

**Finngulf 43**



**O**n paper this should have been an exciting yacht to test. A Farr-designed boat, built by an esteemed small-production yard that I'd long respected, and blessed by an un-forecasted, sunny Force 4-5 in Helsinki. If that seemed good to be true, it was. We were sailing hull number one, which, during its first proper outing in the Gotland Runt, had been cringingly T-boned by a First 50. Though patched up, her wounds were all too evident on the port beam. In addition there were the 'prototype issues' that the yard were obviously still unhappy about.

She may be a Finngulf with a difference – a brave leap into the racer-cruiser market for a niche-based performance cruising firm – but on first boarding her it was easy to tell this lacked the quality of finish we had come to expect from the yard. Nevertheless, *Farr Out* is still a Farr and thankfully she performed like one.

**A Farr cry**

Finngulf is a 27-year-old company that has produced over 800 boats. The founding owner sold the last of his shares two years ago and a largely new young team has taken over, helmed by Anders Kurten. Wanting to do something different and produce an eye-catching cruiser-racer, Finngulf



**Top: ultra-stiff under sail, with high ballast for formidable upwind work. Above: a long traveller spans the open cockpit design, which will please racers more than cruisers**

sought 'a name' out of house. So Farr became their marketing platform.

Sitting between a semi-custom and a production yacht, the FG43 is designed with IRC racing in mind. Her slightly overhanging bow will keep down the handicap while increasing wetted area when heeled, as does a turn to the bilge and powerful flared topsides for hiking crew. Drawn to be quick in light airs, she has the option of overlapping headsails and a masthead spinnaker.

Although the prototype, *Farr Out* is customised even by Finngulf's

standards. Her owner wanted a boat to campaign of slick minimalist style. Mixing these particulars with time constraints and using new finishes and techniques, meant the resulting finish wasn't completely satisfactory.

Just as a Farr design was a novelty, Finngulf decided to use vacuum-infusion technology for the first time for e-glassed hulls and decks. The keel grid is neat epoxy: up to 49mm in the thickest parts of uni-directional e-glass, with the keel hanging solidly within. This load-bearing frame continues out to the



shroud bases each side, which are designed to take 18 tonnes of load – nearly double the shroud’s max load at 57 degrees of heel.

Flush hatches and distinctive portholes with black surrounds, typify the stark detailing that continues throughout. The working foredeck features a locker large enough to contain a watertight hatch within, sealing the crash bulkhead, and doubling as fenders and warps stowage. A hinging roller is an option,

**Above and right: twin wheels linked independently make her a rewarding prospect for the helmsman**

but for the racer it’s anchor-only, no windlass. Wide side decks are constricted slightly by the inboard rod rigging and stanchion supports for hiking crew.

The open-transom cockpit has all lines led aft, a German Mainsheet system with a track that crosses the sole and a Navtec hydraulic backstay controlling rig tension. But low coamings afford little protection for crew and the benches are far too short for cruising. If you don’t mind the trip

hazard, a footbrace can be mounted on the central sole, as can a table. Removable cockpit lockers are an option to span the stern.

### Slick Finnish

Sailing the F43 was enough to eradicate thoughts of teething troubles. In Finland, we sailed in around 16 knots of breeze with 20-knot gusts. Lacking a No. 4 headsail, we set the No. 3 and reefed the main, but she is designed to keep full main



Above and below: keeping things tidy – lines led neatly aft from the mast base and a flush-mounted swim ladder that extends from the transom



**Flush hatches and portholes with black surrounds typify the stark detailing**



Top left: Interior design and layout is refreshingly light and different including an open galley (above) with good storage. Left: engine access is crude but thorough

Above: the compact but efficient chart table adjoins the saloon berth. It can optionally be moved forward for more heads space

as long as possible. We still averaged mid-seven knots at 40°, and tacked through 85° with the reef in; she can reportedly manage 70-75°. As we bore off and hoisted the kite, we notched 8.5 knots in 13 knots true.

Numbers aside, the helm was never overpowered even when we deliberately kept sheeted in and dipped well down, so the leeward rail was under. The 2.05m deep rudder kept a sure grip and felt responsive and direct thanks to independently wire-linked quadrants.

Quick through the tacks, she tracked well. Her stiffness – a whopping 45 per cent ballast ratio can be increased to over 50 per cent with weight-saving alterations – and balance left no doubt about her ability to be campaigned smartly. She showed a turn of pace that will be hard to match for most of the current

crop of production boats, and good views forward, deft response and sea manners made her a pleasure to sail. Underwater foils and flat topsides – her ideal angle of heel is a window between 12° and 17° – combine to produce excellent directional stability.

The Yanmar 40hp with three-blade Flexifold prop will propel her at almost seven knots cruising speed, but a 55hp engine is an option for an extra knot's grunt, albeit one that's 100kg heavier.

### Below decks

I had been forewarned of a different interior and it sure was: all shiny white and laboratory-like. But it's a refreshing concept that veers away from the stereotypical production theme, and one Finngulf deserve credit for. A wide companionway with

shallow steps for hauling sails, combined with two large overhead hatches and five portholes on each side make for an interior that's bright to the point of fluorescence.

Weight-saving benefits abound. The optional carbon fibre-veneer sole panels are balsa-cored composite, so weigh very little yet lift on suckers to provide full access. White foam-cored panels with plywood veneer give the cupboards a light, contemporary look, echoed by the Alcantara headlining. Vertical panels look wooden but are GRP with a teak veneer vacuum-infused to give a finish that's light and stiff.

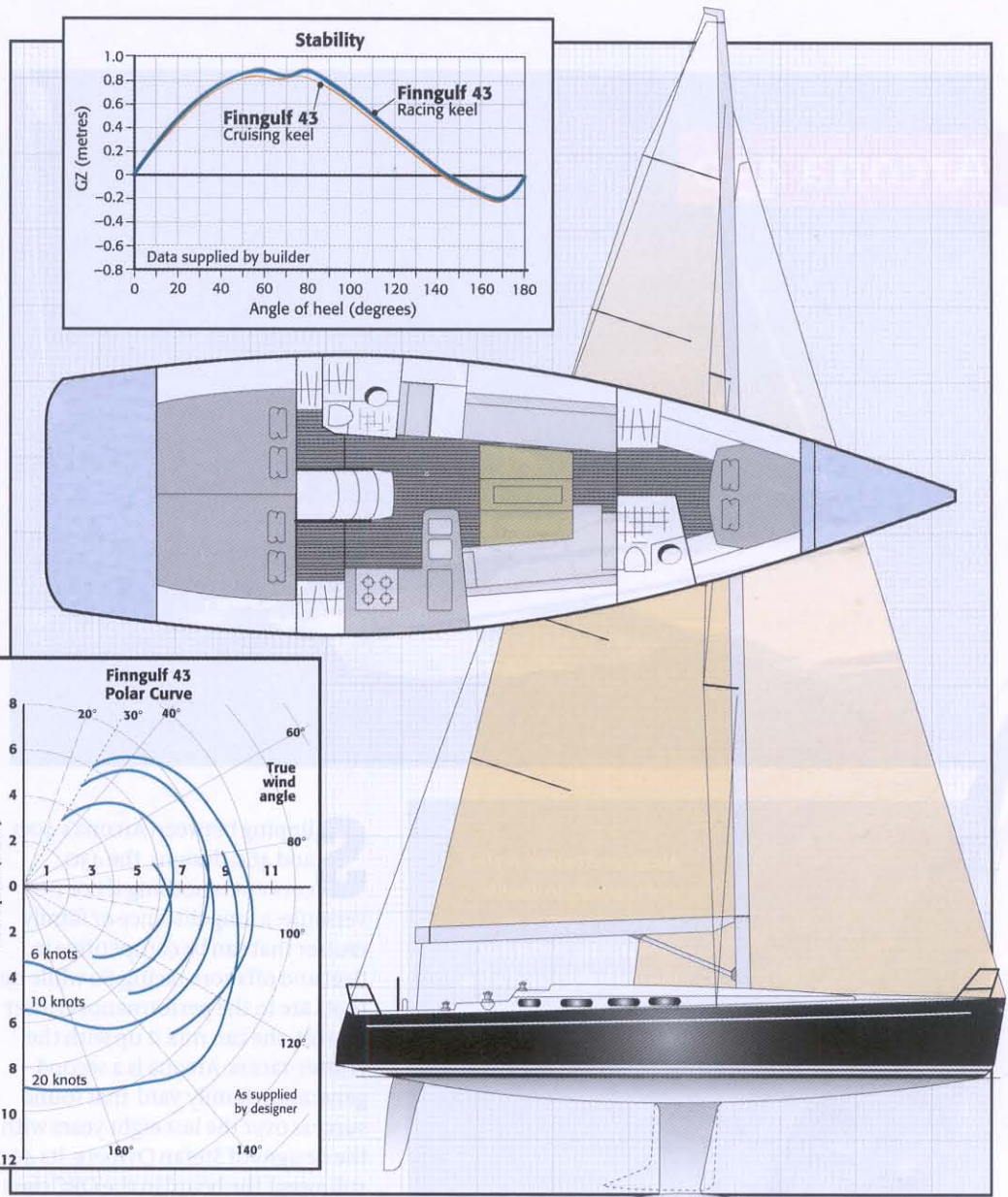
The compact galley immediately to starboard is relatively bare and has a small lift-top fridge, but benefits from two large raised lockers and plenty of stowage below the work surfaces. Twin aft cabins are almost identical – the port one suffers from a tight entrance that inhibits larger crew entering, although Finnulf say they are correcting this from model number 10 onwards. However, there is also an option to move the heads and chart table 20cm forward into the saloon berth.

Although there's hardly room to shower in the small heads, there is a wet hanging area. The forward cabin's ensuite is more inviting, with 6ft headroom, pull-down lockers and standing shower space. The adjoining owner's room is a comfortable area with seats aft of the large double.

Tanks underneath the saloon berths (including lee-cloths) and a shallow bilge mean that storage for extended cruising is limited, as is tank size. Headroom, however, is commendable and the saloon can comfortably seat six. The small chart table aft of the port berth doubles as another saloon surface, and a panel for electronics opens to show a network of tidy fuses behind.

## Progression

After our trials on *Farr Out* in Helsinki then later in Ijmuiden, we had a list of concerns about the prototype yacht; from sloppy paintwork and detailing inside to a substandard finish throughout. All would have significantly affected this report, so we were keen to see the progress.



## The finish on hull four had improved dramatically

Boarding hull number two, *Vivien*, made it easy to appreciate that many of the teething troubles had been ironed out. A handrail had been added above the galley, for example, and the fridge size had increased. Going over hull number four in the yard and at the Southampton Boat Show showed that the finish had continued to improve dramatically, with a nod to Finnulf's earlier more conventional interior roots. Brushed stainless steel now lines the hull behind the saloon berths and looks striking when lit, and stainless steel straps have been fitted in load areas on deck, replacing what were little more than glorified Band-aids.



Above: good looks and with speeds to match

SPECIFICATIONS	Finnulf 43	
LOA	13.10m	43ft
LWL	11.58m	38ft
BEAM (MAX)	4.07m	13ft 4in
DRAUGHT	2.20m	7ft 3in
DISP (LIGHTSHIP)	8,493kg	18,724lb
BALLAST	3,970kg	8,752lb
SAIL AREA (100% FORETRIANGLE)	106.2m <sup>2</sup>	1,143ft <sup>2</sup>
BERTHS	6	
ENGINE	40hp x drive	
POWER	29.85kW	
WATER	243lt	53gal
FUEL	147lt	32gal
SAIL AREA: DISP	25.9	
DISP: LWL	152	
PRICE (EX VAT)	£294,395	