

FJORD 41 XL

Perennially labelled “Med boats”, Fjord’s latest model is put through its paces in our home territory. How does it get on?

No one will find it much of a surprise that the majority of Fjords come to life at the Hanse factory on the German/Polish border and then immediately dive south to live out their days in the sun-drenched waters of the Mediterranean. It is a rarity for us to get our hands on one anywhere but the Med, most usually Mallorca where the local dealer does a booming

trade because the boats are just so well suited to the cruising grounds.

So then, how refreshing to be the first magazine to get our hands on the Fjord 41 XL and for it to have shown up in our backyard. In Hamble Point Marina, surrounded by rows and rows of mainly white GRP, its upright stem, towering topsides, enormous hard top and electric

blue metallic hull wrap lend the boat all the subtlety of a bagpiper in a library. To my eye, it looks utterly fabulous and, given the glorious late September sunshine we had for our test, perfectly at home.

Though this is a brand new model in every aspect from the drawing board of Fjord's chief designer Patrick Banfield, who knows a thing or two about designing boats of this style having developed craft for Compass, Wally and Tenderworks, it doesn't waver from Fjord's usual USP. This is a deck boat, first and foremost, slathered in sun pads and laid-back seating with various modules dotted around the deck that house fridges, a sink, grill, ice maker and all the constituent parts required to have a bloody good time once the anchor has been deployed.



MYRIAD OPTIONS

The difference with this model is the amount of layout choices on offer both on and below deck. Let's start on deck, where most Fjord owners will spend the majority of their time. There are five options for the cockpit, including a totally bare deck – presumably for carrying water toys in chase-boat guise – and a plethora of seating and sun pad variations. There's ►





The electric blue hull has the subtlety of a bagpiper in a library, but to my eye it looks utterly fabulous



a version with an aft-facing U-shaped dinette and a pair of armchairs, one with a sun pad, forward-facing bench and more chairs arranged around a small coffee table and one with a sun pad aft and a pair of low-slung seats opposite each other facing across the boat with a table in between. There are more I could list but you get the picture. Our test boat had the layout the UK dealer thinks will be most popular, which is a sun pad aft with a huge dinette ahead of it and a pair of tables that can either join together to create dining space for eight people or be used as two smaller snack tables.

though if you opt for the latter you lose the walkway through the seat modules that makes moving around this area so much easier and links directly with the companionway stairs down into the cabin. Once you've made your way down these stairs there is also plenty of choice on offer and not just when it comes to décor where there are four colour schemes: Classic, Polar, Elegance and Sport. Our test boat had the latter, which despite being vibrant and modern, has gold highlights throughout and is a little too "Trump Tower" for my liking.



This feels like the best use of the 41's deck space, and thanks to the two-way backrests on both benches it's a very flexible set up that caters for catching the sun, dining and passage-making. An optional sun shade extends towards the stern from the hardtop to provide some necessary shelter from the sun for when lunch is served.

At the helm, there's the option of three or four helm seats,



Engine access is a bit of a squeeze via the hatch under the table

ABOVE
Pop-out teak steps on both sides allow for easy boarding to/from the quayside

SEE MORE
mby.com/fj41

Amidships you can have a storage room, a utility space and another walk-in storage area with access from a deck hatch, or an open-plan cabin with double berth, which is the pick of the bunch for me. It doesn't suffer the compromises that you think it might, being tucked underneath the cockpit. It hasn't got standing headroom but the ceiling isn't so low over the bed that you feel like you're in a morgue drawer and there's a decent level of natural light from the hull windows on either side. The bed is a good size but the person sleeping on the outside will have to clamber over the other occupant to get to the loo in the night.

Forward, there is a big fixed double berth and in between, a choice of a small sofa with drawer fridge underneath, a run of storage with a fridge and freezer, a vanity area with a fridge, or a day head, which seems surplus to requirements given there is a toilet and shower room opposite. There is also the option to have a compact galley down here with a two-ring hob, fridge and sink, and this is the only configuration that includes a bulkhead with a sliding door that sections the amidships cabin off from the rest of the lower deck. In a way it's a shame that there isn't an option to have a convertible dinette forward with the cabin amidships, which would be the perfect layout for a couple who don't intend to have guests very regularly but, given the extraordinary flexibility on offer, I'm being picky.

SENSE OF SECURITY

Something that possibly gets overlooked, due to the way Fjords look, is how safe and practical they are. Despite their open design, because the bulwarks are so tall, you don't feel exposed as you make your way around the decks to attach lines or hang fenders. There are no guardrails but there are thick handrails set into the bulwarks, all of which are inset with LED strip lighting and emanate a warm glow across the decks once dusk settles. The

specially designed foam fenders have dedicated storage spots set within the topside mouldings, there are pop-out teak steps forward of the helm to make boarding from a quayside or mother ship more comfortable and, as an option, there is a sliding bow roller that conceals the anchor when not in use to maintain those razor sharp lines.

A good deal of thought has gone into the design of the helm, too. The seats are fantastic, high-backed and with bolster function they provide comfortable support whether you

choose to sit or stand. The dashboard, which is split into two sections across the central walkway, is studded with cubby holes and storage slots for loose items and both navigator positions have a brace bar close to hand that their occupants can grab onto if things get bumpy. As with all Fjords, the skipper sits on the centre line with a perfect all-round view of the boat's extremities and everyone at the helm benefits from the protection of a deep, frameless windscreen. There is an option for the top of the screen to meet the hard top for even more protection but I can't help thinking that might look a little odd and dilute the essence of Fjord ownership, which is being out in the open air.

The 41 is available with sterndrives only and it was with great delight that I read the spec of our test boat and spotted the largest 440hp engines. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for IPS and its ease of control, but from a driver's perspective this combination of motors and drives wins hands down. With the option of the sterndrive joystick and the slick action of the hydraulic clutches in the DPI drives, it's no longer ►



There are plenty of options down below but our test boat had the storage and fridge option



If the gold highlights are a bit much there are more restrained options



The double amidships cabin will be a popular choice

With the 41XL, Fjord has returned emphatically to what it does best



It's a bit cramped in the engineroom



the case that you must opt for pods to get effective joystick control. That said, I would always opt for a bow thruster for fine control when it comes to manoeuvring into a berth.

At sea the grip and agility of stern drives make the 41 a very enjoyable thing to drive. The steering is light but there is enough feedback on offer and you don't feel detached from the process as you can do with some IPS installations.

WAVE-REPELLENT RIDE

The 440hp engines effortlessly wallop the boat up to cruising speed, which is anywhere between 20 and 30 knots. Interestingly, 30 knots is one of the most efficient fast cruising speeds and with a top speed of just under 38 knots on the day there is plenty left in the tank when you need it. The boat we had on test was suffering with some exhaust gremlins which, when rectified, should mean the boat tops 40 knots quite comfortably but we couldn't get there during our trial.

With a 13ft 1in (3.99m) beam, the 41 can't hope to slice through the chop with the knife-like nonchalance of the Windy 37 Shamal or Axopar 37 but with some sympathetic throttle work the boat will make light work of the conditions. Aboard its rivals you're able to bury the throttles and allow them to hammer through it but the 41 takes a little more caressing from

the helm, although it is solid and remarkably dry. That's something that has always struck me about Fjords, despite how exposed they are and their upright topsides, very little spray finds its way onto the decks. For wafting to and from the day's anchoring spot there are few more pleasant ways to travel in this size category.

The last model I tested from the yard was the 44 Coupe, an update on the 42 with an ungainly glass wheelhouse plonked over the deck. To me it felt like a backwards step, an obstruction to the very thing that makes these boats so appealing. With the 41 XL, Fjord has returned emphatically to what it does best.

CONTACT Inspiration Marine +44 (0)2380 457008;
www.fjordboats.com



WINDSCREEN

The deep screen provides excellent shelter for those at the helm station

DASH FINISH

Fjord persists with black GRP which suffers from glare and scratches easily

ENGINE INFO

Engine screens are under perspex flaps and hard to read

**COCKPIT LAYOUT**

Lots of options on offer but this configuration strikes a good balance

WALK THIS WAY

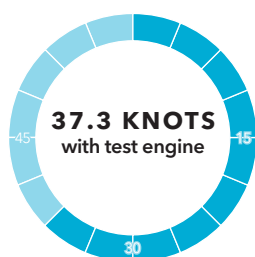
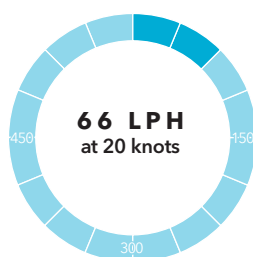
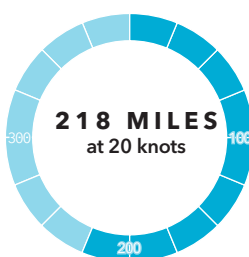
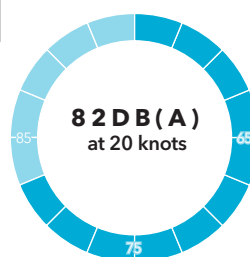
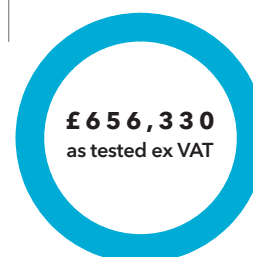
Having four seats at the helm blocks off this useful passageway

IN THE SALOON

Choose between storage, a sofa, galley or heads here

ON ANCHOR

The optional hidden anchor maintains the 41's sharp lines

TOP SPEED**CONSUMPTION****RANGE****NOISE****PRICE****SPECIFICATION**

LOA 44ft 4in (13.51m)
Beam 13ft 1in (3.99m)
Draught 3ft 10in (1.17m)
Displacement 11.4 tonnes
Fuel capacity 900 litres
Water capacity 355 litres
RCD B for 12 people

Designer Patrick Banfield, Jim Wilshire & Fjord Boats

COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from €394,950 ex VAT
Extended hydraulic bathing platform €21,900
Pop-out anchor system €9,900
Upgrade to twin 440hp engines €41,990
Volvo Penta Interceptors €13,865
Guest cabin with double berth €6,800
Sun pad/dinette cockpit layout €21,160
Quick gyro stabiliser €29,900
Air-conditioning €12,900
JL Audio 3-zone audio pack €9,790
Cockpit sun shade €9,900

PERFORMANCE

Test engines Volvo Penta D6 440/DPI. Twin 440hp @ 3,700rpm. 6-cylinder, 5.5-litre diesels

		ECO					FAST	MAX
RPM	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200	3,400	3,600
Knots	13.9	16.5	20.4	24.4	27.0	30.4	33.3	37.3
Litres per hour	67	80	88	99	112	124	141	168
Litres per mile	4.82	4.85	4.31	4.06	4.15	4.08	4.23	4.5
Range (NM)	149	149	167	177	174	177	170	160
Noise dB(A)	82	82	82	83	84	84	88	90

Speed in knots. Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices exclude VAT. 25% fuel, 80% water, 3 crew + safety stores. 25° air temperature, F1 and slight for sea trial