

Sirius 40DS



Is it really possible to fit three decent double cabins into a 40ft hull? Graham Snook tests the biggest 40-footer he's ever seen

Despite her huge spread of canvas, the 40 DS can easily be sailed singlehanded, with all lines to hand at the helm



The cockpit offers excellent bracing and lounging possibilities



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The German yard Sirius is like no other. Torsten, son of the founder Peter Schmidt, considers his boats in minute detail with enthusiasm and unrelenting passion. 'Obsessional' barely scratches the surface of his approach; spending more than two months living on board to make sure everything is how it should be. Anyone in any doubt about the strength with which Sirius builds its boats should try lifting an internal door – as with the bulkheads, they are 30mm exterior-grade plywood with 0.8mm-thick mahogany veneer. Beneath the floor some of the sub frame structure is 25cm square. The hull is laid up by hand, vacuum infused and is more than 7cm thick in places.

Performance

It's worth noting that I tested her just after she'd been loaded with 930kg of provisions for the start of seven weeks of residence by Torsten. Our second day of sailing brought a lush Force 4, so with full genoa and

mainsail we headed up Southampton Water bound for the boat show. She tacked through 80° (on the compass, with a slight ebb tide) and was most comfortable at around 32° off the apparent wind, the log showing 5.2-7.3 knots. Bearing away to a close reach we picked up another knot, with 7.8 knots our maximum.

When beam-reaching the excessive length of the mainsheet was apparent and, had I been on a long passage, I'd have unpacked the drifter. In a Force 3, speeds were 6.5-7.0 knots. Easing off more, to 120° in 8.5-10 knots, her speed was around 6 knots. Downwind our progress slowed to some 5.0 knots with white sails only.

At the helm

Like most cruising yachts these days, she's designed to be sailed two-up or singlehanded, with lines led aft. Our test boat had electric furling controlled by buttons on the binnacle-mounted Scanstrut instrument pod. The single, canting Jefa steering wheel offers the advantages of a

big wheel – a variety of steering positions – but also the easy access aft gained by a small wheel. As long as you remember to 'tack' the wheel, it's a great system.

Behind the helm, a humped seat rises to increase height in the centre and adds good foot bracing when sitting outboard. A pair of Andersen 58ST genoa primary winches (53ST standard) are fitted on the coamings, close to the helm.

On deck

The standard sail plan has a self-tacking jib, however the 40DS we sailed was Solent-rigged and furnished with furling gennaker and drifter to complement the genoa, self-tacking jib and mainsail.

The 63m² genoa was set on a Furlex 300E electric furler (optional) that was slow, but effortless. Tacking was also slow, due to the need to furl the genoa fully before coming about. Good news, then, that she's equipped with a self-tacking jib for when there is enough breeze and a 55hp engine when there isn't. Torsten

sailed her singlehanded during the photo-shoot and used every sail apart from the asymmetric.

A teak deck is standard, although this boat was clad with Flexiteek – a lower-cost, lower-weight option. The toerail at the foredeck is 15cm deep and tapers aft. All lines led aft from the mast go down the port side of the

coachroof to one of 12 rope clutches and onto a single electric winch. A rope bin in the forward coaming keeps this snake's wedding of lines under control.

The cockpit seating is contoured and the coaming nicely angled for back support, except where there are cave lockers. To boost headroom below decks, the forward end of the cockpit on the starboard side is brought aft, making a handy flat surface surrounded by a rail. It's then angled to make a comfortable chaise longue.



The transom has a door for access or folds down for a large bathing platform



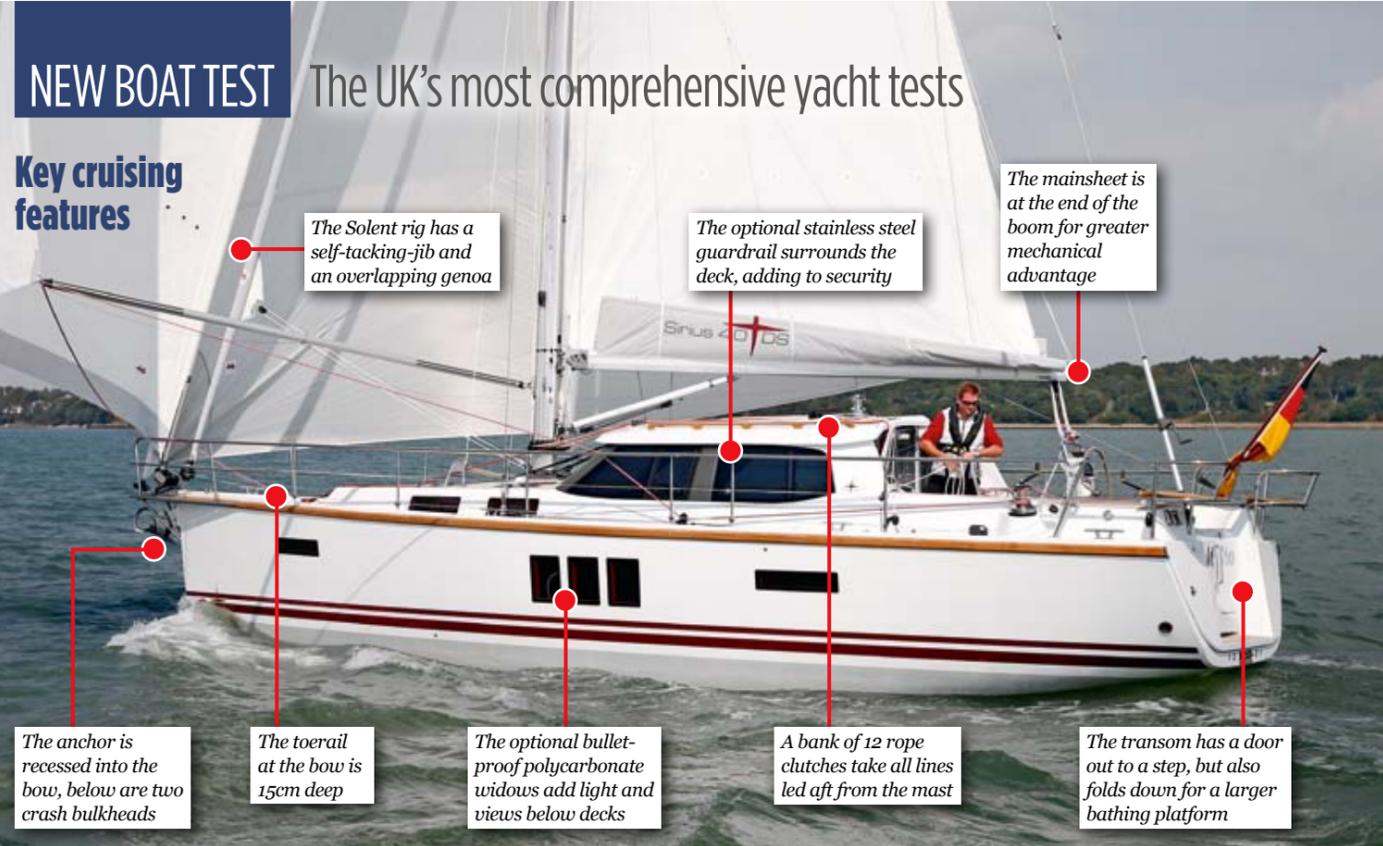
Living aboard

'Below decks' on this boat is a misnomer, as much of her interior is above deck level. Headroom throughout is good, as are the views. Stepping over the threshold from the cockpit into the saloon, there are two steps down to galley, then two more steps aft into the double cabin beneath the cockpit.

Headroom and access is good, thanks in part to the cockpit design.

To port of the companionway is the C-shaped saloon, surrounding the neatest extendable table I've seen on a yacht this size. Gone are flaps that open up or down, or the requirement for braces and struts; replaced instead by a smile-inducing mechanism. Under the forward end is a small paddle. Leaving your thumb on top of the table you squeeze the paddle upwards with your fingers and pull the

Key cruising features



The Solent rig has a self-tacking-jib and an overlapping genoa

The optional stainless steel guardrail surrounds the deck, adding to security

The mainsheet is at the end of the boom for greater mechanical advantage

The anchor is recessed into the bow, below are two crash bulkheads

The toerail at the bow is 15cm deep

The optional bullet-proof polycarbonate windows add light and views below decks

A bank of 12 rope clutches take all lines led aft from the mast

The transom has a door out to a step, but also folds down for a larger bathing platform



LEFT: Under sail or at anchor, you get a 360° panoramic view whether you're in the saloon, the galley or at the chart table

BELOW: Stowage around the galley is vast and varied, just what you need for long-term liveaboard voyaging



leaf towards you. The opposing leaf then moves back, revealing a central section below, which in turn rises up. The action is so smooth that glasses can remain on the table throughout the operation. It's a devastatingly clever mechanism, from Torsten's dining table at home.

Moving forward, down a couple of steps to starboard, you find a forward-facing toilet an Italian ceramic-clad shower and a washbasin. To port is a cabin with three large vertical hull windows (optional) abreast of the 2.0m x 1.5m (6ft 9in x 5ft 2 in) berth. Shelves and knick-knack stowage abounds around the bed. There's full standing-headroom, lots of natural light and a decent-height hanging locker.

Further forward is the en suite owner's cabin with the headboard against the forward bulkhead. Looking aft when sitting in bed, the cabin looks huge. Beneath the 2.06m x 1.4m (6ft 9in x 4ft 7in) berth is more stowage. A neat, robust plywood support holds up the aft end of the berth and doubles as steps to the forehatch.

Chart table

If there is one compromise, it's the chart table. Though it can take a 66cm x 45cm (1ft 6in x 2ft 2in) chart, it's a quirky shape and has no flat chart stowage. There is a small locker forward, but charts would have to be rolled slightly.

It's possible to steer and maintain a good lookout from the chart table, where there is also a remote engine control. The seat is on a telescopic gas strut, giving a low height

for chartwork or an extended height to socialise with the saloon's occupants or sit under the metre-wide companionway and watch the world go by. Under the floor are two bins (one for recycling), aft of which are two heated hanging lockers.

Galley

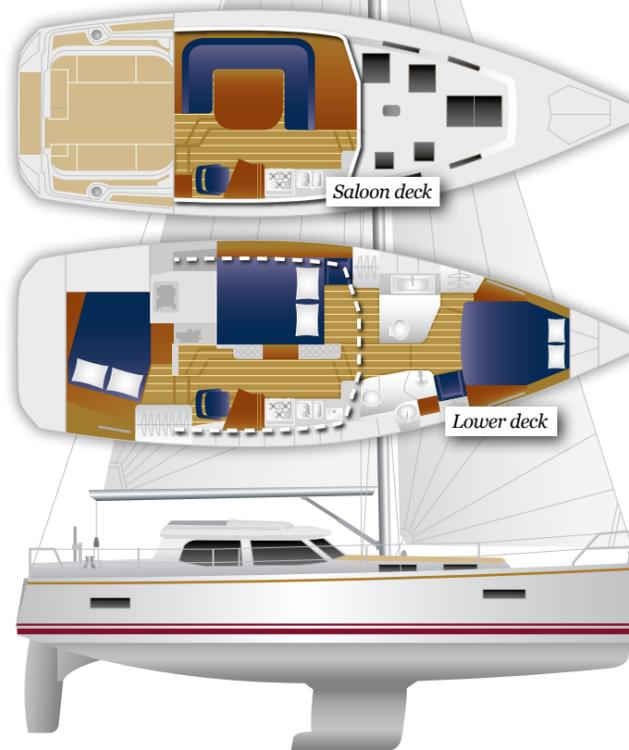
The cook's lot is a happy one; the longitudinal galley is a good size and has impressive views out while you stand at the four-burner stove or twin stainless steel sinks. It's hard to get excited about stowage, but like a magician pulling out an endless chain of hankies, it just goes on and on. Drawers, the full depth of the work surface, pull out effortlessly, before sliding back and closing softly. Beneath hinged floorboards are three compartments, two are 0.75m³, the third slightly less. The stowage space even continues under the galley. This boat had a 100-litre front-opening fridge and an optional top-access fridge or freezer area. She also has an optional Fisher and Paykel dishwasher, which, judging by the slight leak, didn't like being disconnected from shore power midway through its wash cycle. Behind the galley is the optional microwave and even more drawers. Stowage isn't a problem, remembering where you put something might be!

Maintenance

The steps lift up to reveal the engine and apart from a slight difficulty reaching the impeller at the front of the engine block (dipstick access is via a side panel), access to everything else, from quadrant to water pumps, was excellent. Concealed beneath the aft saloon seat is access to the technical room. At the base is a roller toolbox that forms a seat to use the workbench, bleed fuel systems or just hide from your crew.

Sirius 40DS

ARTWORK: MAINE HEATH



FACTS AND FIGURES

- Price (as tested) €650,000 inc 19% tax (approx. £ 512,574)
- LOA 11.99m (39ft 4in)
- LWL 11.17m (36ft 8in)
- Beam 4.08m (13ft 5in)
- Draught 2.0m (6ft 6in) as tested, or 1.0m-2.4m (3ft 3in-7ft 10in)
- Displacement 11,600kg (25,574 lb)
- Ballast 3,400kg (7496 lb)
- Sail area 112.6m² (1,210sq ft)
- Engine 55hp
- Diesel 315 lit (69 gal)
- Water 515 lit (113 gal)
- D/L ratio 231.8
- SA/D ratio 22.3
- Ballast ratio 29.3%
- RCD category A
- STIX 43.5



A dedicated technical room is hidden beneath the saloon

- Designer V Ahlen Yacht design/Torsten Schmidt
- Builder Sirius-Werft
- Tel +49 4522 744 610
- Web www.sirius-werft.de



The forecabin has the headboard forward, making it seem much bigger

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

Our test boat was fitted with a 1:5 ratio Jefa gearbox on the canting Jefa wheel. While I liked it, I felt the helm was too heavy to be comfortable for long periods. Sirius has since changed this for a 1:7. She's not a lightweight boat and testing her with almost a tonne of brochures and provisions gave an honest impression of how she might sail when loaded. Good news then that her performance, while not fast, was respectable for a yacht designed to go places. Her aft waterline beam is quite narrow and she throws up no surprises. Bracing around the cockpit is excellent for helm and crew, so if pushed she will just lean until the mainsheet – which is in front of the helm – is released. I did find the 8:1 mainsheet excessively long and unwieldy. However, it could be adjusted by hand rather than winch – unusual on this size of yacht. It can be changed for 4:1 with 8:1 fine trim or taken to a squat arch above the companionway, with a bi-directional winch controlled by switches by the helm. The latter option also allows for a bimini – not possible with the mainsheet on the binnacle.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

Having cruised Scotland on a yacht with windows the size of small fenders, I'm wholly sold on deck saloons – the ability to see where you are and enjoy the view, whatever the weather, improves life on board no end. For privacy in port at night, just pull down the blinds. The standard layout of the Sirius is social: seated eye-level in the saloon, standing eye-level in the galley, seated eye-level in the navigation station or cockpit. The accommodation is vast for a 40ft yacht. Putting the headboard against the forward bulkhead in the forecabin makes an already big cabin feel class-leading. The mid-cabin (with optional bulletproof polycarbonate windows) is a delightful place to be in harbour, lying on the berth looking passing swans in the eye. Even the under-cockpit cabin doesn't feel like a compromise. Then there's the technical area, hull-deep cockpit locker, fender/warp stowage in the bow locker, and the 70cm-deep lockers under the galley floorboards. At anchor, the fold-down transom offers a variety of aft cockpit access. In port, the large rudder aids manoeuvrability under power.

Would she suit you and your crew?

The internal volume must be seen to be believed – she could easily be a yacht five feet longer. On paper the layout looks unusual, but on board it works. I might question why a boat designed for short-handed, long-distance passage-making needs three good double cabins, but they don't have to be cabins, they could be bigger technical spaces, day heads, offices, increased stowage or all of the above. Though I'm baffled why you would need more stowage – it would be like adding an extension to the Tardis! She has so many clever features, from the open out/fold down transom to the extendable saloon table, to the use of space that makes her so interesting and unique. Unless you're after a cruiser-racer or a yacht that puts beauty before practicality, the 40DS could be the semi-custom boat you want her to be: fin keels (deep, medium and shallow), bilge keels and swing keel are all options. Layouts can be chosen or modified. And she's a genuine deck saloon, offering 360° views from the galley, saloon and nav station. She might not have the classic lines of some other yachts, but she has things they don't offer – space and practicality in abundance.

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING ★★★★★☆

COASTAL PORT-HOPPING ★★★★★☆

OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING ★★★★★☆

TRADE WIND VOYAGING ★★★★★☆

HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE ★★★★★☆