

# X-TREMELY FABULOUS

X-Yachts didn't invent the cruiser-racer concept, but has certainly spent the last couple of decades perfecting it, as its new X4 demonstrates, finds **SAM JEFFERSON**



Eyebrows were raised, it's fair to say, a few years ago when X-Yachts announced its new Xc range. The Danish boatbuilder had previously been a stalwart of the cruiser-racer genre and had built up a hugely loyal following through its pleasing mix of performance and comfort.

The Xc was a departure as it placed the emphasis purely on cruising – albeit at speed. Now, 300 plus yachts later and it's clear that X-Yachts design supremo Niels Jeppesen knew what he was about.

This left the X-Yachts range split with the Xc based on cruising and its Xp range aimed at performance. While this all seemed well and good, it has clearly become evident to Jeppesen and his colleagues that there is a gap in the range. The result has been the new 'X' range which currently features the X4 and the huge X6. The basic premise

for this range was to get back to the nuts and bolts of X-Yachts' ethos and produce a handy, versatile cruiser-racer.

#### CONCEPT: 9/10

★★★★★★★☆☆

The natural conclusion might have just been to detune an Xp and settle for that, but such compromises often end up being a bit of a dog's dinner and Jeppesen and his team wisely opted to go back to the drawing board with a new design. The X4 is the first of that line; a 42 footer that is unashamedly a cruiser-racer; she features a modest displacement of 8,850kg – making her comparable with the Xp44 in weight – a deep T-shaped keel with a lead bulb as standard, rod rigging and vacuum infused epoxy construction with a hull that features a steel grid at its core and is also cured in a purpose-built oven for extra stiffness. →

“ A cruiser-racer should make a poor helmsman feel good ”



Her lines also reflect this straightforward cruiser-racer approach, while Jeppesen has lost none of his talent for producing a yacht that's easy on the eye. There's modest beam with a decent amount of taper aft, but there are a couple of inches of extra freeboard and the hull lines allow for a tad more volume than an Xp with greater initial stability.

#### DECK LAYOUT AND RIG 8/10

★★★★★★★☆☆

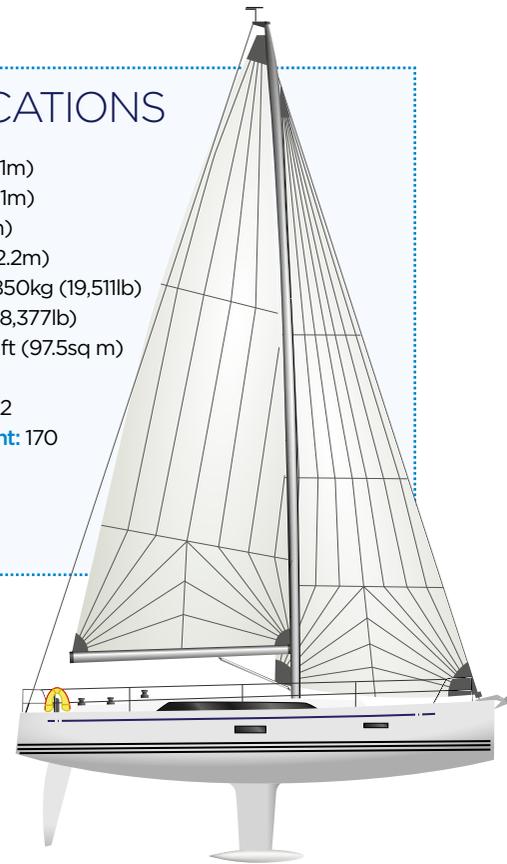
X-Yachts has always been about evolution as opposed to revolution and this is unquestionably true of the deck layout, which is garnered from years of experience in producing cruiser-racers. If you're the helmsman, then everything is in the right place and to hand, even the throttle control. The traveller is directly in front of the helm and there is plentiful space for a dedicated mainsheet trimmer although, if shorthanded, the mainsheet winch is still within reach of the helm,

as is the hydraulic backstay tensioner for that matter. Perhaps of more interest are the concessions to cruising and whether they compromise her racing potential. My verdict is largely that they do not thanks to a flexible approach to fitting out. Teak decks are standard in the cockpit and an option on the side decks, while the slim bathing platform is also an option. You also have the choice of a fixed or detachable cockpit table. So the key is flexibility and versatility.

In common with most modern designs, the decks are very clear and uncluttered, with lines recessed beneath the deckhead and hatches all let in flush. The jib cars are sited on the coachroof, which allows for a very tight sheeting angle and keeps the side decks uncluttered. Up at the bow the versatile theme continues with several variations for setting your gennaker or Code 0. Here, you have four different options, varying from a simple carbon sprit, a

## SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA:** 42ft 11in (13.1m)  
**LWL:** 37ft 1in (11.31m)  
**Beam:** 13ft (3.95m)  
**Draught:** 7ft 3in (2.2m)  
**Displacement:** 8,850kg (19,511lb)  
**Ballast:** 3,800kg (8,377lb)  
**Sail area:** 1,049sq ft (97.5sq m)  
**Sail area/displacement:** 23.2  
**LWL/displacement:** 170  
**Price:** £255,000  
**Price as tested:** c£336,000



**Left**  
Freeboard is slightly higher than the Xp but she's still a nice looking yacht

**Below**  
The bathing platform and teak side decks are options that may be eschewed by weight conscious racing sailors

sprit with an anchor roller included and also a simple GRP cowl that can be used for boats racing under ORC. The rig is a nine-tenths fractional affair. It's still a powerful sail plan, although by comparison the slightly larger Xp44 sets about 10sq m more canvas. Rod rigging is standard and the yacht I tested carried a particularly lovely set of North 3Di sails which are a pricey but highly rewarding option.

#### UNDER SAIL 9/10

★★★★★★★☆☆

Conditions on the day were modest to say the least. There was about ten knots of breeze ruffling Southampton Water so conditions were far from wild, but →





they were sufficient to give you a good feel for the yacht in modest conditions. The key with a cruiser-racer is that she should make a poor helmsman feel good and allow a good helmsman to enjoy himself. I don't know which category I fall into, but I have to say that X-Yachts seems to have hit a sweet spot, as the X4 was an absolute joy to sail. Doubtless the 3Di sails helped, but the feel of the yacht was excellent and she fell into her groove effortlessly upwind. She was sympathetic too; not too twitchy but with excellent feel and very responsive in conditions where a heavier – or beamier – yacht might have struggled. On the wind, we were making a good 6.5-7kn in 10kn of breeze which was good going I felt.

Off the wind we unfurled the gennaker and she continued to progress with rapidity and poise, nudging 8kn when there was an extra puff in the breeze. All in all, this yacht was a joy to sail and very easy for two

people to handle in the admittedly modest conditions. It would be great to have her out in stronger breezes.

#### BELOW DECKS 7/10

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

Logic dictates that a cruiser-racer needs a decent degree of comfort down below and there is certainly a touch more volume down here compared to the equivalent Xp. It's also a pleasant, light space thanks in part to the optional light oak interior on this yacht. There's nothing revolutionary going on down here though; she's fairly standard and, if anything, a touch bland.

There is a choice of four different layout arrangements with the choice of either one or two heads/shower compartments, the latter allowing for an ensuite forward. Either way, the forward cabin is the master and is an extremely comfortable space. With the forward bulkhead moved aft to allow for an

**Above**  
In cruising mode, the X4 can easily be double handed

**Below**  
Below the X4 is light and airy with her cruising pedigree easy to see

extra bow locker on deck, the forward cabin is much less tapered than is often the case on a yacht of this size and this means a couple can sleep with their heads in the bows and there is room to manoeuvre around the edge of the bed.

The aft cabins feature extra cot beds above the double berths which is a good concession to racing, although you'll have to choose the two cabin layout option if you're after a full sized nav station.

#### VERDICT 9/10

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

The key to any cruiser-racer is that she is fast, fun and comfortable and the X4 was all those things. She is also extremely versatile and very comfortable. It will be interesting to see how she performs in mixed fleet racing, but I have a feeling that, with the right crew, she might end up surprising a few supposedly 'racier' rivals. □

## COMPARISONS



### Elan E6

Another sporty cruiser-racer, this one built in Slovenia and designed by Rob Humphreys. Those broad hindquarters make her a bit sticky in light airs, but she flies once the breeze picks up.

**LOA** 13.6m

**Beam** 4.36m

**Draught** 2.6m

**Displacement** 11,300kg



### Dehler 42

A yacht that must surely rank as X4's closest rival, this smart new yacht from Dehler features a very similar blend of performance and comfort. The interior styling is far more striking.

**LOA** 12.84m

**Beam** 3.91m

**Draught** 2.15m

**Displacement** 9,100kg

## ANSWER BACK

### Stuart Abernethy of X-Yachts comments:

The technology and engineering for our Xp range was, and is still, state-of-the-art, epoxy vacuum infusion mixed with carbon-fibre where appropriate, along with utilising the interior cabinetry to add stiffness to a relatively narrow hull form, this quest for performance put us firmly into 'racier' territory than our previous generation of cruiser-racers.

Our new X range embodies a blend of our Xc and Xp ranges (introduced in 2008 and 2011 respectively), resulting in what can best be described as a range of 'performance grand tourers', where we appeal to the racer who isn't quite ready for an Xc model, by utilising the technology from our Xp range, but also appealing to the cruiser who needs more comfort by offering more stability, volume, tankage, and a comprehensive choice of interior finishes to satisfy all personal tastes. Here in the UK this new X range has hit the spot.