

ON TEST X4 & X6

LAUNCHING THE X4 AND X6 SIMULTANEOUSLY WAS A BOLD DECISION. TOBY HODGES TESTS X-YACHTS' NEW DOUBLE ACT

X Yachts builds dependable cruiser-racers, right? Reliably built performance yachts that get regatta results – not glitzy trendsetters? Well, with its dual launch heralding an all-new line this autumn, there appears to be change afoot.

The Danish brand certainly likes to keep its Southampton-based design team busy. It designs everything in house and, in the last eight years alone, has brought out new ranges of both Xc cruising yachts and Xp performance yachts.

It therefore made for unexpected and exciting news when X-Yachts announced the X6 in 2014, revealing a powerful new raised saloon cruising yacht with aggressive lines, wraparound coachroof windows and a mainsheet arch. It seemed a radical move for this level headed brand, but it wasn't a one-off. X-Yachts has now created a whole new 'X' line by launching the X4 simultaneously this summer. ➤

However, I couldn't help but wonder whether there is room for a third model run. "Many clients feel that the Xp models are too race-oriented while the Xc boats are too heavy and classic-looking," X-Yachts' founder Niels Jeppesen explains. "So we went back to X-Yachts' roots to design a very good, fast cruising yacht."

The new 'X' line has similar modern lines to the Xp performance models, but with more volume and increased payload capacity. It is slightly heavier than the Xp but with the same T-shaped keel, rudder and ballast. 'X' models have vacuum-infused epoxy hulls, as per the Xp, but include X-Yachts' renowned steel grid for stiffness.

"The X range is for those who want a sexy, modern-looking boat, but whose priority is cruising," says Jeppesen. With 14 of the X4s selling immediately, this range has had a flying start. So I went to Haderslev to test them both. ➤

FACTS

Test Editor **TOBY HODGES**

- ▶ **Where we tested:** Haderslev on the Baltic coast of Denmark not far from the German border
- ▶ **Wind:** X4 tested in 18-25 knots
X6 tested in 7-14 knots
- ▶ **Models:** both hull number 1 with X6 highly customised



Photos by **RICHARD LANGDON**



The new X line has generous sail area, high ballast ratio, faired keel, rod rigging, and a folding prop as standard



Above: Flush, frameless hatches create a feeling of uninterrupted flow across the deck



Above: The jib tracks are mounted inboard on the coachroof, which helps the X4 to point



Above: The optional carbon bowsprit keeps the anchor clear of the vertical stem



THE X4

Conditions off the Baltic coast of Denmark were ideal, with 18–25 knots of gusty wind in cloudy conditions that partly obscured the sun. This first brand new X4 was decidedly quick to charm as we headed off on a long upwind leg on starboard.

I quickly realised the X4 has a very definite and rewarding sweet spot. Put the bow down a little, feel her heel and accelerate, then edge back up so she flattens off slightly onto her soft chine. The log should then quickly rise by a third of a knot as she settles into a groove. Over-point and she'll drop back down to 7 knots; get it right and she'll carve to windward all day at 7.4 knots. It's highly rewarding.

The test boat's sails and deck gear were ideally set up for maximum performance. We carried full sail throughout the test with cunningham and, later, backstay cranked on. The 3Di black Kevlar/Spectra sails proved stiff enough to handle the bullets of wind that brought 30 knots over the deck without needing to resort to a reef. Admittedly, North Sails' Peter Westfal was doing a fine job trimming the main. In these conditions he

left the traveller alone slightly below the centreline and just played the mainsheet to control the twist at the head of the sail.

He was, however, uneasy about hoisting the shiny new A3 gennaker. Well Peter, I'm glad we talked you round. That long, stable offwind spell was the ideal demonstration of her power and agility and completely sold me on the X4. It was stupidly addictive on the responsive helm. We averaged 9.5 knots; at over 10.5 knots she started to plane and in gusts or little waves, we added another knot.

When asked to, she will point high and maintain admirable grip on the rudder. As in the upwind mode, there was an ideal amount of feedback with a touch of weather helm if and when pressed. It was really impressive stuff for a freshly launched model – but I guess that's what you come to expect from a pedigree yard used to building performance boats. The X4 may be slightly fuller in her hull sections than this builder's past cruiser-racers but she retains that addictive agility.

The excellent control line set-up including traveller, jib tracks, vang and cunningham encourages regular sail-shape tweaks to help

Above: The modern hull shape ensures a lively ride. The control line set-up helps get the most out of her

get the best out of her. The leads are particularly neat, with jib sheets led under the deck, and mainsheet led through the aft coaming down to the traveller. Mainsheet winches are buried neatly into the coamings, with primaries mounted on top – all Harken Performas. The deck is also kept very clean, with flush, frameless hatches.

The test boat had a 'Maxi style' mainsheet set-up, led directly from boom end to recessed traveller and on to the winches positioned within reach of the helm. It's a neat, direct system that I like but it loads the traveller more than a German led system. There is space in front of the wheels for a trimmer or helmsman if short-handed.

With plenty of beam carried aft, the deck lockers surrounding the cockpit have a practical amount of volume, plus there is a locker between the quarter lockers with room for two gas bottles. A deep sail locker forward has space for gennaker and fenders.

The standard boat comes without a cockpit table. Instead X-Yachts provides options for either a removable or fixed table. The tail bags were screwed-on accessories, and I would prefer to have seen proper built-in storage designed specifically for the job. ➤



Above: Mainsheet winches nestle in the coamings. Headsail sheets emerge from beneath the coachroof

- 1 The rod rigging meets stainless steel chainplates that are covered to maintain a clean toerail line.
- 2 The mirrored windows on the first boat have been changed for tinted versions. Cockpit shelter can be enhanced by an optional sprayhood and fixed windscreen.
- 3 Most of the control lines are smartly concealed under the deck and led aft to clutches on the coachroof.
- 4 The X4 that we sailed is yet another open-transom design with only two aft guardrail wires. In response, X-Yachts has now improved the aft pushpit design to include a third lifeline.
- 5 An optional swim platform is lowered and raised using a simple rope purchase.



Above: The optional oak Alpi decor. "We are being asked more and more for light wood finishes," says X-Yachts's founder Niels Jeppesen
Far right: Aft cabin double berth
Right: The three-cabin version includes a minimal chart table



Below: The master cabin bed has plenty of stowage beneath



Interior

Heading below, my first impressions were a little anticlimactic following such an enjoyable sail. It just seemed a tad plain; I have seen the 'oak Alpi' look used a lot across production yachts recently and it seemed out of place for a pedigree Scandinavian yard like X-Yachts (although the standard finish is still teak).

This is a sore point for this builder, as in the past, X-Yachts has been criticised for being too conservative with its traditional teak interiors. However, my reservations are about more than simply the choice of veneer. The interior of the X4 – the quality of the finish – didn't come across as a cut above the mass production yards. In essence, it lacked that feeling of luxury.

Some of this can be put down to her size – at 41ft there is only so much you can do with the space – but the doorways, for example, still felt unnecessarily narrow (although X-Yachts have now improved the frame detailing to make them wider) and offered just 5ft 7in headroom. In comparison, the interior of the X6 (overleaf) has more 'wow factor' than any other production yacht I've seen recently.

The X4 has a conventional three-cabin two heads layout. A two-cabin layout will be available in 2017, which I think would work better for this size and target market. The Oceanair blinds, optional indirect floor lights,

and illuminated LED light switches are smart design touches and there is good all-round access to the engine space.

Saloon

The test boat lacks a dedicated navstation hence the saloon feels extra roomy. In this three-cabin format, there is only the option to build in a minimum-size chart table adjoining the aft part of the starboard sofa. The two-cabin option will have a dedicated forward-facing navstation.

It's a smart area with plenty of natural light. The flip-top table with integrated wine-bottle stowage is large enough for six. There are four raised lockers each side of the saloon, but with tanks located beneath the berths for optimum weight placement, storage space is a little limited in the saloon.

Galley

The galley is smart and functional. It has a light, practical layout with adequate storage, a Corian fiddled worktop, double sink and top-opening 90lt fridge. A front-opening second fridge is optional, as are accessories like Nespresso machine and microwave. A double bin slides out from below the sink.

Forward cabin

Duck through the doorway and you'll find a light and inviting cabin. The optional en-suite in place of an extra wardrobe seems to make



the best use of the layout. The forward-looking coachroof window is a stylish touch to go with the hull portlights and the large deck hatch. Headroom of 6ft 4in is carried up to the island berth, which is somewhat elevated with generous stowage beneath. The berth lifts on gas struts for easy access.

Aft cabins and heads

The aft cabins have a conventional layout with a long double berth, small wardrobe, long double shelf and a hull window. In the heads, a swing door divides the wash area and heads itself, but also reveals the main entrance to the aft cabin. The heads converts into a wet-room and there is a shower on a stand with a mixer tap.

Build

X-Yachts has a facility in north Poland with 110 workers where the initial hull and deck lay up for both the X4 and the X6 is done. The rest of the assembly, including quality control, takes place in Haderslev, Denmark.



Above: Raw contemporary appeal sets the X6 apart and moves X-Yachts into new and exciting territory

THE X6

There's presence and then there's presence. The X6 is a bold design: a muscular, small superyacht blessed with powerful lines; a yacht that will place most others of her size firmly in the shade. Where the X4 is visually similar to the Xp range, this is a completely different animal, inside and out, with a healthy dose of testosterone and raw contemporary appeal.

"I have never walked into a boat before and fallen straight in love with it like this," said our veteran photographer Richard Langdon, not one normally prone to exaggeration. The formidable natural light

illuminates a mix of finishes including bare teak, clear-coat carbon, stainless steel and walnut – all modern, light, and fresh looking. "It's sensational," I agreed.

It should be noted however that this first X6 was built in collaboration with its British owner and is customised with a multitude of optional extras, including the carbon and leather trim, the brushed-stainless galley surfaces and the backlit feature bookshelf. He has also opted for a carbon Hall Spars mast and custom-made roller boom, which, together with features like her large hull portlights and bespoke dinghy

Inside and out, the X6 is a bold new direction for X-Yachts



stowage – there is room to stow a RIB facing forward on a roller-launching system that hinges down, as the aft deck lifts up – help identify her as very much a scaled-down superyacht.

Twin rudders are unusual for X-Yachts. The X73 in 2001 was the first model to have twin rudders – making room for the tender garage. “We don’t do it on smaller models because of prop walk,” Jeppesen explained. “But at this size you have a stern thruster.”

The X6 has very similar hull lines to the X65 I tested in 2009, seven of which were produced. She has a similar price and specification but her interior design is a quantum leap ahead.

Interior panache

To descend the bare teak steps of the shallow companionway is to witness a new dawn for X-Yachts. Yes we’ve seen a lot of raised saloon models before, but this has lashings of added panache. Stand in the saloon and you are at the perfect height for near-panoramic views, including that most prized angle looking forward over the flush foredeck. The amount of natural light in the saloon and galley is phenomenal.

Lift up the floorboards in the saloon and you’ll find high-calibre engineering: X-Yachts’s galvanised steel grid immediately imparts peace of mind; the tanks and batteries are all centrally positioned for optimum weight management and the hoses

and wire looms are housed in metal cradles to keep them neatly together and out of the bilges. The plywood soles are thicker than those used in my house. I’m told that matching the walnut veneer in those lengths was somewhat tricky. The predominant trim is light oak Alpi again, but this has been brushed when bare for a more tactile finish.

By providing a modular layout to the three-part accommodation plan, X-Yachts can offer a variety of options. The test boat had a four-cabin format (two Pullmans and two double cabins). The choice of an extra Pullman forward, reduces the size of the sail locker and removes the space for a forepeak crew cabin. The aft Pullman is ideally placed for a professional crew next to the walk-in engine room and galley, although the addition of an en-suite here would make it more practical for crew use.

The telescopic coffee table in the saloon is an odd, over-complicated device with four diagonal folding leaf sections to seat a maximum of seven. Combined with a small cockpit table, this restricts the options for hosting any kind of slap-up meal from the wonderfully light and large galley, the size and quality of which is a real selling point of the boat. It has a phenomenal amount of locker space and cold storage, plus space for extras like a trash compactor, coffee machine, dishwasher, and microwave.

The owner’s cabin forward, with over 7ft of headroom, is again well lit and



Above: The owner’s cabin forward has 7ft headroom and plenty of natural light through the hatch and the portlights



Above: The option of a Pullman cabin aft makes for a practical sea berth, or, situated next to the engine room and galley, it is ideal for professional crew



Above: The interior of the X6 sparkles with natural light, her design and layout outshining all other recent production yachts



Above: The smart bookshelves on the forward bulkhead have indirect lighting



Above: More design features: stylish porthole-style barometer and temperature displays



Above: A nice mix of contemporary design and semi-custom finishing

The optional carbon arch keeps mainsheet lines out of the cockpit

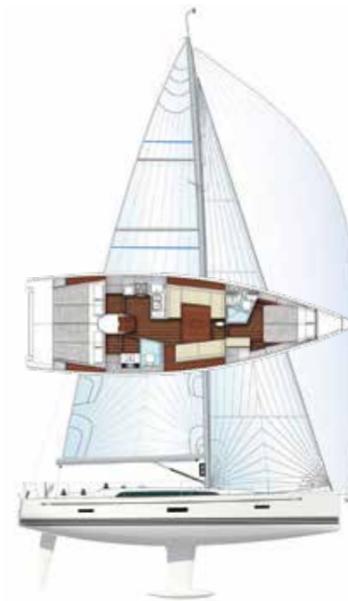


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DATA X4 & X6

SPECIFICATIONS X4

LOA	13.09m	42ft 11in
LWL	11.31m	37ft 1in
Beam (max)	3.95m	13ft 0in
Draught	2.20m	7ft 3in
Disp (lightship)	8,850kg	19,511lb
Ballast	3,800kg	8,377lb
Sail area (100% foretriangle)	97.50m ²	1,049ft ²
Berths	4-7	
Engine	45hp Yanmar saildrive	
Water	340lt	75gal
Fuel	200lt	44gal
Sail area:disp	23.2	
Disp:LWL	170	
Price (ex VAT):	€279,000	
Test boat (inc VAT):	£370,000	
Design:	X-Yachts design team	



SPECIFICATIONS X6

LOA	20.09m	65ft 11in
LWL	17.85m	58ft 7in
Beam (max)	5.40m	17ft 9in
Draught	3.00m	9ft 10in
Disp (lightship)	29,500kg	65,036lb
Sail area (100% foretriangle)	222.9m ²	2,399ft ²
Berths	6-10	
Engine	160hp Yanmar	
Water	1,000lt	220gal
Fuel	1,200lt	264gal
Sail area:disp	23.7	
Disp:LWL	145	
Price (ex VAT):	€1,980,000	
Test boat (inc VAT):	£2,600,000	
Design:	X-Yachts design team	
www.x-yachts.com		



propels her at 7.4 knots at 1,700rpm, consuming just 5.6lt of diesel per hour.

Cockpit arch benefits

For a large, powerful design, she's a calm yacht to sail, thanks in part to a very smart, well thought-out deck design. The sheets for example disappear below deck aft, reappearing at two Harken 980s abaft the cockpit. The furlers for staysail, genoa and Code 0 are all under the deck and I like the versatility her cutter rig provides. The mainsheet is led from the arch forward through the boom and back to winches.

Personally I'm a fan of the cockpit arch. It's a look reminiscent of the showpiece spoilers that typified the dream cars of the 1980s, but an arch also helps to create a cockpit enclosure, a sense of privacy and protection, and keeps the boom clear. The custom-made furler boom on the test boat has a manual override so the deck winch can be used in case of any power problems. This UK owner was also having a fixed bimini fitted with solar panels on top.

The lengthy but shallow cockpit has a small table and a dedicated liferaft locker by the companionway. Aft the benches is a pair of winches either side, with storage beneath the side decks for running rigging tails. A generous sail locker swallows fenders and furling sails, plus there's a chain locker with a wash-down hose and windlass.

inviting with a distinct impression of luxury. The double aft has a corridor-style entrance that extends under the cockpit sole. It then widens out to reveal a generous cabin with a large hull portlight and private access to the adjoining heads.

Twin rudder power

Anyone familiar with X-Yachts will not be surprised to read that this is a slippery, powerful beast. In just 5-7 knots of breeze the X6 will almost match the wind speed to windward. Add a couple of knots in a puff and she heels elegantly and clocks 7.5-8 knots. When it piped up to 14 knots we were slicing upwind pointing 30-35° at 8.5 knots, even topping nine if we footed off 5°.

It was a potent and commanding performance. The inhaulers make a notable

difference, adding five degrees to her pointing. An X-Yacht is consistently a delight to sail upwind, but the twin rudder grip offered on the X6 encourages you to push a little offwind. In 10-15 knots and with the Code 0 unleashed we maintained a steady 9.5 knots at 55-80°(apparent). This felt to me more steady than exhilarating and I noted excessive drag off the leeward rudder and wash off the windward rudder in this mode. Jeppesen said they had been tuning the rudder angles to get the best orientation. The loaded helm when reaching was probably more down to poor trim, as it was a nicer, more neutral feeling going upwind.

There's no doubt that the X6 will make a formidable passage-maker. And if the wind does dip below 5 knots, the standard Yanmar 160hp engine with three-blade Flexifold

Above: The bespoke tender garage aboard the test boat

Above left: Helm controls include a stern-thruster