Boat test – Oyster 675

MINI SUPERYACHT

As she hit the water, Sam Fortescue tested Oyster’s award-winning new 675 and found a new standard in luxury.
But first things first. From the pontoon there is no mistaking the pedigree of this boat: she has the Oyster eyebrow connecting the deck saloon to the cockpit coaming, and the classic retrospective stern (although an extended transom version is also available adding 4ft on deck).

Coming aboard, you cross the stout bulwarks onto wide side decks. There is an impressive acreage of teak deck behind the helming positions, which provides all sorts of useful space on deck and headroom in the owner’s cabin below.

The cockpit on a boat of this size offers all sorts of possibilities. With high topsides and a decent coaming, the space offers protection from the elements, but also separate helming and relaxing areas. The curved taper as the coaming runs aft comes from larger yachts and gives her an air of casual aggression.

There are twin helm stations here, controls the passerelle steering rods to connected with larger sisters.

I was about to go below to look at her lay-out when one such gust blew in, and I returned to the helm quickly, elbowing aside the main and the 105 per cent blade jib was a dodger – it took less than a minute from the helmsman’s station thanks to near-silent hydraulic packs.

It takes a good deal more than 10kt of breeze to trouble a 40-tonne yacht, especially when the bulb keel alone accounts for more than 1ft of that.

But in the stronger 16-17kt gusts that swirled over the lower Stour, the boat didn’t hesitate in picking up her skirts and running, leaning slightly into it with real purpose.

There are two further sheet winches just in front of the mast. Many of the halyards and fine trim lines trickled down from the aft deck. Bright sunlight from a very tight sheeting angle. But as much as this wasn’t a thorough test of the boat’s performance, it did provide an insight. Unfurling the leech line tension (although

The Oyster 675 is a broad and comfortable platform that keep stern lines from snagging underneath – a clever idea.

The round-up on deck wouldn’t be complete without a look at her transom, which houses a wealth of exciting features. The whole transom lowers hydraulically to provide a large bathing platform with steps down from the aft deck. Bright stainless steel work can then be fitted to provide a bathing ladder and two vertical posts at the corner of the platform that keep stern lines from snagging underneath – a clever idea.

Then, from the upper portside of the transom, a hydraulic Boardisan passerelle can be deployed. A GRP panel drops down and the passerelle extends in three segments. Clever design means that stanchions and a handrail flip up and are kept under tension when it is fully extended. Controls allow the walkway to be rotated left and right and angled up or down, while a remote control bleeper gives you access to all these options from the pontoon. It’s a gimmick, sure, but a neat one.

One more point. The hull is a laminate of GRP, Kevlar for impact resistance below the waterline, and carbon fibre for stiffness and light weight. Above the waterline, vacuum infusion is used, with carbon fibre chainsplates to transfer the loads from the V1/D1 struts to the hull. The twin spade Rudders are similarly built of GRP and carbon for stiffness.

Luxurious living

If you’re looking at a boat of this size, you’re on the cusp of wanting a skipper/crew – perhaps one who looks after the boat when she’s in the marinas, and steps away when you take her cruising. The standard four- or five-cabin layout options certainly allow this, with twin bunks right forward in a design that has been honed on the smaller 625. But Oyster is keen to underline its...
'can do' attitude, and says that almost anything can be achieved to fulfil a customer’s wishes. So in that sense, the layouts offer a guide only.

Oyster thinks the most popular option will see the owner’s cabin positioned aft across the whole beam of the boat. And it’s easy to see why. With (optional) vertical hull lights and ensuite shower room, this creates a fantastic space. However, it would be worth asking for beefed up sound insulation here as on our trip the engine room fan allowed a bit of noise to escape under way.

Though Oyster would probably counsel against it for comfort in a seaway, the owner’s suite can also be positioned forward with two double cabins aft either side of a deep dinghy garage (in the extended transom version). The heart of the boat’s accommodation, its saloon, is set with a very well-equipped galley behind the companionway to port, and a deep chart table or desk to starboard. The saloon table is to starboard too, with a table that can be extended with numerous fold-up leaves, and there’s a sofa to port, where a 32in flatscreen TV can fold out of the bulkhead.

Finish, as you’d expect from Oyster, is excellent – no misaligned joints or untreated surfaces here. The options are pretty much endless. Our test boat had limed white oak joinery with horizontal grain to create the impression of even more space, with walnut underfoot. But if you wanted faux crocodile skin headlining and patio-effect lino on the sole, I get the

sense that the good artisans at Oyster would scratch their heads, then set about figuring out how to make it work. The limit is your imagination.

There are plenty of useful flourishes about the galley and saloon, including a Nespresso machine that folds out of a cabinet, a one-drawer dishwasher, a full-height Frigoboat fridge-freezer and a drinks fridge in the saloon table. Stowage and storage is really abundant.

Behind the scenes
On a boat of this size, engineering becomes a key part of keeping your cruise going, and Oyster understands this. There is a full-height door into the engine compartment under the companionway, with additional access through heavily soundproofed doors in the aft cabin and the galley. Basic maintenance should be straightforward, then, with dual Racor fuel filters readily accessible and capable of keeping the engine and generator going while a filter is changed. Alarms also warn of the presence of water in the fuel.

The electrics behind the chart table instruments are all immaculately labelled and organised for easy troubleshooting, and under the saloon sole the water handling systems are all beautifully laid out for access. Alan showed me the twin raw water manifolds, which combine intakes for fewer through-hull fittings. One services the engine, while the other supplies on-board refrigeration, but can be switched over with the turn of a seacock if one intake gets blocked – handy for keeping the engine going in an emergency. The watermaker also lives down here, along with two freshwater tanks totalling 1,550lt.

There is not ready access to keel bolts, which is a shame, but all the bilges are limbered so that they drain into the central well in the keel stub, which is emptied using a 50lt/minute automatic pump. An emergency manual pump operated from the cockpit can manage 135lt/min. The back of every locker can be very simply removed to access whatever ducting or trunking lies behind – a neat feature that is belied by the solidity of the joinery on the outside.

Given the complexity of the boat’s systems, a generator is a necessary encumbrance to keep batteries topped up and to run power-hungry equipment such as aircon or watermakers. The standard spec is for a 9.5kW Onan four-cylinder diesel, but it wouldn’t be up to tropical aircon, so an upgrade is recommended for that. Alan Harmer said that more customers were asking for solar panels and even tow gens to charge batteries and reduce the recommended four-hour daily generator burn time. There is also increasing interest in speccing lithium-ion batteries instead of the 600Ah 24V gel cells.
SAM’S VERDICT

A boat of this size is a very serious investment, and you want to know that you don’t have to think about every tiny detail yourself. Oyster’s long years of building bluewater blockbusters means exactly that – their designers and technicians have sweated all the small stuff for you. Every decision has been weighed up carefully to deliver a boat that is, above all, safe, solid and seamanlike.

There are some new features on board for a family Oyster – the huge fold-down bathing platform and moulded-in bowsprit, for example. But don’t be fooled; she is still every inch an Oyster. I would unhesitatingly cross oceans in the 675, and expect to do so in considerable comfort. Yes, there are handholds where you want them and lee-cloths, fail-safes on key pumps and filters and an array of rig possibilities. But really, the biggest decisions a buyer will have to make are about rig, finish and layout – do you want the extra cabin or would you rather a workshop space, for instance? Standard rig or upgrade to inmast furling or carbon spars?

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★☆
COMFORT: ★★★★★
BLUEWATER: ★★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 69ft 1in (21.1m)
LWL: 59ft 7in (18.2m)
Beam: 18ft 6in (5.7m)
Draught: 9ft 8in/6ft 3in (3.0m/1.9m)
Displacement: 37.1 (82,607lb)
Sail area: 2,465sq ft (229sq m)
Engine: Volvo D-4-180 (180hp)

PERFORMANCE
Sail area/displacement: 20.4
LWL/displacement: 175
AVS: 125

PRICE
As tested: £2.48m ex-VAT
Contact: oysteryachts.com