

LITTLE GEM

Classic good looks, sparkling performance and a simple interior make the Saffier Se 33 a diamond of a daysailer for **Sam Jefferson**



It is almost 100 years since the great commercial sailing vessels shuffled off our oceans and travelling by sea using the power of the wind became an activity carried out purely for pleasure. During that century, I can't help but feel sometimes this primary goal – pleasure – has been rather lost amid a desire to clutter up yachts with all manner of paraphernalia that can actually detract from our sailing enjoyment.

All right, we may need all manner of kit aboard to cross an ocean, but how often do any of us actually sail across an ocean? Not that often. In reality, most yachts are used sparingly at weekends and owners are frequently lumbered with vessels that are almost a chore to sail and all too often are motored around from marina to marina. It's the equivalent of taking a heavy, unwieldy camper van out for a brisk burn around the country lanes on a Sunday afternoon.

Yet there is more to yachting than just the pleasure of sailing – there is also the joy of owning a yacht – the pleasure of arriving at a crowded anchorage and turning heads, or the swell of pride you feel as you walk away from your boat

and take that backward glance.

Testing the Saffier (sapphire in English) Se 33 UD prompted a minor crisis for me, because it got me thinking of how deficient my own yacht was in both these very important areas – at least by comparison. The brand is the brainchild of Dutchman Dennis Hennevanger. After a childhood spent living aboard his parents' yacht and cruising the world, he and his brother Dean started up the brand in 1998 and opted to take a different approach to creating the perfect yacht where sailing enjoyment was king. Since then they have been perfecting the art of putting together innovative daysailers and weekenders. They have twice scooped the prestigious European Yacht of the Year award and the 33 was also nominated last year.

Providing sailing pleasure is this vessel's primary function, so performance is a key factor – and so are looks. One glance at the Saffier 33 as she lies in the marina and you are left in no doubt on that score: with her gleaming dark hull, black spars, low freeboard and slender lines she looks both elegant and purposeful; a thoroughbred amid the cart horses. This is a yacht you could happily

● **ABOVE**
Sleek, fast and purposeful, this is a yacht guaranteed to turn heads

● **FACING PAGE, TOP**
The Code 0 is an easy sail to handle. We later used it in over 20 knots of wind without fuss

● **FACING PAGE**
The steering was wonderfully responsive. I was unsure about the look of the twin helms, however

cruise into a Côte d'Azur anchorage and garner admiring glances.

Another yacht I tested which worked on a similar stylish weekender concept was the Huzar 28, but while that was almost brash, the Saffier is elegant, with more than a hint of the modern classic to her lines. She's the sleek black Porsche Cayman to Huzar's bright yellow Porsche Boxster. Leaner, meaner with greater potential for speed.

Yet step aboard and you rapidly realise this is no stripped-out racing machine. The open cockpit and decks are clad with Esthec, a high quality variety of synthetic teak. The side decks are totally uncluttered, with all lines running under the deck and re-emerging by the twin helming positions, where everything can be controlled by the helmsman using a pair of electric

Harken winches. The mainsheet traveller is abaft the helmsman, within reach but out of harm's way. Still further aft is a large sunbathing and general lounging spot, which concludes with a drop-down bathing platform. In all, the cockpit is huge, with acres of sunbathing space. There is also decent storage in two separate cockpit lockers and the engine, a 14hp Yanmar saildrive with folding prop, can be accessed either via the cockpit or the cabin.

If the cockpit is huge, a trip down below confirms that the Saffier is unashamedly a weekender. The accommodation is light and nicely fitted out, but very simple. The coachroof is almost flush with the deck and barely interrupts those lovely lines at all, but means that headroom is consequently limited to sitting only. There is a decent

PROVIDING SAILING PLEASURE IS THIS VESSEL'S KEY FUNCTION, SO PERFORMANCE IS ALL IMPORTANT...



sized V-berth forward, with the galley set just aft, consisting of a sink and a single burner stove which runs off mains electricity in port and methylated spirits if you're at anchor. Beyond that, you can either have the option of a separate heads compartment and one extra berth, or the heads under the forward berth and two extra settee berths. I would recommend the former layout, as sleeping four on here would be no fun and it's nice to have a fully enclosed heads compartment.

Soaking it up

Enough on the accommodation. As I said at the start, this boat is all about the sailing and this meant that I was mightily pleased when conditions for the day of the test included 20 knot winds and a nasty North Sea chop. We beat out of the harbour at IJmuiden into the teeth of this, something guaranteed to kill the speed of most yachts, yet I was immediately impressed. The Saffier has minimal overhang so makes maximum use of her waterline length. She's also very narrow by modern standards with slack bilges and a deep T-shaped keel on a narrow foil with a massive torpedo of a lead bulb on the bottom.

All these attributes allowed her to soak up the head sea, her knife-like bow slicing through →



● **ABOVE**
A single-burner stove in the galley runs off electricity in port

● **RIGHT**
The interior is modest but well-finished



the spiteful waves with ease and making real progress into the teeth of these unfriendly seas despite her light displacement. No slamming, no juddering, no fuss.

The helm also remained finger light and she barely griped even in the strongest gusts. If I had one complaint – and it is a minor one – it would be that, while the helming position was very comfortable with an excellent foot rest to brace against while heeled over, the absence of guard rails meant there was nothing but the wheel to hold on to when she heeled to the gusts. She was surprisingly dry even without her distinctive sprayhood. Out of the harbour and in slightly more regular seas, we were hitting seven knots hard on the wind.

I was enjoying myself and there was more to come, for the next stage was to roll out the Code 0 and see what happened. We would have benefited from the gennaker, which would have allowed for sailing deeper angles and provided a bit more power, but even so, the sensation as the big sail cracked into life and we surged away, hitting 12 knots, was wonderful. Apparently, with a gennaker, the Saffier comfortably reaches 17kt in these conditions. The boat also remained poised and a pleasure to handle. No panic, no fuss, just masses of speed and bags of fun. The boat also had an intangible reassuring quality; you just knew she was going to look after you even in the wild conditions. I returned to the marina with a big grin on my face and remembered why I got into sailing in the first place. ✨

SAM'S VERDICT

This is a great yacht. She is just as comfortable defying the North Sea on a wild day as she is anchored off some Mediterranean beach turning heads. You can play around with this one like a big dinghy, but she will also look after you and is simple to handle. I don't really have any gripes about this yacht at all. True, the accommodation is modest, but she is marketed as a weekender. Perhaps the option of tiller steering might be fun, plus the twin wheels are practical, but do interrupt her sleek deck lines slightly.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

ACCOMMODATION: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

Length with bowsprit: 33ft (10m)

Length of hull: 31ft 5in (9.6m)

Waterline length: 27ft 8in (8.5m)

Beam: 8ft 9in (2.7m)

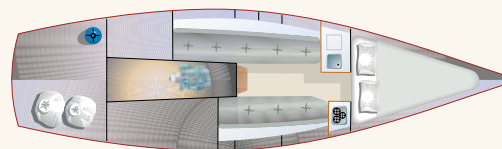
Draught: Three options are available: 7ft 2in (2.2m); 5ft 5in (1.7m); 4ft 6in (1.4m)

Displacement: 6,172lb (2,800kg)

Mainsail: 290sq ft (27m²)

Jib: 194sq ft (18m²)

Gennaker: 753sq ft (70m²)



Base price: c£72,000

Dealer: Buy direct through Saffier Yachts:
saffierjachts.com
info@saffierjachts.com
+31 (0)255 – 5128 60