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**Sailing to the Azores
and back for fun**

GRAND SOLEIL 42LC

**A proper cruiser
with Italian flair**

**A dream fulfilled on
the FRENCH RIVIERA**



**Family fun in the
WEST COUNTRY**

**FITTING A
NEW ENGINE**



Performance pedigree and Italian panache certainly make for stylish boats, but how do they translate into a serious cruising boat? Theo Stocker tests the baby of the range

FIRST TEST

GRAND SOLEIL

42LC



SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE Grand Soleil

MODEL 42 Long Cruise

PRICE FROM
£337,392 ex VAT

DESIGNER Marco Losuzzi

BUILDER
Cantieri del Pardo

Words Theo Stocker Pictures Richard Langdon

Light winds may not make for the most exciting boat test images, especially when it's chilly, the sky is grey and it's threatening to rain, which was the weather we were dealt for our test of the Grand Soleil 42LC. There is still a surprising amount you can tell about a boat in light airs, however. A sluggish, heavy boat won't go anywhere until there's a decent Force 4, while a lightweight racer will be up and off in a mere zephyr, before terrifying your nervous crew once the breeze kicks in. The wind speed at which a cruising boat starts sailing is a good indicator of where she sits on that spectrum. Time would tell how this boat fared.

The 42LC is not exactly a new boat; the model was launched at the 2020 Düsseldorf boat show, a few short weeks before we were all plunged into the depths of Covid lockdowns. We didn't manage to make the stars align until the first boat in the UK passed to her current owner. The fact that the boat is three years old but still looks factory-fresh suggests that she is well-built and well able to withstand the average knocks and bumps of the cruising life.

Nor is cruising Grand Soleil's heartland. The Italian yard is better known for lightweight, sporty and extremely elegant performance cruisers between 40ft-80ft, unashamedly designed for the Mediterranean. Sleek coachroofs, flared transoms and more than a little Italian panache make them instantly →

All controls are led aft to the helm and a powered winch each side makes shorthanded sailing a doddle



PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close hauled	32-35	11-13	5.0-5.5
Fetch	60	9-10	4.4-4.6
Beam reach	90	4-5	3-3.4
Broad reach	120	6-7	2.8-3.2
Run	150	4	3

*APPARENT WIND ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED



It's a clean deck layout, with grab rails recessed into the coachroof



LOGBOOK

TESTED

Theo Stocker

LOCATION

Central Solent

WIND NW F2-3

SEA STATE Smooth

DATE April 2024

Engine controls are at the starboard helm, along with anchor and thruster controls, plus lights and bathing platform switches

recognisable, both on the race course, where they have found plenty of success, and elegantly bobbing in the most fashionable of harbours.

While many of the older models have gone on to become great second-hand cruising boats with a decent turn of speed, it was just a decade ago in 2015 that Grand Soleil launched its first 46 Long Cruise. The range has now grown to include boats as large as 72ft. The Grand Soleil 42LC joins as the baby of the family, designed, as the others are, by Marco Lostuzzi.

Visually, the Grand Soleil family resemblance is still there – sharp, high bows, sweeping down past a low coachroof to the flared topsides at the stern, above a pinched-in waterline, just as with the Performance boats. The difference is all in the volume – the soft chines aft come down a lot closer to the water, the topsides now tower above the pontoon (you'll need a fender step if you're boarding midships) and the waterline has spread outwards. Look up, and there's a more modest rig – our test boat was fitted with the self-tacking jib and a furling mainsail, and although a carbon bowsprit adds nearly a metre to the boat's length, it's a fraction of the huge sprits on the Performance boats. Sadly, we didn't have a Code Zero or gennaker for the test sail. Below the waterline, things have mellowed too – the bow knuckle still



floats sportily just above the water, but the forefoot is deeper and there's more hull rocker, promising a more forgiving sail.

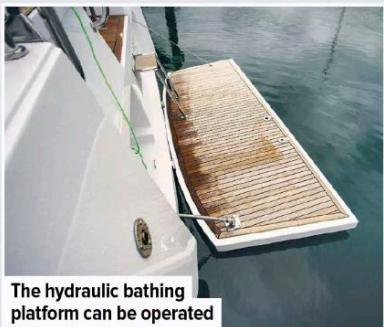
Looking at the polars, and we'll have to rely on those for the boat's strong wind capability for this review, it certainly looks like the 42LC will start to leave her stern wave behind for anyone bold enough to set an asymmetric spinnaker in the high teens and early 20s – speeds of 9-10 knots should be achievable, though most will be happy with reaching at 8-9 knots without pushing too hard.

THE TEETH OF A ZEPHYR

Motoring serenely down the Hamble river, out to a not-quite-glassy Southampton Water, the Volvo D2-50 manages 6.5 knots at just 2,000rpm, and maxes out at 7.7 knots at 2,800rpm; 7 knots at 2,300rpm should be a pretty efficient way of motoring from A

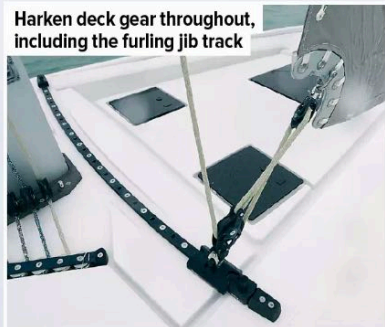
to B. With a bit of tide under us and the sails sheeted home, we were soon making 4 knots boat speed into little more than 5 knots of true wind with 7-8 knots across the deck. Another knot or two of breeze and we were at 4.6 knots. Then came the strong stuff; 8 knots of true wind gave us 11-13 knots apparent and we were slicing serenely along at 5.5 knots. I reckon with an overlapping headsail, a battened main with a bit more roach and a scrubbed hull we'd have had another half knot or more, easily. The polars agree

The optional cockpit arch keeps the mainsheet out of the way, helps to set the sprayhood, and provides solid handholds for moving about



The hydraulic bathing platform can be operated remotely when returning to the boat by dinghy

Harken deck gear throughout, including the furling jib track



A good drop for the anchor chain will avoid pile ups, and there's room for your fenders

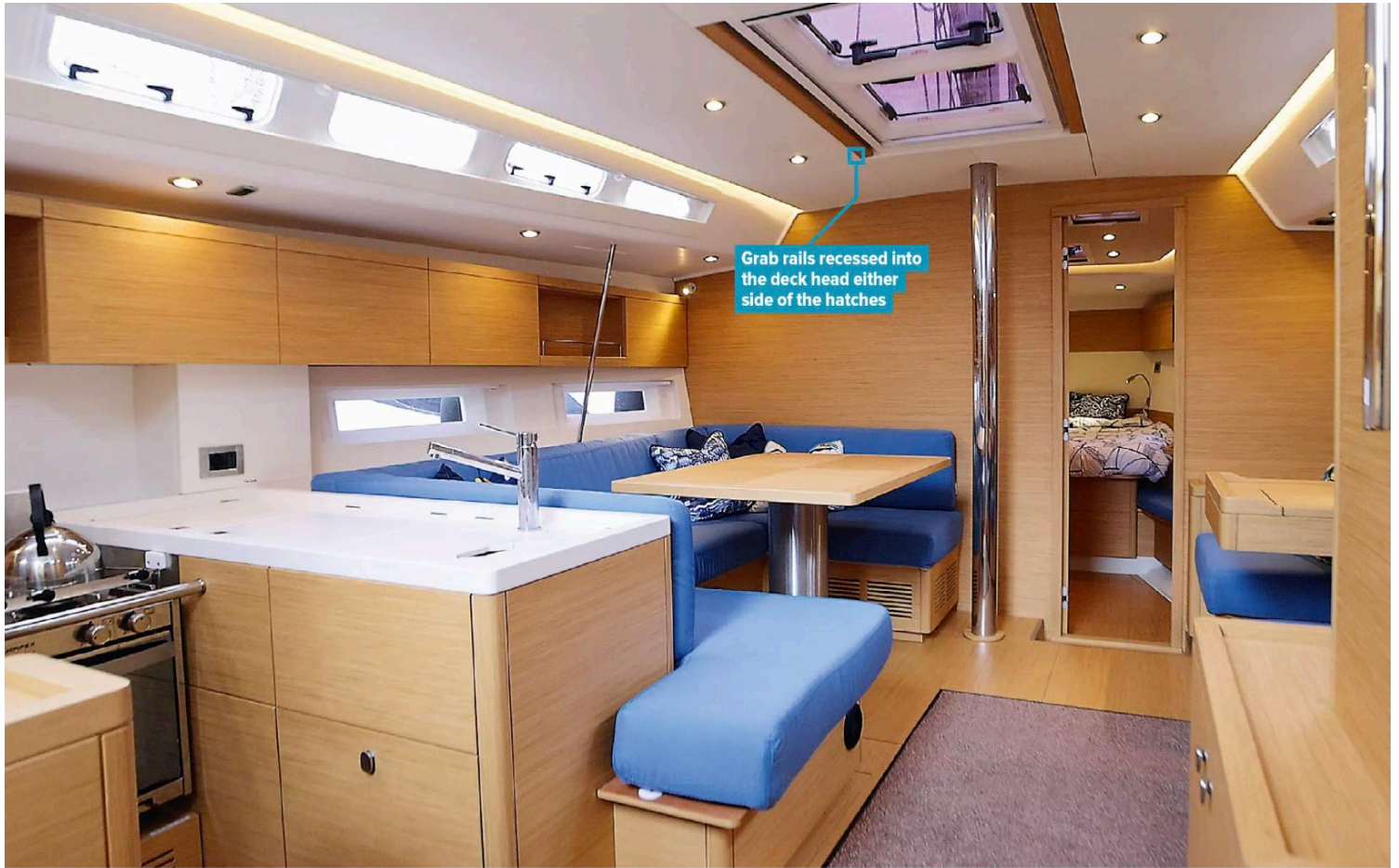


Below deck and anchor roller furling looks neat, and the bowsprit has grip moulding for walking on

The furling main and self-tacker are easy to handle but the boat would benefit from a little more sail area in light airs



A decent bowsprit with bobstay means offwind sails can be a good size



Grab rails recessed into the deck head either side of the hatches

Main saloon: space, light and ventilation abound in the saloon



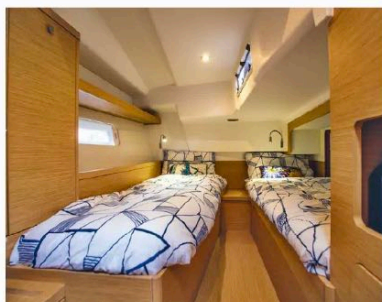
The aft heads includes an electric toilet and shower compartment



ABOVE: There aren't many galleys on boats this size with anywhere near this much stowage



There's plenty of space to move around the forward cabin, with an island double bed on the centreline



The starboard aft cabin on this boat had separate twin beds; water tanks below each



Additional stowage in the port quarter is accessed through the starboard aft cabin

With a self-tacking jib and in-mast furling, sailing this boat is simplicity itself

that you'll be up above 6.5 knots as soon as you've got 10-12 knots true. The extra breeze will help with pointing too – while we were sailing at around 35° apparent and tacking through 100° true, once the sails and keel are working properly you'll get a few extra degrees of height. A less slippery hull would be slower off the mark and less keen to point.

EASY TO HANDLE

This also translates into a boat that is easily handled. Twin wheels link to a single deep rudder abaft a deep L-shaped keel, and this boat had the standard 2.25m keel (a slightly heavier 1.9m 'shoal' keel is an option). Although we couldn't get everything loaded up in the light airs, the helm felt light and taut, and the boat answered the wheel quickly, even at slow speeds.

Singlehanding wouldn't be an issue, with all lines led aft under the coamings to clutches, served by a pair of winches each side, the outboard one being powered. There's still just enough space forward of the wheel for crew to handle the lines and a rope bin beneath the aft end of the cockpit benches. With no instrument repeaters or lines forward, the danger is that your crew get bored before they get overwhelmed. They will, however, be able to sit back against the sloping coachroof bulkhead under the shelter of the large sprayhood, which sets from the cockpit arch. It is taller than many sprayhoods, so you look forward through rather than over it, but it performs its job admirably.

The arch also secures the mainsheet; given the potential dangers posed by mainsheets in the cockpit, having this completely clear felt incredibly safe. It may offer less sail control than an aft mainsheet (a padeye in the cockpit sole aft of the table is an option), but it sets much further aft than the usual solution of a bridle forward of the companionway, and pulls the boom towards the centreline, rather than down to cockpit sole, leaving the kicking strap and adjustable backstay to handle mainsail twist. With a self-tacking jib, in-mast furling main and powered winches, setting sail, tacking, gybing, and stowing sail is simple, with minimal line-handling.

Controls for the bow thruster, anchor windlass and hydraulic bathing platform are all to hand, all of which can be operated by remote if you're away from the wheel. While the latter of these may sound like overkill, a remote-controlled bathing platform has the advantage that it can be raised as you leave the boat by dinghy, then lowered again when you return to the boat – clever! The thruster and single rudder make handling under power straightforward.

Side decks are wide and clear thanks to the split chainplates for cap and lower shrouds, leading to an extensive foredeck, where there's a recess in the coachroof for sunpad cushions. In a blow, getting to the bow might feel a little exposed across this open space, but the moulded toe rails here should help. Not that you'll need to, given that the below-deck jib furler and any furling offwind sails can be managed from the cockpit. Our test boat had an impressive collection of fenders, for which, amazingly, space could be found in the bow locker, the aft section of which is watertight stowage space, plus a draining gas locker, while the forward portion houses the anchor windlass with a decent hull-depth drop for the chain.

Stowage aft is provided in the generous lazarette between the wheels, with a bin for the liferaft accessed via the bathing platform. Given this is hydraulic, you'd need to manually override to get to the liferaft in the event of a power failure. There are no lockers below the cockpit seats, giving more headroom to the aft cabins.

In this two-cabin version, there is still a large locker port side aft (aft of the galley), but it is only accessible via the starboard aft cabin, marginally reducing its usefulness, though no doubt a good space for spare linen, folding bikes and infrequently



A narrow waterline forwards and fair lines aft help the boat point well and get moving quickly

A puff of wind and we were slicing serenely along at 5.5 knots

used spares. The large cockpit table also includes a deep bin with more than enough space for snacks, drinks and binoculars.

IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

The Long Cruise name suggests that this isn't just a boat for weekend afloat here or there, but for proper, long-term cruising, and as I headed below I was struck by how many details Grand Soleil seems to have got right. Gently-sloping companionway steps with handles either side lead to a large grab handle on the heads bulkhead to starboard. The heads are easily accessible in wet sailing gear, and there is a separate shower cubicle in which to hang dripping foulies. Grab rails are set into the deckhead either side of the coachroof hatches (as long as you're tall enough to reach), then fiddles and chainplate tie rods provide handholds as you move forwards.

The galley in the two-cabin version is something to behold. I don't think I've ever seen a galley with this much stowage. Cleverly, the forward section of what would have been an aft cabin has been used for a full-height bulkhead of lockers, plus lockers and drawers against the hull, meaning there is ample space for microwaves and coffee machines, as well as extra worktop space. No more ferreting around under seat cushions to find that elusive tin of baked beans or caviar.

A two-burner stove sits inboard of a bottle and condiment rack and lockers, with more pan lockers and a large split-top fridge. I liked the recess tucked behind the galley sink, providing somewhere to put



wet dishcloths and washing-up liquid. To port, C-shaped seating around the large saloon table affords comfortable seating for four, and while there are no seats on the fourth side, a couple of foam stools would provide extra seating if you wanted it.

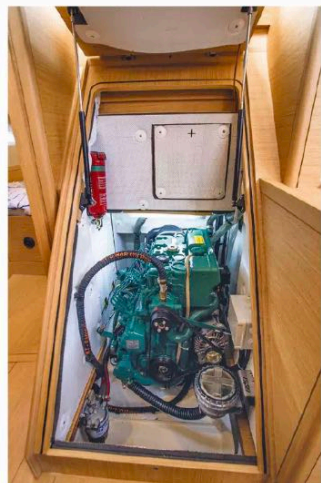
To starboard, a proper forward-facing chart table, replete with plotter, instruments and electrical switch panel, sits neatly between two comfortable chairs, which make the saloon a most convivial space, though a straight sea berth is an alternative option. All joinery is finished with solid wood edges and rounded corners, as is proper on a yacht.



The cockpit arch gives the mainsheet a good mechanical advantage while keeping it clear of crew



LEFT: Two comfy chairs flank the forward-facing chart table



ABOVE: The engine bay is well illuminated and ventilated

Accommodation is provided in two double cabins, with an option of a third double cabin port side aft, and a lowering saloon table would give you another double in the saloon. As it is, the boat's owner Paul never sails with more than four on board. The starboard aft cabin on this boat has separate twin beds – a double is an option, or an infill could probably be added to make up a double, and there's decent locker and shelf space, as well as access to the side of the engine bay.

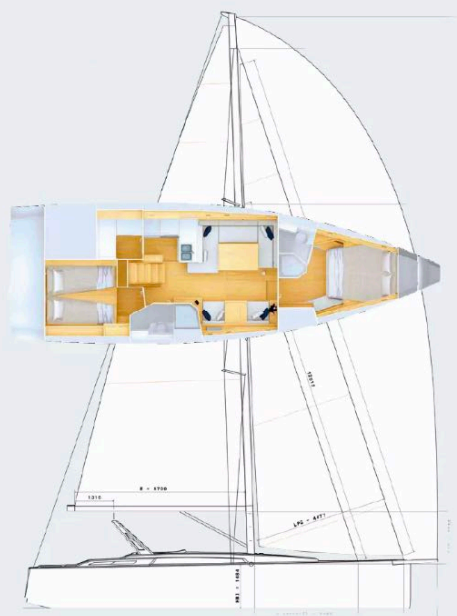
The forward cabin is definitely the owner's cabin, with a large midships island bed with steps either side, and a large wardrobe locker, complete with shoe locker below. Below the bunk are two large drawers, while the retracting bow thruster and battery plus a couple of small stowage bins take up the forward section of the under-bunk space. There's plenty of room to stand and walk around, thanks in part to the small step down in the cabin sole from the saloon to maintain headroom (as do steps down into the galley and the aft cabin). The generous ensuite heads, complete with separate shower cubicle, doesn't make it feel like a squeeze.

CLEVER FEATURES

One neat detail was that the recess housing the speed and depth transducer is sealed off from the rest of the bilge, so that when you swap out the transducer, any water is easy to mop up without draining aft to sit on the keel bolts. I also liked the sliding portlight blinds set into the hull lining – it all adds to the quality of the finish.

Tankage is pretty good, with 300 litres of water and 200 litres of fuel giving you sensible if not vast range; enough for moderate offshore sailing. Tanks are both located in the aft cabins, leaving more stowage space beneath the saloon seating. To my mind the boat looked a little 'bows up', though this may just be a trick of the sheerline and high bow knuckle rather than from too much weight aft; the boat certainly did not drag her stern at the speeds we were sailing at.

Access to the Volvo D2-50 and sail drive gearbox is very good. The engine space is well illuminated and includes forced ventilation to keep fumes and smells out of the accommodation. There is an option for a 60hp motor, but given our speeds under engine, there doesn't seem to be much to be gained by doing so.



GRAND SOLEIL 42LC

VERDICT

There are plenty of 42ft cruising yachts out there, but if you're looking something a little more refined with ambitions to go further afield, the options start to narrow. With a slightly larger budget, you might consider a Scandinavian boat like the Linjett 39 we tested last month or an X4³ Mark 2 – both very nice boats of a similar ilk, if a little pricier, or you might be looking at a Dehler, Hanse or an Elan. Given the light winds of the test it's hard to be sure, but I'd bet the Grand Soleil with an overlapping jib and slab main would give those boats a run for their money. Like all new boats these days, it doesn't come cheap, but I was impressed with both the quality of finish and the attention to detail. For a three-year-old boat, the one I sailed showed virtually no signs of wear and tear.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

This isn't a boat for a crew of eager beavers wanting to tweak the lines as, in practice, there's very little for the crew to do underway. It's a comfortable boat that will reassure nervous crews and lend herself to being sailed short handed. At the helm, this will be fun and rewarding for those who like to sail properly, but still easy handle. Light wind performance suggests she'll have a good turn of speed thanks to her deep keel and moderate displacement. By all accounts this is a dry boat to sail that handles waves easily. Even the shoal draught keel is relatively deep, but unless you want to go creek crawling, this shouldn't limit where you can go too much. I was a convert to the cockpit arch from a safety and practicality point of view.

Sufficient tankage and decent stowage on board means you can spend time away from harbours with ease, though you may want to add some systems like solar, heating or a water maker. She's also well set up for living aboard, with plenty of details to prove she's born out of real sailing experience. It would appear that Grand Soleil have indeed built a thoroughly capable cruising boat that is fun to sail.

PROS

- Cockpit arch keeps mainsheet clear
- Well thought through details
- High quality finish

CONS

- Lack of traveller limits mainsail control
- Deep draught may restrict some anchorages
- High price compared to a mainstream production cruiser

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE AS TESTED
£550,000 inc VAT

LOA 13.85m / 45ft 5in

HULL LENGTH
12.90m / 42ft 4in

LWL 11.92m / 39ft 1in

BEAM 4.16m / 13ft 8in

DRAUGHT
2.25 / 7ft 5in (Shoal
1.80m / 5ft 11in)

DISPLACEMENT
9,600kg / 21,164 lbs

BALLAST
2,735kg / 6,030 lbs

SAIL AREA
94.6m² / 1,018 sq ft

BAL/DISP RATIO
28.5%

DISP/LENGTH 157.3

SA/D Ratio 21.3

ENGINE Volvo Penta
D2-50 (50hp)

TRANSMISSION
Saildrive

WATER 300L (66 gal)

FUEL 200L (44 gal)

RCD CATEGORY
A Ocean

DESIGNER
Marco Los্তুzzi

BUILDER
Cantiere del Pardo

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