

Allures 45



If you're unshakably committed to exploring the world under sail, there are few better boats to help you do it



Chris Beeson tests a French yacht with true pedigree, designed to take shorthanded crew around the world in safety and comfort

When we tested the Allures 45's predecessor, the 44, in 2007, we were impressed by its conceptual clarity. Back in 2003 Allures started with a blank sheet, then questioned dozens of blue-water cruising couples to create the ultimate ocean cruiser. The 44 was fabulous – but the 45 is even better. We tested one of the first 45s to come off the production line, *Vagaris*, which had just been sailed back to the UK by new owners Adrian and Jacqui Ward after a shake-down cruise around the Baltic.

Performance

In a southerly Force 4-5 with a single reef in the main and a few rolls of reefed genoa, she ploughed upwind at around 35-40° to the 20-25 knots of apparent wind, making 6.3-7 knots. Tacking was a bit tricky, hauling the genoa around the inner stay, but she's a blue-water boat. If there's a lot of tacking to do, you'd use the staysail but if your next tack is 500 miles upwind, it won't be such a big deal.

Coming down onto a fetch, she made 7-8 knots in 20 knots apparent, she beam-reached at 7.1-7.4 knots in 19 knots apparent with two metres of the three metre centreboard lowered and clocked 6.7-7.1 knots on a broad reach in



Co-owner Jacqui Ward takes the leeward helm as Vagaris broad reaches back to Gosport

17 knots of apparent wind.

Her 55hp Volvo Penta drives a non-standard three-blade Gori prop that, in overdrive mode, scooted her along at 7 knots with just 1,600rpm.

At the helm

Views forward are very good, the genoa sheet winches are immediately to hand and the helm positions are very comfortable, especially when

leaning outboard against the arch. There are very good footblocks, and you'll need them. With all her ballast in the bilge (the centreboard weighs just 200kg), she dips her rail a fair bit. In hindsight, we could have managed the mainsail better and tucked in a second reef to prevent her rounding up, as she did a few times. Rounding up while beating is one thing, but being unable to haul her back down to a white-sail beam reach is quite another.

Design & construction

There are one or two few notable changes from the 44. First, the hulls, which used to be built by the military shipbuilder CMN in Cherbourg, are now built by the Garcia Brothers' yard near Caen. Garcia Brothers was rescued from receivership – along with its 30 years of aluminium boatbuilding experience – by Allures in 2010. The acquisition brought three advantages: the hulls are just as strong but better finished; the build team is able to suggest improvements directly to the design team; there are no strikes or industrial action.

Design has changed too. The new 45 has

Allures' trademark radiused aluminium hull, instead of chines, and GRP deck, but, as well as being longer, she is beamier and carries that beam well aft. This gives her much more powerful stern sections to carry the increased sail area. Statistically, she's fairly similar to the Xc-45.

Sailplan

She has a 9/10 fractional rig with a big mainsail, single-line slab-reefed on our test boat, with a furling genoa and staysail. If you're using the latter, there are running backstays to support the mast. If you need to go aloft to check the VHF, AIS or RTF antenna, there are two steps at the masthead so you can keep yourself steady.

Deck layout

She can take two anchors, with plenty of chain. The windlass handles the port bower anchor chain and you can use rope from the starboard roller. She has a tack fitting outside the forestay



The cockpit is secure, dry, comfortable and great for lounging around in

and a 2:1 halyard for offwind sails. Aft of the inner stay is a full-depth sail locker for offwind sails and deck stowage.

Huge toerails offer safe passage aft and once through the widely-spaced shrouds there are grabrails along the whalebacked coachroof. Handles on the sprayhood and steps on the outer coaming will see you safely into the cockpit. Lines are ducted aft to halyard winches and the port winch is electric. Adrian has also fitted secondaries to handle gennaker sheets.

The cockpit has MarineDeck cork-and-resin decking on all seating surfaces. It also runs up the cockpit bulkhead onto the coachroof, which makes sitting against the bulkhead more comfortable.

Aft of the twin wheels are gas lockers to port and starboard (port for the in-use bottle). A wide arch spans the transom, supporting davits for the tender and allowing for the mounting of the windgen, GPS and Navtex antenna.

Living below

She's wonderfully bright and airy and stowage abounds in the saloon, galley and cabins – the owners unloaded a packed, long-wheelbase Transit van into her and there's still plenty of space. The central settee and drinks locker aft conceals the casing for the three metre centreboard and its control lines. The table seats six with three exits, so you don't need to dislodge your dining partners to get up and, with the two small leaves folded, the



Key cruising features

She can carry a masthead gennaker or Code Zero with a tack fitting in front of the bow roller and a 2:1 halyard

Huge windows on the top and sides of the coachroof flood the saloon with natural light

All-round coamings are at a good height and the fixed cockpit table offers bracing, grab rails and stowage

She has two pairs of cleats fore and aft so that bow and stern lines can be rigged separately from the springs

The wider stern has allowed twin wheels, a bigger cockpit, and an easier passage through to the bathing platform

The combined passarelle/ladder stows in the port transom locker, and the outboard stows in the starboard locker

table lowers to create a vast double berth, so they can stay all night. The cabins have very decent-sized berths with good mattresses and plenty of light and ventilation.

Chart table

One of Allures' trademarks is the fore-and-aft chart table from where you can watch the sun go down while planning your next passage. There's no plotter below decks because Adrian and Jacqui do all their planning on an iPad. Stowage, as ever, is abundant in lockers and drawers outside, inside and below the chart table.

Galley

It's a linear arrangement on the port side using the back of the saloon bench settee for bracing. Light and ventilation are excellent and there is a bewildering amount of stowage – everything you touch opens or lifts to reveal galley

necessities, all thoughtfully stowed. The water tank manifold is under a sole panel.

Adrian and Jacqui opted for a Levante three-burner stove from GN Espace, which features four-way gimbaling and very accurate temperature control. This choice also involved installing a different sink because the Levante is part of an integrated galley system where the baking trays that slide in and out of the oven will also sit neatly on ledges around the sink. Adrian installed a freezer and vacuum packer in the technical room, the latter proving very useful for storing the French cheese aboard.

Heads

There's a shower cubicle aft, separated by a folding acrylic door, requested by Adrian, and plenty of stowage under and around the swanky basin. Just above the loo is an access panel for the Electroscan unit. This passes



You can enjoy the anchorage from the chart table while planning your next voyage

electricity through seawater to release chlorine, which treats black water, making it safe to go over the side so you don't need a holding tank.

Maintenance

As you would expect from a blue-water boat, maintenance access is excellent and all of the tanks have accessible fittings and big inspection panels. The wiring and seacocks are clearly labelled and easily accessed, as are the lines that raise the centreboard and the hull itself.

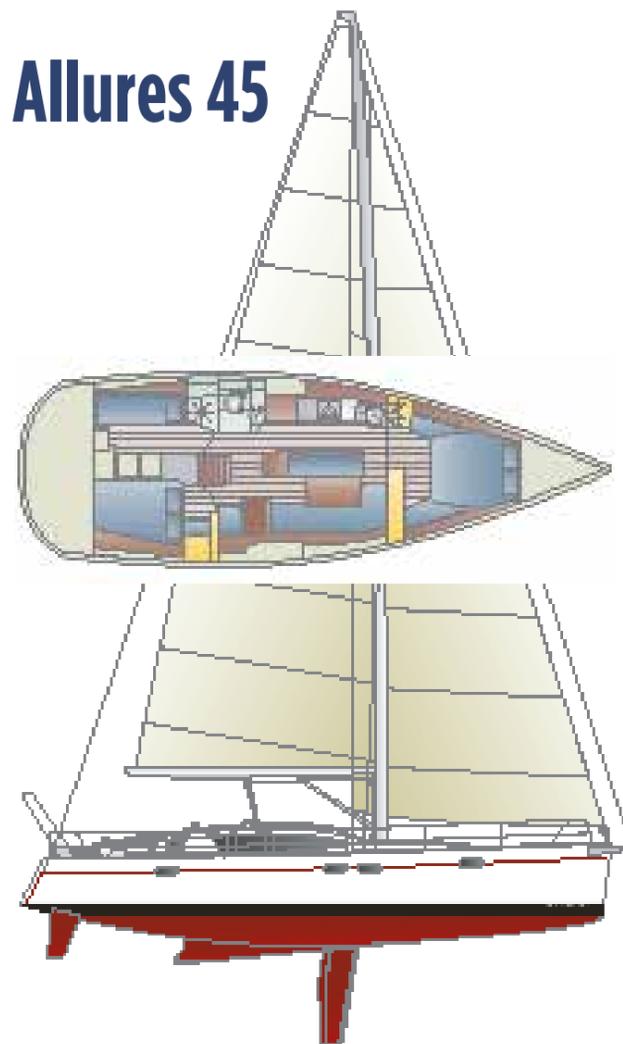
There's a maintenance room port aft (essentially a workshop) with plenty of room for spares and access to heater, generator, engine. There's also a hatch so you can get some light and ventilation while you're tinkering away.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or follow the link below on your computer to view a video of Chris testing the Allures 45, PLUS a 360° virtual tour of the boat www.yachtingmonthly.com/allures45 See page 6 for QR code instructions



Allures 45



ARTWORK: MAXINE HEATH

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Price £353,000 (as seen)
- LOA 13.98m (45ft 10in)
- LWL 12.35m (40ft 6in)
- Beam 4.43m (14ft 6in)
- Draught 1.05-3m (3ft 5in-9ft 10in)
- Displacement 11,800kg (26,015 lb)
- Ballast 4,400kg (9,700 lb)
- Sail area 100m² (1,076 sq ft)
- Engine 55hp
- Diesel 550lit (121 gal)
- Water 550lit (121 gal)
- D/L ratio 174.2
- SA/D ratio 17.9
- Ballast ratio (%) 37.3
- RCD category A
- STIX 35.6
- Designer Berret-Racoupeau/Franck Darnet
- Builder Allures Yachting
- Contact Williams and Smithells
- Tel 01329 827053
- Web www.allures.fr



The galley is bright, secure in a seaway and the stowage is remarkable



The mini-workshop is great for both maintenance and stowing spares

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

Some context is needed here first. Beam reaching in a 45ft boat in Force 4-5 winds, one could reasonably expect more than eight knots' boatspeed. However, most of the new boats we review are designed for coast-hopping and tested with empty lockers and water tanks. This is not a boat built for speed. The Allures 45 has been designed, from keel to truck, to take a shorthanded crew safely around the world in enviable levels of comfort. She was also loaded on the day with tons of liveaboard kit and had full tanks. So, in that context, she delivered very respectable boatspeed.

I'd like to go back out again and play with her sail configurations to find out whether the heel and the rounding up were down to our unfamiliarity with the boat – owners Adrian and Jacqui have done very little upwind work with *Vagaris*. Perhaps with an extra reef in the main she'd have gone just as fast with less heel, but should you really need two reefs in 20 knots of true wind? Certainly the 44 we tested in 2007 tracked like a train in a similar breeze without even a sniff of rounding up, so it was a bit of a surprise to find her broaching out of a white-sail beam reach. My time on board was fleeting but there's no doubt Adrian and Jacqui will find the right balance once they become more familiar with *Vagaris*.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

This is where she really excels. With the centreboard raised she draws just 1m (3ft) so you can explore further upriver and anchor in less populated areas, or, of course, even dry out. The vast tankage, solar panels and wind generator give the owners the autonomy that is the trademark of a good blue-water project, and the cavernous stowage means they will want for nothing – and have spares for everything. The experience that has been built into the Allures 45 at the conceptual and design levels is stunning.

The GRP deck means that she's quieter to move around on and that the deck won't become toe-toastingly hot. And if they ever need to fit extra kit, it will be no more complicated than doing it on a GRP boat. Down below, she is uncompromisingly luxurious. Her huge windows bring the outside in and, although she doesn't have air conditioning installed, she does have enough hatches and blinds to keep her crew comfortable in any climate.

Would she suit you and your crew?

Vagaris' owners, Adrian and Jacqui Ward, bought their first big boat, an Elan Impression 384, in 2006, shortly before reading *Yachting Monthly's* review of the Allures 44. After taking part in Rally Portugal 2006 to test their aptitude for blue-water life, they cruised the Med but yearned for wider horizons and never forgot the Allures 44 - 'It's your fault!' Adrian told us. Having rented out their Brighton home to finance the trip, Adrian and Jacqui took delivery of *Vagaris* in March this year and took her on a shakedown cruise in the Baltic, taking in Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg before returning via the Kiel Canal. Allures doesn't like the word 'dream' because dreams tend not to come true. It believes every boat is a platform used to deliver a project. Undoubtedly Adrian and Jacqui share the energy and vision to realise their project, to explore the world under sail, and they helped to create the platform to do it. But would this be the right boat for you? If your project is as far-reaching and well-formed, and you're committed to it absolutely, the Allures 45 would make an excellent platform.

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING
★★★★☆

COASTAL PORT-HOPPING
★★★★☆

OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING
★★★★★

TRADE WIND VOYAGING
★★★★★

HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE
★★★★★