomics. Together they have created a series of yachts that offer more style and sophistication – and better performance – than most traditional cruising yacht builders can match, in sea-kindly hulls with an easy motion and all the stowage and practical features one would expect from a proper blue water cruising yacht.

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The design brief for the new 42 LC was essentially to follow the blueprint established by the two previous models: 'a comfortable and spacious cruising boat that is easy to sail,' Lostuzzi says, 'but with good sailing performance and seaworthiness.'

Above the waterline the hull looks decidedly modern with a plumb bow, a subtle positive sheer, 1.8m high topsides and a low-profile cabin top that guarantees a good view forward from the helm. Under water, however, it looks a lot more like a classic blue water cruiser. It's sharp up front but full-bodied and notably deep in the bilge with a generous amount of rocker, as befits a long-distance cruiser designed with motion comfort high on the list of priorities. This sets it apart from both cruiser-racers and most production cruisers, which tend to have less balanced hull forms with a shallower bilge and a flat run aft from amidships.

'The fore sections below water are V-shaped and quite narrow, giving better wave passage,' Lostuzzi explains. 'The mid sections are quite round and the aft sections are moderately flat. In this hull form the waterlines remain very symmetrical with increasing heel angle, making the boat always very balanced and light on the rudder.'

That deep bilge might look rather traditional, but it's an innovative aspect of the Long Cruise yachts' design. Weight distribution is crucial for performance, handling and motion comfort at sea, as any racing sailor knows, but in many cruising yachts it tends to be neglected, playing second fiddle to the design and layout of the accommodation. Those boats might sail well in light displacement mode but less so when fully laden, as they usually are during normal use. Fuel, fresh water and holding tanks, and stowage for heavy items such as tinned food, are often located in places where they exacerbate the pitch and roll of a fully loaded boat in ocean swell or choppy seas.

Long Cruise yachts, by contrast, take weight distribution and load-carrying very seriously indeed. 'All of the LCs have the weight very concentrated in the centre of the boat and under the dinette sole, which reduces the pitching moment,' Lostuzzi says. 'Plus the ballast ratio and the low centre of gravity give a high righting moment, making the boat stable, powerful and gentle to sail in a rough sea.'

The deep bilge allows all tanks to be low down and right on top of the keel, along with the optional watermaker, batteries and almost everything else. The engine, too, is low down and quite far forward. All this weight is carefully positioned to be a help rather than a hindrance: it effectively improves the yacht's ballast ratio.

Putting all of the yacht's technical systems in the bilge also raises the cabin sole, which in turn creates deeper, larger spaces for stowage of loose cruising gear and personal kit under the saloon seats and cabin bunks – another big bonus for long-distance live-aboard cruising.

While the load-carrying ability of the 42 LC might be quite different from its cruiser-racer sisters, they share the same hull construction techniques, materials and build quality. 'The hull and deck construction is full sandwich composite, hand-made with E glass and polyester resin,' Lostuzzi says. 'The structures are laminated in fibreglass on a female plug and unidirectional fibers are employed in the more highly loaded areas. The bulkheads are made in marine-grade plywood and laminated into the hull.'



Main picture: Grand Soleil's Long Cruise range is about to expand, with a new 42ft (13m) model that is due to launch later this year. A key design feature of these yachts which has played a large part in the success of the Long Cruise range is the deep bilge, which allows for optimal weight centralisation significantly improving performance in rough or choppy seas.



Nauta Design is responsible for interior design as well as the exterior styling of the new 42 LC, continuing a partnership with Grand Soleil that has scooped a number of awards. Light oak veneer, through-hull and cabin top windows plus plenty of opening skylights will ensure the saloon is bright and airy. The 42 LC's deep bilge allows for ample stowage of cruising gear behind and beneath the seating units, while most of the yacht's technical systems are strategically positioned under the saloon sole, clustered around the keel where they serve as useful extra ballast.

The keel is an L-shaped fin rather than the T-shape used on Grand Soleil's cruiser-racers, because it's less likely to snag flotsam. 'It's made in two parts,' Lostuzzi says, 'the bottom one in cast lead and the top one in cast iron. They are connected to each other and to the hull by mechanical fasteners.'

A stand-out feature of the Long Cruise range is the cockpit, neatly separated into two parts. There's a comfortable lounging area up front, ideal for inexperienced crew or non-sailing guests, with seating that looks more like chaise-longues than cockpit benches, flanked by reassuringly high coamings. There's a sturdy cockpit table between them, designed for foot-bracing and a graceful composite arch above. 'The arch makes the mainsheet system much safer,' Lostuzzi says, 'and it holds a large sprayhood that shelters the whole cockpit very well.' It also supports a large bimini to provide shade.

The aft half of the cockpit is the working area, with all sheets, halyards and other lines ducted aft to a bank of rope clutches and a pair of electric winches on either side, just forward of the twin wheel binnacles, making it very easy for one person on watch to sail the yacht from the helm.

The wheels drive a cable-link steering system supplied by Jefa. 'Since all the controls you need for manoeuvres are located close to the wheels and the standard jib is self-tacking, the boat can be sailed single-handed,' Lostuzzi says, 'but of course it's easier to fly a Code Zero or gennaker with two or three people.'

#### Grand Soleil 42 LC vital statistics

LOA: 12.95m

LWL: 11.70m

Beam: (max, deck level) 4.18m (max, waterline) 3.533m (stern, deck level) 3.842m (stern, waterline) 0m

Freeboard: 1.8m

Draught: 2.25m or 2.0m

Displacement: (light) 9,950 kg (typically loaded) 11,410 kg

Ballast: 2,550 kg

Standard sail wardrobe: mainsail, jib 106%, self-tacking jib 90%, foresail, code zero, gennaker

Sail area: (full, upwind) 107.3m<sup>2</sup> (reefed for Force 6, upwind) 89.9m<sup>2</sup> (reefed for Force 8+, upwind) 52.6m<sup>2</sup> (full, reaching) mainsail and code zero 141.1m<sup>2</sup> (full, downwind) mainsail and gennaker 213.56m<sup>2</sup>

SA/D: 9.035

D/L: 0.85

B/D: 0.42

The deck is free of trip hazards, with all lines ducted aft and a neat-looking sunbed is recessed into the foredeck, which will come into its own when the boat's at anchor. There is a steel anchor pole inside the bowsprit, which keeps the anchor far away from the bow,' Lostuzzi says. The anchor chain runs to the windlass in the foredeck locker, which also holds lines and fenders. All deck hardware is Harken, apart from Spinlock rope clutches. The rig is made by Sparcraft and the jib furling system is a throughdeck Furlex.

Unlike Grand Soleil's cruiser-racers, the mast is deck-stepped to prevent water finding its way into the deep, equipment-filled bilge. The rig, made by Sparcraft, is 9/10 fractional with double spreaders, 20° sweepback and wide chainplates.

'This kind of rig is very stable and easy to adjust,' Lostuzzi says. 'You just tension the backstay with increasing wind. The sail plan has a large mainsail, which is more controllable and easier to depower and a relatively small jib, which is easier to furl. With increasing wind pressure you can hoist a foresail on the inner forestay instead of a jib. By contrast, when the wind is light you can hoist a Code Zero, making the boat very powerful.'

It's often assumed that Long Cruise yachts are mainly optimised for Mediterranean sailing. They are ideal for that purpose, but the assumption misses the point. 'The rig plan and the deck hardware of the 42 LC are very flexible,' Lostuzzi says.

'You can hoist a powerful Code Zero for typical Mediterranean conditions or a small foresail for more severe Atlantic conditions. And you can choose between a standard rig or a 1m taller race rig, adapting the boat to your needs.'