

46 FT CRU

For many people 46ft is the ideal size for a long-distance cruising boat, offering a good compromise between ease of handling, speed and space but within these parameters there can be a world of difference between boats .

Mike Kopman looks at Nautor's new solidly built cruiser, the Swan 46, and a speedy 46-footer from Arcona



SWAN 46

Many long-term fans of Nautor have felt that, since coming under Italian ownership, the company have strayed from their solid cruising roots in favour of more flashy boats better suited to Med race courses than a Pacific sabbatical. With the launch of their Swan 46, Nautor have aimed to address these concerns. The brochure reads: 'The new true cruiser' and at 16 tonnes she's certainly no highly strung race boat with a thin veneer of comfort.

But does a 46ft (14m) flush-decked cruiser have to displace that much? The Swedish builders of the Arcona range of performance cruisers don't think so. Their new flagship, the Arcona 460, shares many features with the Swan, and on deck looks remarkably similar. The both have racy, wedge-shaped coachroofs, recessed furling drums, and halyards, furling lines and mainsheet systems concealed beneath the decks with no unsightly access panels. However, with a six-tonne difference in displacement, clearly they are two very different boats.

SWAN 46

Seen from the dock the Swan is a beautiful boat, from the elegant fold-down swim platform to the classically raked stem. There's a simple 9/10ths aluminium two-spreader rig with a split backstay and hydraulic tensioners. Halyards, furling line and mainsheet are all concealed beneath the deck and led aft from blocks at the mast base to a deep, secure cockpit with twin wheels.

The wide side decks are kept clear with genoa tracks inboard, shrouds taken to the

CRUISERS

ARCONA 460

toerailandstanchionbasesbeautifullyinlaid into the teak decks. And what is a Swan without an expanse of teak? It seems Nautor have taken the best developments from racing and performance cruising and applied them to a more conservative design.

Rather than opt for a Gucci fold-out anchoring system, the chain emerges from a small hatch. If most of your sailing is between marinas, the clean lines can be preserved by leaving the whole bow roller unmounted, but for serious cruising it can be left permanently in place with the anchor stowed on it.

Nautor have opted to do without a traveller, leaving the main sheeted to the middle of the cockpit, which although sometimes in the way is far better than the coach roof-mounted alternatives. But rather than fix a stand-up block to the sole, on the boat we sailed a piece of non-functioning track spanned the cockpit at perfect skinning height. They've gone to the trouble of installing split backstays, twin wheels and a lovely transom gate only to plonk an aluminium bridge across the walkthrough. I can see the reason: the mainsheet rubs on

the cockpit seats when the boom is out, but what's wrong with a discreet bit of protective stainless trim? Hopefully Swan will have a more satisfactory arrangement on future boats.

In the cockpit sole between the two wheels is access to the lazarette, with another hatch in the aft cockpit seat. It's a big locker but it's the only stowage in the cockpit – there were no other cockpit lockers on the test boat though the two-cabin version has a cavernous one to starboard. The deck lockers have proper seals rebated into the underside of the gas-assisted lids and are immaculately ►►



‘She’s no speed machine, but there wasn’t a hint of slamming, just a very gentle, pleasant motion’

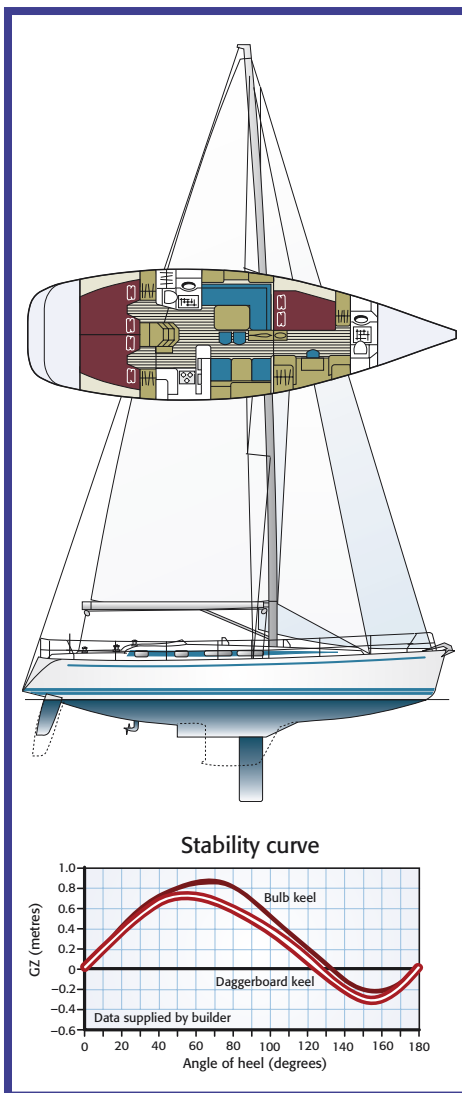
finished inside. All the fittings have a custom feel about them and everything clicks, hisses and snaps into place. One gets the feeling that Nautor have spent a lot of time adjusting, tinkering and positioning to get it all to work just right.

Below decks

The Swan’s interior really exudes quality. The companionway has a retractable washboard, the secure steps have plenty of handholds and good old-fashioned Treadmaster, and you’re never short of something to hang onto. There are plenty of lockers (with concealed perforated aluminium strips for ventilation) and floor-level LED courtesy lighting throughout.

The test boat had a combined coffee table/nav area on the starboard side which works well by itself but was less than ideal on the lift-keel version of the boat. The intrusive keelbox means people sitting forward of this table are isolated. The more conventional layout, with a dedicated chart table forward, would probably work better. The keelbox also blocks access to one end of the saloon settee so the dining table slides, allowing those sitting at the far end to escape without penguin-like shuffling of bodies. Free-standing chairs (with tiedowns) are used to supplement the U-shaped seating around the table.

The owner’s cabin forward is a welcoming suite with a large double to port (perfectly usable at sea with a couple of lee cloths) and a dressing table/desk to starboard. The bunk



has sprung wooden slats for comfort and ventilation and there’s lots of stowage. Forward of this is the ensuite head.

The L-shaped galley is secure and has good stowage plus a chest freezer and front-opening fridge, although two sinks would be a nice improvement. Opposite this is a guest head with a large hanging wet locker with twin quarter cabins further aft, or one quarter cabin, a bigger galley and the aforementioned cockpit locker.

The engine installation under the companionway is quite ‘cosy’ but with access panels in the right places, all the service points are accessible. In light of the Swan’s no-compromise cruiser character the choice of a Saildrive seemed an odd one, though the lack of a shaft does mean there’s space for a small genny behind the engine.

Lifting the floorboards revealed a proper deep bilge with a sump that would actually catch water – when was the last time you saw a flush-decked boat with one of these?

What was less impressive was the untidy wiring visible here, but this was hull number one. Hopefully this is something that will be addressed on production models.

Swan under way

Under sail the Swan didn’t exactly light my fire, but then 16 tonnes is a lot of 46-footer. With around 17 knots of breeze off Rapallo and a chunky swell left over from stronger conditions, the Swan showed her character. She’s certainly no speed machine – we struggled to maintain 6.5 knots – but there



SWAN 46



wasn't a hint of slamming, just a very gentle, pleasant motion.

While not being instantly responsive, the leather-clad J/3 wheels were never more than lightly loaded and would be very easy on crew and autopilot on a long trip. There's a bit of a retro feel about her, as if she was designed a decade or two back when sea kindly manners were more important than speed, but spinning the wheels showed she's taken advantage of developments in design and she tacked quicker than expected.

Cracking off, we eventually got her up to just over 7.5 knots on a beam reach. The dual rudders gave good control downwind in the quartering sea without adding much drag to a system already burdened with twin wheels. Back on the wind, we pulled up the daggerboard (with a touch of the hydraulic controls) to see what would happen. Leeway was quite seriously affected but our angle of heel remained virtually unchanged.

The deck layout is such that the genoa sheets can be led to either the primary or secondary (mainsheet) winches. This arrangement is very versatile: the mainsheet can be jammed off on one side freeing up that winch for the genoa sheet. In this way the boat can be set up with both main and genoa sheets on the aftermost winches within easy reach of the helmsman - excellent for short-handed long-distance passage-making when tacks are likely to be less frequent. On the test boat these winches were powered, which made things even easier. Set up this way, the boat could

Clear decks and a secure cockpit. Note the neatly recessed halyard and mainsheet blocks near the mast base. The mainsheet is on the cockpit sole on this boat, but the test boat had it mounted on a short non-functioning track



The Swan's interior is immaculately finished, but the coffee/nav table area (above) is cut off from the rest of the saloon by the intrusive keelbox. The saloon table slides forward and aft



‘The Arcona’s good fun to helm, an absolute pleasure, giving precise feedback’

tended by one person on watch with ease.

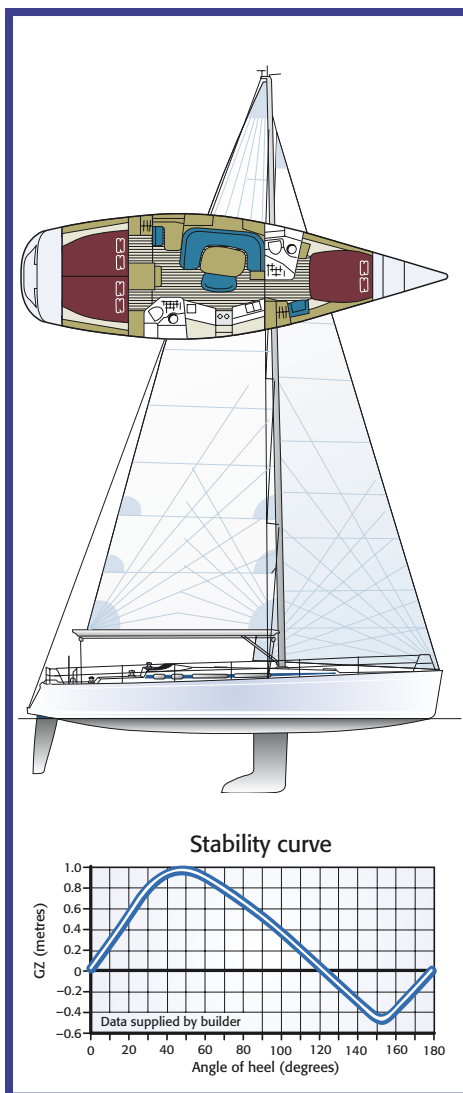
I think that in many respects the fixed-keel, single-rudder version might be a better all-round boat, for sailing and comfort, but congratulations to Swan for offering a highly refined shoal draught version. The ability to float in 1.3m of water would certainly be very useful in off the beaten track locations, not to mention the envy of your neighbours anchored further out.

ARCONA 460

The Boo Marinyard has been in the Jansson family for over 35 years, initially selling around ten carefully built boats each year from the west coast of Sweden. After taking over from his father, Torgny Jansson decided to start production of a new generation of Arconas in Estonia and take advantage of the cheaper costs there. The first of these boats, the Arcona 400, was voted boat of the show at the 2001 Scandinavian Sailboat Show and the brand has been growing since.

Shovelling the snow off the 460’s decks in Jungfrau Fjord near Stockholm revealed a very stylish boat. Like the Swan, all lines are led aft undercover. Most of the stainless work is custom-made by the yard and hand-polished. “I like details!” Torgny told me proudly, pointing out rope bins for halyard and sheet tails, the retractable washboard and recessed dodger stowage.

Shrouds and genoa tracks are close inboard, making it easy to move around the decks – no mean feat considering they were



covered by half an inch of ice! (The locals were all sailing in hiking boots but my Dubarrys may as well have been iceskates.) Up forward there’s a huge sail locker with separate chain locker.

What makes the Arcona different, however, is her displacement. “We’re pretty anxious to build a boat that’s light,” said Torgny. The 460 is constructed from a multi-axial glass sandwich with a Divinycell core and solid laminate in high-load areas. A galvanised steel spine is bolted (not glassed) to the ribs, stringers and main bulkhead to spread keel and rig loads. The hull itself has minimal volume below the waterline too, with a fine entry from the plumb bow and flat, shallow bilges.

The prototype we sailed was actually a little over the target weight but Torgny assured me that subsequent boats have come in below ten tonnes. Towering over this light hull was a flash carbon triple-spreader masthead section. The standard rig is in aluminium.

Below decks

The 460’s interior is mainly constructed from mahogany-veneered plywood, the dark wood offset with pale vinyl head linings. There are proper varnished teak and holly striped floorboards and carefully laminated wooden mouldings around work surfaces and door frames, but Arconas have some way to go to match the workmanship of Nautor’s Swan. Several lockers are unlined and uneven gaps are evident here and there



ARCONA 460



Ergonomics in the big cockpit are excellent with perfect control over the mainsail. Interior looks good but lacks some finesse. Note the chart drawer under the nav table (left)

around some modules. Some of these issues will no doubt be addressed in subsequent boats; this was hull number one.

While the six tonne difference between the boats is rewarding for the helmsman, the price shows in the interior, such as in the moulded head compartments, which flex and creak when entered. Veneered wooden work surfaces in the galley have been used in favour of heavier corian, and Arcona are looking into using foam-cored floorboards.

Four layouts are offered, with either a linear or L-shaped galley in the saloon area, and three or four cabins. The test boat was a linear-galley three-cabin version with a large and comfortable ensuite owner's cabin up forward. In the four-cabin layout this cabin is slightly smaller and further forward, leaving a narrower bunk and smaller sail locker. The saloon is spacious and the linear galley works well. Aft are two identical quarter berths and a large guest head.

The chart table area features an innovative chart stowage drawer which slides out sideways from below the table. Stowage generally is pretty good, with emphasis on easy access via sliding drawers rather than awkward bins.

Overall the interior is seamanlike and comfortable, more than you'd expect on a boat with this performance. The only drawback is that there is absolutely nothing in the way of a bilge. The flat hull, bolt-on keel and central girder means sucking up any bilge water is going to be a tedious affair.

The test boat was fitted with the optional ►►



78hp engine, which, in such an easily driven boat, provides enough to open a small towing business as a sideline. The installation was tight with this engine but access was OK with panels on all sides.

Arcona under way

Beating out into a freezing 20-knot breeze under full sail, we found ourselves a little overpowered and decided to put a reef in the main. It's amazing how much more punch the wind carries when the air is so cold and dense. It was a simple job with the single-line reefing and we were much more comfortable, and faster, for it.

With high-performance high-aspect appendages, the Arcona's helm is light and sensitive, so light that sometimes it felt as if it was bordering on lee helm. Going upwind in the gusty conditions required feathering the boat repeatedly and I found myself overcorrecting. I got better results using less helm and letting her luff herself up slightly, eventually maintaining a steady 7.8 knots upwind, touching 8 in 18–20 knots.

She's good fun to helm, an absolute pleasure, giving precise feedback and responding to the smallest inputs instantly. And with the 110 percent headsail, tacking was accomplished in seconds with the speed barely dropping below six knots.

The ergonomics of the spacious cockpit are excellent and there are plenty of places for the helmsman to perch, with good visibility and access to the mainsheet. The full-width traveller on the cockpit sole gives total control over the mainsail, but even with one reef in the powerful main it needed constant attention to keep us on our feet.

Freeing off a little, we were quickly into the nine's and the boat came alive. But those high-aspect foils have their drawbacks. When the broach came it was sudden and almost without warning. When sheeting in the main (my lack of Swedish meant I hadn't understood they were setting up for a gybe) we suddenly rounded up. There wasn't enough warning to dump the main, but it was no drama and we were soon underway again.

Hoisting a (very badly cut) asymmetric spinnaker later took our speed to over 11 knots, and the faster she went, the more stable and in control she felt. We did have one quick broach soon after hoisting, but to be honest, it was mostly to do with user error. Once we'd rounded up it took some doing to get the stalled rudder working again so we could bear away and get the kite full, but again, that's hardly surprising with that dagger-like spade rudder, and with the race-boat style response comes sometimes temperamental handling.

Conclusion

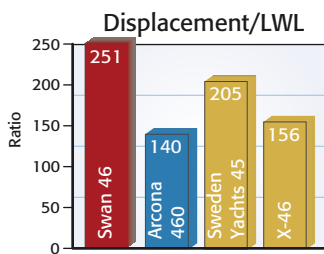
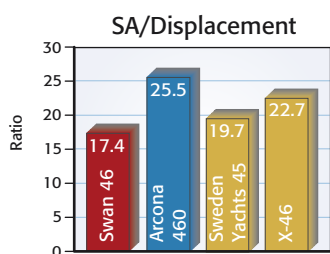
I must confess to being quite disappointed with the Swan's sailing performance, an impression enhanced by a day on the Arcona. I had to wonder if it really was necessary to build a 46-footer weighing 16 tonnes in today's age of advanced construction methods and materials. But Nautor's solidity and thoughtful cruising design are definitely back. She's rock solidly built with careful attention to detail and fantastic looks, and as a boat to take confidently round the world, she's perfect. Mine will be the fixed-keel, two-cabin version thanks.

The Arcona is a different beast all together, and beast is the operative word. With a powerful rig and lightweight construction, she has performance to shame many higher profile racer-cruisers. She's also well built, with racy looks to match her temperament and an interior that is genuinely liveable in, if a little rough in places.

She would be a fantastic boat to own, for cruising and racing, and deliver true sailing pleasure, but she might be a bit more of a handful for the average family to cover thousands of miles on. Not that she couldn't do it; she's just not in the same 'cleat it off and forget it' category of cruising boat as the Swan. But you'll have a lot more fun getting there and for £150,000 less too.

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Arcona 460 Designed by: Stefan Qviberg. Built by: Boo Marin. Contact: Arcona Yachts UK. Tel: +44(0)2380458490. www.arconayachts.com



SPECIFICATION	 SWAN 46		 ARCONA 460		 SWEDEN YACHTS 45		 X-46	
	LOA	14.05m	46ft 1in	14.2m	46ft 7in	14.15m	46ft 5in	14.02m
LWL	12.28m	40ft 3in	12.55m	41ft 2in	11.9m	39ft 1in	12.3m	40ft
Beam (max)	4.27m	14ft	4.20m	13ft 9in	4.18m	13ft 9in	4.15m	13ft 7in
Draught	3.30m	10ft 10in	2.44m	8ft	2.3m	7ft 7in	2.4m	7ft 10in
Disp (lightship)	16,700kg	36,817lb	9,900kg	21,826lb	12,400kg	27,337lb	10,400kg	22,928lb
Ballast	7,300kg	16,094lb	4,000kg	8,818lb	5,200kg	11,464lb	4,500kg	9,921lb
Sail area (100% foretriangle)	111.6m ²	1,201ft ²	115.4m ²	1,243ft ²	104m ²	1,119ft ²	106.2m ²	1,243ft ²
Berths	6		6		6		6	
Engine	Volvo Penta		Volvo Penta		Volvo Penta		Volvo Penta	
Power	40kW	53hp	41kW	55hp	58kW	78hp	41kW	55hp
Water	370lt	81gal	350lt	77gal	435lt	96gal	380lt	84gal
Fuel	400lt	88gal	200lt	44gal	275lt	60gal	200lt	44gal
Sail area: disp	17.4		25.5		19.7		22.7	
Disp: LWL	251		140		205		156	
Price (ex VAT)	£367,740		£218,220		£330,800		£242,950	

