

Blue-chip, blue

You can't step aboard the Allures 44 without imagining yourself in a remote South Pacific anchorage. Chris Beeson finds out why

There's a curious mix of delight and envy brought on by emails from blue water buddies in far-flung places – a mix that got the better of Xavier Desmarets and Stéphan Constance in 2003. Weary of opening their email inboxes at work to find pictures of friends in the Friendly Islands and pals in Pago Pago, they decided to build boats for themselves and do the same.

They began with a blank sheet of paper at the top of which was written: 'the perfect blue water cruiser.' Then they gathered a focus group of 20 blue water couples, whose boats were mono- and multi-hulled, steel, wood, GRP – as varied as possible – and sat them down with hull designer

Jean Berret, interior designer Frank Darnet and consultant Marc Van Peteghem. Together they thrashed out their vision of the perfect blue water cruiser. Even Vendée Globe winner Michel Desjoyeaux, who knows a thing or two about life onboard, chipped in with a few ideas.

The boat needed to be light but strong and easy to repair anywhere in the world. She had to sail well, be seaworthy and feel good at the helm. She had to look attractive, somewhere you'd want to spend time. She had to be comfortable, well insulated and quiet. She'd need good headroom, walkable side decks, shoal draught and the ability to take the ground without falling over. Other key requirements included a good

galley, excellent bunks, cavernous stowage and easily accessible technical systems.

The list went on and on. The imaginary result was an aluminium hull without chines that was designed to sail delightfully with up to three tonnes of gear stowed onboard. It had a lifting centreboard, twin rudders and a skegged saildrive far enough forward for good manoeuvrability, a GRP deck, genoa and staysail rig, and wonderful liveaboard quarters.

Darnet designed the boat's interior on computer and, rather than employ boatbuilders, asked Cherbourg shipbuilder CMN to lend its considerable expertise with aluminium and build Berret's hull for them.



ON TEST
THIS MONTH



P86 **NEW BOATS**
James Jermain's latest round-up includes a brand-new Moody, two from Elan and a radical new design from Antwerp.



water baby

And it worked. In their first year Desmarts and Constance built three Allures 44s. Last year Allures' 26 employees built 14 boats (including her smaller sister, the 40, voted Yacht of the Year by the French cruising magazine *Loisirs Nautique*) and they're moving to new premises soon where they can build even more.

The blue water experience that's gone into this liveaboard boat is evident everywhere and it will happily go anywhere. And that means anywhere. French racing legends the Peyron brothers (Bruno, Loïc and Stéphane) are taking one to the Arctic, parking it on the ice for the winter and making a documentary. How cool is that?

ON DECK

In the cockpit, her blue water pedigree shines through. If you want to put down a cup, there's a holder already beneath it. If you begin to

lurch, there's a handhold or something to brace against. If you want to sit back, there's a gently inclined slope.

In the transom, there's liferaft stowage and a kedje locker, with a roller on the stern. Solar panels, wind generators and assorted aerials are kept out of harm's way on the goalpost, where there are davits too.

There's good bracing against the cockpit table, which has a bar locker. The primary winches are within easy reach of the (removeable) wheel. Forward of the primaries are two smaller winches

for the staysail sheets, furling lines and runners, all easily managed from the cockpit.

The main is trimmed on the starboard halyard winch on the coachroof so, from the wheel, you'd need to engage the autopilot and get forward to dump the mainsheet. The centreboard control lines are also starboard and they run down through the coachroof into a stainless steel pillar in the saloon, then forward and into the centreboard casing. The main traveller is just ahead of the sprayhood.

There's really no reason to venture out of the cockpit underway but if you do, there are →

ALLURES 44

'If you're seriously considering the blue water life, this boat will make up your mind for you'



P88 ONE MAN AND HIS BOAT

Jeremy Evans meets a man who divides his time afloat between the *John Laing* and his Nantucket Clipper



P92 BARBECUES

There's nothing like a 'barbie' in the cockpit or on the beach. Our group test compares six of the latest sausage-sizzlers



P100 NEW GEAR

Chris Beeson's chandlery basket overflows with goodies, from colour-coded water bottles to full-function AIS sets



grabrails halfway to the mast and good 1.5-inch teak toerails the rest of the way forward, draining at the centre cleat (there is an aluminium toerail option).

The 9/10 fractional rig has two aft-swept spreaders. The inner forestay meets at the upper spreaders, the outer at the hounds and the spinnaker halyard is at the masthead, as is the double backstay. There are runners to prevent the rig panting in heavy weather.

The side decks are walkable from stem to stern. At the mast, the outer shroud chainplates are outside the teak toerails and the lower diagonals right next to the coachroof, leaving plenty of room to pass between.

UNDER SAIL

Allures doesn't have a demo boat. These yachts all seem to head off around the world as soon as they're built. One owner keeps his in Cherbourg and allowed us to test her. Unfortunately she wasn't clean below the waterline - more like a mobile marine park. That, and the unwieldy

in-boom mainsail furling system, made for a frustrating test.

We limped into the outer harbour in 10-12 knots of wind, with the staysail set and three-quarters of the main unfurled, making a measly 4 knots at 40° to the true wind. We slumbered through a couple of tacks. With a clean bottom and a slab main, she'd have made 6-7 knots easily. Outside the harbour, under full main and genoa, things improved and in 13-15 knots of wind on a beam reach, she lifted her skirts and made 5.5-6.0 knots.

The afternoon was saved when we bore away to 120° and unfurled the gennaker. Blue water boats spend 95% of the time under autopilot (tip: removing the wheel halves power consumption) but when their owners take the helm, they want it to feel good. This one feels very good. Allures tried several systems before finally settling on Jefo rod steering.

As the log touched 7-8 knots (it should have been 10-12 kn) the wheel delivered a wondrous helming experience. With the centreboard

raised she squeezed out an extra half-knot and the motion (hardly a rodeo to start off with) smoothed out into a carpet ride. Despite the hobbled performance, the biggest struggle was turning her back towards Cherbourg.

BELOW DECKS

The split-level interior isn't to everyone's taste but it creates different areas and maximises stowage, both important for liveaboards. Again, it's obvious that hundreds of thousands of miles of blue water experience have been built into this yacht's interior.

There's stowage beneath or behind nearly everything, which includes a modest cellar of 100 bottles. A sewage-neutralising unit means there's no need for a holding tank. The port cabin has excellent maintenance access to the heater, generator and watermaker, housed between the two aft cabins. All cushions and mattresses are Bultex with durable covers and rest on slats to prevent condensation build-up. As getting in and

»» BELOW AND ABOVE DECKS

BELOW: Centreboard control lines are visible and replaceable through the water-level Perspex panel



ABOVE: Fore and aft chart table creates a third living space. **RIGHT:** Domestic batteries, storage and the sewage neutralising unit



LEFT: under and behind seating **ABOVE:** Storage under chart table



ABOVE: Excellent access to the 'technical room'

»» MORE PHOTOS ON YM PLUS



ABOVE: Grabrails and storage pockets galore on the sprayhood



ABOVE LEFT: Centreboard control lines lead through the coachroof **ABOVE RIGHT:** and down inside a stainless steel pillar



UNDER POWER

This boat was fitted with a 75hp engine instead of the standard 55hp but with the amount of weed she was dragging, she probably needed it. At 2,000rpm the Autoprop ploughed her along at 7kn and managed an extra 1-1.5kn at 2,500rpm.



The acid test with twin rudders is the turning circle. Allures has attempted to solve the problem by moving the saildrive far enough forward to give wash over both rudders. Though not as good as a single rudder midships, it is surprisingly successful. From a standing start, she turned within 2-2.5 boat lengths when going forward and within 3-3.5 lengths when going astern.

out of U-shaped seating can be a struggle, Darnet chose L-shaped seating with another bank above the centreboard casing.

The main surprise is the push-me-pull-you chart table, with fore- and aft-facing seats, just inside the companionway to starboard. Wacky it may be (and not big enough for full sized paper charts), but the blue water people wanted somewhere else to sit, talk and make plans and from here, on a platform raised 11in above the cabin sole, you have a wonderful view through the coachroof windows.

At the foot of the companionway, there's 6ft 6in headroom. Step down 3.5in and both aft cabins have 6ft 5in headroom and 6ft 6in double bunks, good shelving, hanging lockers and, of course plenty of stowage. There were two eye openers: the aft heads is not en suite to the port cabin, nor does it have a separate hanging locker.

Forward of the companionway there's a curved island locker. To starboard is an 8.5in step down into the saloon, where the seating leaves you at eye level with the hull ports. A step to port leads to the galley.

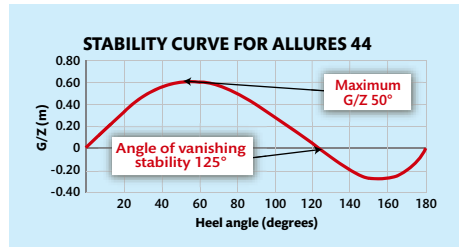
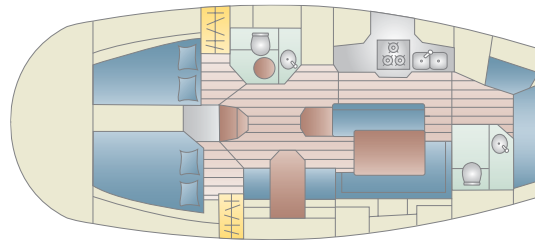
The fridge is a converted freezer (better insulated and has drawer stowage), both sinks are deep enough to contain a pressure cooker (that blue water classic) and again the stowage is ubiquitous. Behind the stove is a set of plastic containers used for rice, pasta, cereals and so on, the things used most often.

Another 3.5in step down takes you into the forward cabin, which is en suite. There's 6ft 7in headroom in the cabin and 6ft 5in in the combined heads and shower compartment. Just outside the heads is a bench seat, to port and aft of the 6ft 7in long forward bunk. ▲

» VERDICT

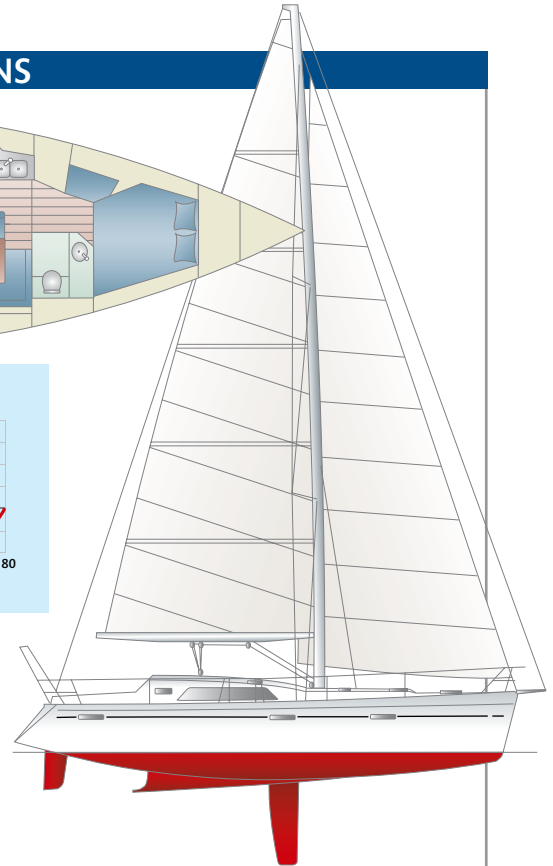
If you're seriously considering the blue water life or living onboard, sit with your other half at the chart table and this boat will make your mind up for you. In every respect she's been designed to make your life onboard a joy to live.

The performance of our test boat was stodgy, for obvious reasons, but there was enough evidence to suggest that she should be a joy to sail, with a fantastic 'feel' on the helm.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**CONSTRUCTION**

The hull is built from 2.6m sheets of aluminium to reduce the number of welded seams and the panels are cut underwater to minimise deformation. Plate thickness is 10mm on the bottom, including the flat forefoot on which she rests when drying, 6mm at the turn of the bilge and 5mm at the topsides.

The inside of the hull is coated with polyurethane paint to insulate and protect against corrosion then foam is glued (but still removeable) to increase protection and insulation. The hull is glued to the GRP deck



joint using a product Allures developed out of 500 samples, patented and which won a French industrial innovation award.

Every pipe and wire is accessible and labelled. All wiring is double-sheathed.

Price:	£283,487 (inc blue water pack)
LOA	13.60m (44.6ft 6in)
LWL	11.64m (38ft 2in)
Beam	4.25m (13ft 9in)
Draught	0.98m/3.00m (6ft 11in)
Displacement	10,500kg (23,148 lb)
Ballast	4,200kg (9,259 lb)
Sail area	95m ² (1023sq ft)
Engine	55hp diesel
Fuel	550 lit (121 gal)
Water	550 lit (121 gal)

Displ/length ratio	185
Sail area/displ ratio	20
Ballast ratio (%)	40
RCD Category	A
STIX	not supplied
Design	Berret Racoupeau/Darnet
Builder	Allures
UK Agents	Matthew Porter Tel: 01803 380506 www.portway.co.uk

* All prices quoted in YM boat tests are inclusive of VAT

THE RIVALS**SOUTHERLY 42RST**

Price	£278,915
LOA	12.86 (42ft 2in)
LWL	11.11m (36ft 5in)
Beam	4.03m (13ft 3in)
Draught	0.84m/2.72m (2ft 9in/8ft 11in)
Displacement	11,250kg (24,802lb)
Ballast	3,670kg (8,091lb)
Sail area	73.62m ² (792sq ft)
Engine	55hp diesel
RCD Category	A
STIX	39.8
Contact	Northshore Yachts
Tel	01243 512611

**FEELING 44**

Price	£225,000
LOA	13.75m (45ft 1in)
LWL	11.90m (39ft)
Beam	4.25m (14ft)
Draught	0.70m/2.60m (2ft 4in/8ft 6in)
Displacement	9,400kg (20,723lb)
Ballast	3,100kg (6,834lb)
Sail area	94m ² (1,012sq ft)
Engine	55hp diesel
RCD Category	A
STIX	not supplied
Contact	Williams & Smithells
Tel	02380 334445

**OVNI 435**

Price	£240,640
LOA	13.37m (43ft 10in)
LWL	10.59m (34ft 9in)
Beam	4.22m (13ft 11in)
Draught	0.74m/2.54m (2ft 5in/8ft 4in)
Displacement	10,300kg (22,707lb)
Ballast	3,600kg (7,937lb)
Sail area	87.5m ² (942sq ft)
Engine	55hp diesel
RCD Category	A
STIX	35.17
Contact	North Sea Maritime
Tel	01702 584821