

Offering It All To Sailors: Salona 42 Yacht

If you can't decide whether you want a racing sailboat or a cruiser, the Salona 42 is a good starting point for your search

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It's difficult not to like the new 42-footer from Salona. It's got sharp lines, good design, handles well and is a sprightly performer. If you are not familiar with the Salona brand by now, it's probably because you haven't been keeping up with the racing scene in Europe, where Salona boats have been giving their nearest competitor – X-yachts – a good run for their money.

This relatively new brand and boat line is a partnership between J&J Design (Seaway) based in Slovenia, and AD Boats, a shipbuilder based in Croatia. J&J have been responsible for a number of the designs behind Bavaria yachts, as well as some award winning work for Shipman.

But the big splash came in 2006-2007, when the Salona 37 started racking up awards – in particular, Sailing World magazine's Boat of the Year 2007 award. Chosen from a short list of 19 nominated entries, the Salona 37 impressed due to its construction quality and excellent handling.

With such a pedigree behind it, there shouldn't be a surprise that the continued pairing of J&J and AD Boats would continue to produce excellent quality boats. In fact, a 37 was recently sold in Hong Kong by Asia Yacht Services – the first Asia-based dealer of this up-and-coming boat brand. The 42 continues in the same tradition, with similar build standards and attention to detail. What made the 37 a great boat has been carried over into a 42-footer.

One of the things that the folks at Asia Yacht Services are keen to point out is the flexibility of the AD Boat yards in meeting customer demands. This goes beyond cosmetic things like hull colour and whether you want an L-shaped galley or a C-shape. Salona likes to refer to its series of racing-cruising boats as semi-custom, to reflect the degree to which they will meet client specifications.

What J&J and AD will do is adjust your boat based on the degree to which you expect to go racing or cruising. Interior designs can be created allowing shelving space along the interior to be removable and replaced with bunks for the extra crew needed on long-haul racing. Similarly, the number of heads can be changed, depending on whether you expect guests to enjoy every moment, or if you're more likely to be going in a bucket in the middle of heavy seas.

As you'd expect, the Salona 42 can be ordered with draft keels of variable depth. Four configurations are available, with the range covering 1.75 metres up to 2.69 metres. Up top, the potential combinations are vast. Underfoot, owners can choose where they'd like teak decking (if at all), and where they think non-slip footing should be built in. On the 42 we tested, the cockpit was given a luxury look with teak, while the areas requiring secure footing around the mast and the pathways up to the bow were non-slip.

Our test model was fitted with dacron cruising sails. Despite this, the mainsail had full battens. The traveler system was something new to me: the traveler track ran the

width of the cockpit recess, just in front of the central helm station. The mainsheet was controlled by winches just to the port and starboard of the traveler block. This configuration, apparently more common in European racing boats, allows the helmsman quick access to both traveler lines and mainsheet during tacks and gybes.

However, this setting does restrict access somewhat to the transom and restricts space somewhat in the cockpit, as mainsheet lines can cut through the cockpit space from the foot of the helm station. This might be a bother to the sailor more concerned about cruising and entertaining.

An **alternate traveler-mainsheet** option is available, as is a smaller wheel, to open up space for people in the cockpit. The cockpit area is already quite spacious and could easily sit eight people in comfort. There is plenty of room for people to sit on either side of the helm station without being a disturbance to the helmsman. Cruising-oriented sailors can opt for a teak table in the middle of the cockpit, so that gives an idea of just how much room there is.

One thing we didn't have a chance to try, as this boat was quite new, was a single-line reefing system on the main sail. Since our model didn't have in-boom or in-mast furling, this would be an obvious advantage to cruisers, as well as allowing the full power of a main sail to racers. Salona states that one of their aims is to create cruising boats that can be easily sailed single-handed. Being able to reef the main sail with the use of a single line would certainly help in that ambition.

Our boat seemed to straddle the divide as a 50-50 racer-cruiser. But there's more to the design and construction story than that. A big part of the appeal of these boats is their construction quality. The 42, like its brethren in the Salona line, are built with a stainless steel frame that connects the hull, mast and keel to create an ultra-strong boat. The fibreglass of the hull is then bonded to this frame.

On top of this, Salona has taken the extra step of putting in watertight bulkheads in the bow and aft of the rudderstock. They makers claim that these are truly watertight, as all the access holes for electrical and mechanical requirements pass through a watertight gland, which means that a rupture in the forward area or a snapping of the rudder, while unpleasant, is not the end of the world.

Once under sail, we enjoyed a good bit of sun and light winds of around eight to 12 knots. At around eight knots of true wind, we seemed to average five knots on a reach – not bad at all. As we were forced to do a bit of maneuvering around Hong Kong's busy sea lanes, we put the Salona 42 through some tight twists and turns. As it happens, the steering is very responsive and the boat seems to turn on a dime. When helming this boat, it's not hard to imagine that you're actually on a 32-footer.

The interior is well appointed and can come with either teak or mahogany finish and furnishings, depending whether you prefer a lighter or darker colour scheme. A number of cabin configurations are available, and between them, there are several possibilities that should answer almost everyone's requirements from a cruising sailboat. Owners can opt for a three-cabin model, in which a master cabin in the bow is balanced by two symmetrical cabins at the stern. Alternatively, potential buyers can go for a larger stern cabin paired with a smaller skipper's berth at the aft starboard side. The bow cabin can also come with an ensuite bathroom, at the expense of a bit of headroom on the bed. The main saloon area is meant for up to eight people, and given the generous beam of the Salona 42, that shouldn't be too difficult. Surveying the interior, I had the feeling that

eight people could be quite comfortable, perhaps even stretch out a little. The well-equipped galley on the port side contains all the amenities needed for cooked meals and enough storage space to last a crew or a few guests for several days away from home harbour. Opposite the galley on all interior design configurations is the nav station.

Nearly every seating place has storage space underneath.

The lighting and ventilation in the main saloon is excellent, with a sizeable sun roof window dead centre above the saloon. This opens up for added draft, or can be closed off and shuttered with a retracting screen. A similar but smaller roof window can be found above the master cabin in the bow. A thin strip of curtain runs at head height along the sides of the main saloon. Pushing them to one side reveals the side windows, letting in more light if needed.

The Volvo Penta D2-40B 42-horsepower engine of the Salona 42 runs very quietly and powers the boat along nicely. At about half power, the 42 managed a steady five knots. Steering and tight turns remained remarkably easy under power, as under sail.

The air conditioning on our trip was superb. My daypack, which had been sitting in the saloon during our trip, was cool to the touch when we retrieved it. In short, if you are looking at a new cruising sailboat that can easily double as a racing boat, the Salona 42 with all of its options, is a definitely a good starting point in your search.