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Arcona 340





# Arcona 340

Blending sporty performance with Scandinavian quality, the Arcona 340 also comes at a surprisingly sensible price. David Harding reports



ARCONA 340: sporty cruiser

PRICE: from £132,000 (inc VAT)

**B**uilding a fast boat costs money: other things being equal, a fast boat is likely to be more expensive than one that's slower.

Similarly, a boat that's strongly constructed and fitted with a hand-crafted interior will cost more than a mass-produced equivalent.

Little wonder, then, that the Arcona 340 from Sweden costs more than some production cruisers of similar length. She's fast for lots of reasons. She has a bulbed, all-lead keel for a low centre of gravity and a slim section. Her vacuum-infused, Divinycell-cored hull is laid up with vinylester resin and multi-axial fabrics for stiffness and light weight. Inside is a galvanised steel frame that takes the load from the keel, mast and rigging.

Because the hull is light and rigid and the centre of gravity low, the Arcona can carry a large rig: the mainsail alone is 37.8sq m (407sq ft) and her sail area/displacement ratio 23.2. The double-spreader mast is keel stepped, giving more scope for tuning and allowing use of a slimmer section.

A powerful boat with plenty of low-down ballast and a generous spread of sail is going to be subject to higher stresses than a lightly-ballasted, modestly-rigged alternative and the structure needs to be able to cope with them. It's the same for car-makers, who wouldn't put a turbocharged V8 engine into a standard family saloon without beefing up the chassis, suspension and gearbox.

In the case of the Arcona 340, this sportiness is married to an interior

of a style that's rarely associated with performance yachts. Far from being basic or plasticky, it's built in hand-finished mahogany. Few internal mouldings are used and most of the joinery is bonded directly to the hull, giving additional rigidity, minimising wasted space and allowing easy access to the systems and skin fittings.

Builders that combine this quality of fit-out with a performance-orientated design are few and far between. Among the better-known examples in Europe are Finn Gulf, X-Yachts and Grand Soleil – but with X-Yachts' racing bias and Grand Soleil's range starting at 11.3m (37ft), the Arcona has relatively little direct competition.

## Quality and price

Despite the expense normally associated with building a boat of this type, the Arcona costs less than you might expect. She starts at around £132,000 including VAT but not delivery (most Arcona owners sail their boats home from the Baltic). When you consider that a well-specified First 35 would set you back over £130,000, it's far from outrageous.

The principal reason for the price of the Arcona is that she's built on an Estonian Island. Arcona Yachts is a Swedish company that has its administrative office and commissioning yard near Stockholm and a second yard on Sweden's west coast where the larger models are built. But the cost of the smaller boats is kept down by the use of a self-contained facility on Saaremaa. Although labour rates are lower here, Estonia



**ABOVE** The Arcona is a slippery performer in light conditions

**LEFT** Overlapping headsails are optional but the blade gives plenty of power

has a long tradition of boatbuilding and the modern, fully-equipped yard even boasts a test-pool complete with sprinkler system.

Arcona Yachts' designer, Stefan Qviberg, is a relative unknown outside Sweden and some builders might consider that to be a disadvantage. The success of the Arcona range, however, suggests that it has done them no harm: the 430 won the 2009 European Yacht of the Year award in the Performance Cruiser category and the 340 has been nominated this year. Quite apart from these accolades, the range has attracted some hugely experienced cruising

and racing sailors. That's easy to understand given the combination of interior finish and sailing performance, which I experienced on testing the 370 in 2007.

What I was keen to see on the 340 was whether Arcona could maintain these standards on a smaller boat. A builder's margin reduces as the size and price come down, leading to pressure to cut costs – and to features found on larger models often not making it into their little sisters.

Externally at least, our test boat, *Annarchy*, showed no signs of being the poor relation. With her two-tone decks and plenty of





well-specified deck hardware she looked very much part of the family. Her hull shape has been developed from that of the 430 – the most recent model in the range until the 340 came along – and is notable for its relatively square transom and for topsides that tuck in less at the waterline than you might expect on a performance cruiser.

Stepping aboard, you can't help but notice her form stability and even with four people on one side as we motored down the river she hardly heeled.

If the relatively upright topsides increased the wetted area, it certainly didn't upset her in the light conditions we experienced to start with. In less than 3 knots of wind she ghosted along at 2 knots, picking up to 3.3 knots when the anemometer registered 4.5 knots. You would put the engine on if you had to get anywhere, but it's good to have a boat that will sail in light airs. As the wind over the deck climbed to 12 and finally 14 knots,



**Folded into its recess and covered over, the sprayhood is protected and out of the way when not in use. Winches are from Lewmar or Harken**

she powered up beautifully and clocked an easy 6.5 knots with the apparent wind at 25°. In the flat water she also maintained 5 knots through the tacks.

### Performance plus

Just like the 370, the 340 proved to be a delight to sail – fast, manoeuvrable and delightfully responsive yet not in the least bit twitchy. She carried just enough weather helm to give a positive feel through the wheel, and the rudder had a nice amount of balance.

To assess the combination of boat and rudder balance, and to see

how she might behave in the event of a problem with the steering system, we tried sailing upwind with the wheel unattended. Steering by sail trim alone we could manage provided we were quick to make the necessary adjustments as soon as she started rounding up. After some practice and a few unintentional pirouettes we also managed to bring her through the wind and get her sailing on the other tack. Left entirely to her own devices she rounded up and tacked before bearing away, gybing and continuing to circle gently.

The large, double-spoked wheel

recessed into the cockpit sole drives the Jefa steering system and gives a good choice of helming position. For upwind sailing the obvious place to sit is outboard of the wheel, on the flat aft section of the coaming, from where you can brace your feet against the pedestal. Your mainsheet trimmer – if you have one – can sit immediately forward with all controls to hand.

Otherwise trimming is simple enough from the helm. Anne Noon, who owns *Annarchy*, chose what's sometimes known as the German mainsheet system, whereby the sheet is led forward to the mast and then aft both sides to winches on the coamings. As standard there's a conventional purchase directly from boom to traveller.

With the headsail winches (Lewmar 46 self-tailers) also on the coamings forward of the mainsail winches and jamming footblocks for all the sheets, short-handed sail trimming should present no



problems. It's made easier by the small foretriangle, which accounts for only 42% of the sail area.

A powerful backstay tensioner is vital with such a large mainsail and the Arcona's 32:1 should be adequate. The rest of the hardware, mostly from Lewmar, appeared to be in the right place and worked well. Harken kit can be specified as an alternative and the layout varied according to owners' preferences. On *Annarchy* the kicker is led aft on the port side but it can be split both sides or led to a central swivel cam.

Aft the wheel, the transom is open in the middle and closed off each side by full-depth stern lockers. It seems a good compromise, providing stowage and some protection while allowing the wheel to be mounted well aft and making boarding or MOB recovery relatively straightforward.

For beating in racing mode, three crew in the cockpit would be plenty. Any more and the mainsheet and genoa trimmers would probably start falling over each other.

Moving forward on deck, two points stand out. One is the teak toerail – in many ways nicer than slotted aluminium – that runs inboard of the stanchions and reduces the chances of stubbed toes. The other is the absence of non-slip finish on the coachroof except in the flat, recessed centre section between the forehatch and centre hatch. To me this is a strange omission: it's impractical, it does nothing to enhance the appearance, it increases glare and reflection in strong sunlight and it shows up any scratches. Few foredeck hands or mast-men would stand for it: gybing the pole would



The cockpit layout is well suited to short-handed sailing. The optional 'German' mainsheet system has the tails led aft to a winch on each coaming

be a challenge with wet decks. I had to shut up about it when Tony Bottomley of Arcona Yachts said he would arrange for my boat to have a non-slip finish.

### Practical solutions

There's little else to fault on deck. A couple of vents come as standard and the sprayhood folds down into a recess forward of the companionway. Helping the uncluttered appearance and reducing trip hazards, all the lines from the mast run aft beneath removable panels and the boat's generous sail area/displacement ratio allows the Furler furling drum

to be mounted below decks as there's no need to maximise the J measurement (mast to forestay).

Immediately abaft the furling drum, the anchor locker contains the gas bottles as is common practice in Sweden. Equally common is the lack of an anchor roller; owners can choose a removable one (most popular in racing circles) or a more substantial fixed alternative.

Stowage elsewhere is in the form of two full-depth lockers in the stern and another to starboard.

Apertures are generally smooth and

well finished, though the engine-control cables looked vulnerable in the starboard locker. Some simple form of protection wouldn't go amiss. In similar vein, while most of the cut-outs through bulkheads are well sealed, there is some bare end-grain here and there. An extra hour's labour would make an appreciable difference.

In partial compensation for the smooth coachroof, the non-slip finish on the decks seems good – effective yet not aggressive. Moving along the decks is eased by the relatively high position of the lower spreaders. They're often set so low down on the mast that

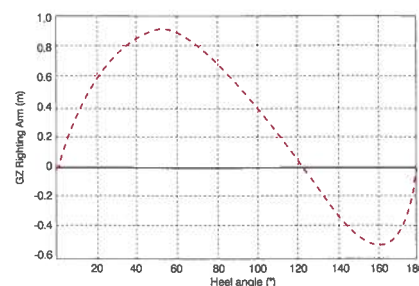
## Arcona 340 data

LOA	10.40m (34ft 1in)
LWL	9.30m (30ft 6in)
Beam	3.45m (11ft 4in)
Draught	1.95m (6ft 5in)
Displacement	4,800kg (10,580lb)
Ballast	1,900kg (4,188lb)
Sail area (main and fore-triangle)	65.03sq m (700sq ft)
Displacement/length ratio	166.7
Sail area/displacement ratio	23.2
RCD category	A
Engine	Yanmar 3YM 20hp diesel saildrive
Headroom	1.88m (6ft 2in)
Designer	Stefan Qviberg
Builder	Arcona Yachts, Sweden
Distributor	Arcona Yachts UK. Tel: 02380 457770 www.arconayachts.com

Most of the sail area is provided by the large mainsail



Headroom is 1.88m (6ft 2in)



The GZ curve shows the maximum righting moment at 52° and an angle of vanishing stability (AVS) of 122°





Nicely finished mahogany, plenty of stowage and few internal mouldings make for a welcoming and practical interior



The heads incorporates hanging space for wet gear and connects via a door to the main cockpit locker



A good-sized nav table with ample stowage and a hinge-down switch panel

the lower shrouds present an obstacle on deck.

The mast itself is by Seldén and the standing rigging in 1x19 wire as standard or, as here, in Dyform.

### Sail and power

As is usual on a boat of this nature, the choice of sails is left to the owner but most Arconas have been equipped by the UK Halsey loft in Sweden. Those on *Annarchy* are in Spectra laminate to a Tape-Drive design with a single-sided taffeta.

When the wind dies completely (and you will want to keep sailing the 340 until there's not a breath), the Yanmar 3YM 20 Saildrive turning a two-bladed folding prop will push her along happily at 6 knots with 2,500rpm showing on the rev-counter. Full chat is 3,400rpm, giving around 7.5 knots. Noise and vibration levels are pleasantly subdued and manoeuvring is predictable.

### Below decks

The interior finish is in a different league to that on most production cruisers – as the price difference would lead you to expect.

You're greeted by satin-varnished mahogany, soft headlinings, barely a hint of internal moulding (except in the heads) and a generally warm and welcoming ambience.

Detailed inspection of our test boat showed the finish not quite to match that of the larger Arconas, but it was notably better on a later production version. The inside of the hull is neatly flow-coated, the edges of the sole-boards rounded and sealed, door hinges are reassuringly chunky, the systems easy to reach and the foam-cored hull is ramped down to a solid laminate around the seacocks. It looks like an interior that will last in a boat that can be maintained.

Starting in the vital areas, we find a chart table that's 57cm x 91cm

(23½in x 36in), with a recessed hinge, sensible fiddles and a reasonable amount of stowage. The switch panel hinges down to reveal neatly laid-out circuitry.

Opposite, to port, the galley features lights set into the

headlining beneath the side decks so you're not working in your own shadow. There's a well-gimballed cooker, good stowage and a crash-bar with attachment points for a bum-stop.

Aft the chart table, the heads combines mouldings with white laminate and some timber trim. The toilet itself is well sited for bracing yourself either side and, abaft it, a door opens into the cockpit locker. A wet locker will accommodate three sets of waterproofs.

Between the heads and aft cabin, the companionway's dished steps in oiled teak provide secure footing. Removing the lower section of the steps reveals the engine. There's no access to the sides but you can reach the aft end and the gearbox from the aft cabin. Batteries are under the aft berth and, unusually, there are fuses between the batteries and their switches.

In many boats the settee berths are set as far apart as possible to maximise the impression of space and create a wide open saloon. On the Arcona, they're brought slightly closer together so there's plenty of stowage outboard of them. Lifting the cushions and backrests reveals the tie-bars anchored to substantial stainless steel tangs that are bonded to a box-section girder inside the hull.

The bulk of the galvanised steel frame is hidden beneath the sole, most of which is screwed down: just a few sections can be lifted up.

Headroom is a maximum of 1.88m (6ft 2in) and all the berths are at least 1.98m (6ft 6in) long.

### PBO's verdict

You tend to get what you pay for with boats. In the case of the Arcona 340 it's one that sails beautifully and is built with a good deal of care and attention. As a result she's not cheap but you would be hard pressed to find this sort of quality and performance for less.



## What does the owner think?

**A**nne Noon bought *Annarchy* in the spring of 2009 to replace her previous boat – an Arcona 370. She wanted something slightly smaller and easier to handle on her own.

Having sailed the 340 back from Sweden, she clocked up well over 750 miles in her first season.

She likes the Arconas' sailing performance and the fact that they hold their value: her 370 sold for almost exactly what she paid for it several years earlier. In terms of the 340's construction, design and finish, she praises the wet locker in the heads, the general arrangement below decks that 'makes it good for keeping rubbish out of the way and keeping things clear', the plentiful stowage (especially at the chart table), the good handholds and, on deck, the wide choice of helming positions combined with the ability to walk around the wheel.





# Arcona 340

**460**

**430**



**400**

**370**

**340**



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