



Cool customer

ICE Yachts new 70 footer supersedes short handed cruising – with pure Italian flair - as **Sam Jefferson** discovers

When it comes to writing boat reviews, there are times when it is hard not to repeat yourself. When you are testing a 70' Italian fast cruiser/racer it's nearly impossible. So, hell, lets go for it; because, gosh, boats just keep getting bigger don't they? I remember in my day that a 40 footer was considered.... etc etc. On top of that. This is an effortlessly stylish Italian design – penned by Unberto Felci so yes, bring out the cliché book once more, style, soul, passion etc. The problem is, it's all true. This is a very elegant and frankly massive yacht that can comfortably be cruised by a couple. Of course, not every couple has a couple of million pounds to spare, but that's another story.

ICE yachts are one of a surprising number of Italian boatbuilders that specialise in stylish yachts that are often lazily called Med cruisers. This is foolish as you could comfortably blaze across the Atlantic in this carbon hulled yacht at a very respectable clip. Yet it feels like its natural domain is racing across from St Tropez and dropping anchor off some rarefied resort such as, say, Portofino. I know, a cliché but for the sake of consistency, I tested the ICE 70 just off Portofino and the boat fitted in beautifully.

ICE is increasingly positioning itself at the top end semi custom section of this market and the 70 is the latest example. Felci has drawn up a set of lines that are less extreme than many of her contemporaries. Beam aft is not excessive and there is some taper to the run. The waterlines are fine and point to light weather

ABOVE
Aggressive lines and a knife like bow married to modest beam and light displacement make for a strong performer

capabilities, while the retractable lead bulb T-shaped keel drops down to a maximum depth of 4.5m which suggests she will be a stiff boat. There is a deep (2.8m) single rudder. Displacement is a modest 26,000kg thanks largely to extensive use of carbon in the hull construction. The boat features a dreadnought bow, vertical transom and a low coachroof which all adds up to a very purposeful looking yacht.

If you're thinking this is an out and out racer, you'd be wrong. It's a boat you can race for sure but the main purpose is sailing fast, arriving in style and relaxing once you have arrived in the lap of luxury.

On deck

Did I mention this is a very stylish boat? Ah yes, there it is. The moment you step on deck the boat oozes class. I don't usually get excited about



into the foredeck just forward of a decent sized sail locker and this spins up at the touch of a button and can add a bit of brute force when mooring – particularly when using slime lines. Naturally for a boat this size there is a tender garage that can take a 3.3m boat

Down below

Head down below and you have a beautifully finished living space that is a sea of bare teak and leather. I felt the need to fall back into one of the stitched leather banquettes and, fire up a cigar and start waffling on about hedge funds, but got a grip. Obviously this is a big boat but it must be said, it feels bigger. There is a huge lounge area with a L – Shaped seating area to port with a saloon table that can be raised or lowered. To starboard there is a massive and very comfortable linear couch

ABOVE
Twin headsails are ideal for blue water work

BELOW
The saloon oozes quality

which can be split in two and the outer section can be slid over to the port side to provide more seating around the saloon table. There is a decent sized nav station at the end of this starboard side couch. Just forward of this is a separate seating area with a television. Obviously this is a custom boat so layouts are going to vary massively but the test boat had only two cabins – palatial as you can imagine – and a galley set into the port quarter. This is surprisingly roomy and features a double sink and induction cooker. It's also well laid out for food prep at sea with plenty of places to wedge yourself in and has independent access to the crew quarters. This cabin is understandably a little more functional and has its own heads plus access to the generator.

The lift keel obviously steals a bit of space forward and creates a →

biminis which often top off a boat like a mattress balanced on a bottle of wine. Yet I have to say this one was worth a second look. Two beautifully sculpted carbon arches that are raked in such a harmonious manner that it almost adds to the appearance. The cockpit is wide and open with twin helms set well aft and a traveller just forward of that. Big twin winches set on either side of the coamings with all the running rigging run in channels beneath the coamings mean that this area is very much the 'sailing area' of the boat, while forward is a comfortable lounging area. The steering binnacles boast an almost absurd amount of buttons. We're talking Star Trek territory here – and give some hint of how such a big yacht can also be sailed short handed. There are push button controls for every aspect of sail trim - plus bow and stern thrusters.

Forward, the decks are clear and uncluttered with a track for a self tacking jib recessed into the deck. A rope winch is cleverly recessed





corridor towards the master cabin set in the bows replete with a desk space enabling you to work from home. There is also a generous twin guest cabin offset to port. Both have their own ensuites. It's worth noting that the quality throughout is exquisite; forests of inlaid wood, herd loads of leather. No creaks, no squeaks and every door closes with a satisfying ker-thunk.

Under sail

The day of the test featured light winds of about 7-9kn and flat water. Ideal to test the boat's light wind credentials and the boat responded admirably. Once you got your head around the myriad buttons in front of you on the binnacle, sailing was a breeze, only slightly complicated by the foresail set up which features a self tacking jib with a bigger overlapping genoa outside. This is a very practical set up but in the light winds it did mean that we spent a lot of time furling and unfurling the genoa every time we tacked. It wasn't exactly tiring pushing the button, believe me, but a bit more wind and the self tacker would have made things totally effortless. Trimming the main is indeed effortless thanks to the traveller being on an electric winch which makes fine tweaking an absolute joy.

Hard on the wind in these light conditions we made 6.6kn. The steering was light and responsive. The boat was not skittish like a dinghy but once she got in her groove, I was impressed with how sensitive the helm was and how small the boat felt in terms of the way she handled. Easing off onto a beam reach, we touch 7.4kn in 8kn of wind before putting up the Code 0 and careening off down the Ligurian coast at 8-9kn with the breeze filling in slightly. Champagne sailing.



ABOVE
Genoa, staysail and gennaker makes for a versatile rig

BELOW
The stateroom boasts over 20m² of space

SAM'S VERDICT

The ICE 70 is a niche boat designed to fulfil the requirements of a very select clientele with very particular needs: to sail fast and effortlessly and look good while they do it. The boat achieves this feat with aplomb. Sad to say, but it was easier to handle than my own more modest 28 foot yacht and about 100% more comfortable. All of this comes at a

price tag some way beyond many of us but, if I had the money and was planning a grand tour of the Med and beyond, this would definitely be on my shopping list of dream boats.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

BLUE WATER ABILITY: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

Length: 21.3m (69' 11")

LWL: 19.8m (65')

Beam: 5.75m (18'10")

Draught: 2.75m-4.30m (9'0"-14'1")

Displacement: 26,500kg (58,400lb)

Price: €2,580,000 ex VAT.

Contact: iceyachts.it





ABOVE

Test day and the wind was gusting up to 35kn but the boat handled it supremely well

BELOW

The carbon rig is extremely powerful and the boat is a strong performer in light airs



RUPERT'S VERDICT

This boat fills a void in the market in which there's a lack of lightweight multihulls that take advantage of foiling technology, yet don't require sailing permanently on the edge of control. Between them Libertist and Lerouge have done a very good job in keeping the general concept simple, without sacrificing speed or efficiency of handling.

Despite the aim to keep weight to a minimum, the decision not to opt for a narrow central hull to enable the boat to be towed behind a car means there is space for

reasonable interior accommodation. Granted it's smaller than other boats you can buy for the same money, but everything essential is provided in a neat package.

The next two examples are currently in production and Libertist unveiled a 7m (22ft) model that can be legally towed at last year's La Rochelle boat show. Lerouge has also completed designs for 10 and 12 metre versions.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

BLUE-WATER ABILITY: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 8.53m

LWL: .53m

Beam: 7.1m

Draught 0.45 to 1.95m

Light displacement: 1,400kg

Air draught: 13.60m

Wing mast area: 4m²

Mainsail: 40 m²

Jib: 19 m²

Spinnaker: 78 m²

libertist.eu

From €145,000 ex VAT

ALTERNATIVE BOATS

AMEL 50

The Amel is similar in the fact it wants to be different. It's also a blue water cruiser with lots of clever touches and a cockpit and living area that segue seamlessly together. Displacement is alarmingly different though.

amel.fr

CONTEST 50CS

Contest Yachts are all about performance in a blue water sailing package but they come at the matter from a very different angle, going for a fibreglass build, centre cockpit and lines penned by Judel/Vrolijk.

contestyachts.com

KRAKEN 50

Another yacht where the manufacturer has gone for painstaking attention to detail in order to produce their vision of the ultimate blue water cruiser. The key for Kraken is to produce a yacht with a skeg hung rudder but there are many, many other thoughtful touches beyond this.

Krakenyachts.com





