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COMFORT ZONE
The 2015 launched
GL460 is spacious and
easily handled cruiser.

The Dufour Grand Large 460 debuted at the 2016 Sydney Boat Show by Australia dealer Matt Hayes of Performance Cruising Yachts, who was sufficiently impressed with this 46-footer to order it as a stock

boat. Initially launched at Cannes 2015, the GL460 is proving popular; our review boat was hull #28. The Rochelle based builder has a range that goes from 31-foot to the flagship 56-foot GL560 and there's plans for an even larger model. Under founder Michele Dufour the company was known for performance cruisers but after changes of ownership and a management buy-out, cruisers comprise about 90 percent of Dufour's output, with its Performance range taking the remainder. The Grand Large cruisers are intended to have wide appeal, as epitomised by the GL460 which has all the essentials for an easy life at sea: a simple rig with self-tacking headsail, spacious flat decks and a large cockpit plus acres of space below decks in three or four cabins.

VERSATILE COCKPIT

A cruising yacht's cockpit has to be a versatile space because it must function both at sea and at rest, something Italian designer Felci clearly understands. The large, wide teak-clad cockpit is divided into a central relaxing area with sail controls aft and on the coachroof. Sail controls around the twin binnacles comprise a single set of sizeable Lewmar 55 mainsheet winches with two more L45s on the coachroof for halyards and adjusting the self-tacking jib. I easily deployed the jib after unlocking the jammer furling line on starboard. Then it's simply set and forget for the jib. On the starboard binnacle the throttle is prominently placed and thruster controls are nearby as well. The diameter of the twin stainless steering wheels

EASY STREET

CRUISERS SHOULD BE ALL ABOUT COMFORT AND SEAWORTHINESS, SO KEVIN GREEN SPENT AN AFTERNOON ON THE NEW DUFOUR GL 460 TO SEE HOW IT MEASURED UP.



is just right for both sitting outboard or when heeled with the foot chocks deployed. Also, there's access to the rudder shaft for emergency steering (with tiller supplied). Ignition is conveniently placed beside the Raymarine plotter with autopilot screen – both easily viewable – as is the rev counter for the 75HP saildrive. Elsewhere in the cockpit, good features abound: ample space between the twin binnacles for walking, then dropping the swim platform before switching-on the transom barbecue. Along with the adjoining sink, this is a great option to have. A standard fitting is the retractable sunbed in the cockpit, which the large space allows for. At sea the cockpit table is a useful brace and contains a fridge with storage, with wide fold-out teak wings. Our review boat was offshore-ready thanks to a spray hood (and a bimini can be fitted above the binnacles) protecting the shallowish cockpit. The main hatch has the fashionable saloon style doors, rather than my preferred sliding washboards.

EASY SAILPLAN

Sail handling on a cruising boat should be easy so the GL460's slab reefed mainsail and self-tacking jib is good. But for the ultimate ease, there's an in-mast furling option. Our review boat came with an upgraded Elvestrom dacron mainsail on a Performance Rig which includes an adjustable backstay for the deck-stepped alloy Z-Spars 9/10th mast, which is supported by an alloy vang and outboard wire shrouds. Most useful is the low boom height which easily allowed me to tidy the mainsail in the lazy jacks; while also being a good idea for lowering the centre of effort. Looking at the foredeck, the elegant

fibreglass bowsprit is ready to fly a Code 0, essential for variable tropical conditions, plus there's inboard tracks for a genoa to be used. The bowsprit neatly integrates the anchor with a stainless steel spine under the moulded fibreglass, where a CQR anchor hangs below, controlled by the Lewmar vertical 1400W windlass. Just behind is a cavernous locker that's about six foot deep with a hatch into the chain locker; its size reflecting the voluminous hull and full bows of GL460. A slight concern was exposed electrics that sails could foul or dampen, so I'd fit a cover over them. Looking around the flat deck, the flush hatches won't trip crew up and halyards running in gutters are equally good, as is the stylish mini Dorade vents. The teak toerail and substantial cleats all round – including midships and opening guard rails – finish off a functional topside on the GL460.

GALLEY FORWARD

Up to four cabins and four heads are available, which is ideal for charter, but our review boat was the standard three cabin with two heads model. The unusual aspect is the midships galley location, something dealer Matt Hayes says is popular with buyers because it devotes the main part of the hull to the lounge. "Customers who like this layout also opt for the transom barbecue which is optional on all the larger models," said Hayes. Alternatively, a longitudinal central galley is available on the four cabin model. The saloon takes up the entire aft section, apart from the starboard corner where a sliding chart table adds versatility to the seating. It can slide against the aft

cabin bulkhead – where screens and other electronics could be located. The electrical panel is here, beside the VHF radio and hifi. The open plan saloon – as is the way with modern cruisers – is ideal for shoreside but lacks support for offshore. So there's plenty of space to move around, with longitudinal benches either side and the central table with midships benches. Storage space is fantastic with overhead cupboards, under-bench and the deep bilges have lockers as well – ideal for stashing wine at stable temperature.

The athwartships galley uses both sides of the hull for bench space and whitegoods. To starboard sat double Isotherm fridge/freezer drawers while portside housed a chest fridge. Beside it was the two burner Emo gas stove with gimballed oven. Also, a dishwasher and microwave can be fitted along with a 6KW generator. The deep single sink is fine but two smaller ones would be my preference, and it was surrounded by nice tall fiddles on the composite worktops, to finish off an excellent galley. Ventilation comes from two smallish opening skylights but natural light abounds thanks to rectangular portlights and coachroof windows; enhanced by the light coloured Canadian Oak, which is precisely machined. Entertainment options includes a retractable flatscreen television which can elevate from the aft galley bulkhead but our boat had it as a wine rack.

Sleeping arrangements are an ensuite in the forepeak with island queen sized double and separate shower/toilet. The huge volume makes it feel like a 50-footer, so claustrophobia shouldn't be a problem. Storage includes dual hanging lockers along with overhead shelves and small cabinets. For guests, there's the choice of symmetrical double aft cabins and I'd opt for the port one as it adjoins the bathroom. Being near the companion way and fairly large, the bathroom could also be a useful wet locker as well. Reflecting the beam carried aft on the GL460, the cabins have wide berths and ample standing room, two lockers plus marvellous aft facing windows. Ventilation is limited to a single small hatch.

SKILL SET
Left: Former Socceroo Craig Foster (with wife Lara) concentrating to keep those tell tales horizontal. Below: The owner's v-berth is cavernous with separate shower and head.



KEVIN GREEN / JEAN-MARIE LOT



VOLUMINOUS HULL

The tall hull allows for reasonably deep bilges which aids stability should flooding occur. Further stability comes from the batteries being in the bilges, while tankage is under the port bunk. Engine access is via the lifting companionway and is conventionally laid-out with access to all service points on the Volvo diesel. The hand laminated GRP hull has a long hard chine aft and deep forward sections with a contemporary snub bow and blunt transom, to maximise the 41-foot waterline well. The deck is injection moulded foam, for insulation and weight-saving. There's a single deep spade rudder on a stainless shaft and saildrive gearbox. Keeping things upright is an L-shaped cast iron keel which won't snag when coastal cruising – something the GL460 looks eminently suited for. The ballast ratio is modest at only 26.4 per cent but like many modern designs stability comes from the wide beam and volume, while a sail area-displacement ratio (SAD) 20.82 puts the GL460 in the moderate weighted cruiser class.

SAILING WITH A SOCCEROO

Former Socceroo Craig Foster joined us for a sail on the GL460 and being a football tragic myself, there was a danger of sailing taking a back seat to soccer anecdotes. But Craig and wife Lara were keen to learn about sailing, so with a deal struck of me introducing them to pulling a few sheets if Foz told me some moves on the footie field, we motored out onto a calm Sydney Harbour. Under power, the GL460 cruised along nicely with the upgraded 75HP pushing us at 7 knots without shudders felt on the stainless steering wheel; and we really were in cruise mode as a large

rigid inflatable was being towed and putting some drag on the four bladed propeller. After anchoring the inflatable we went into sail mode, so I hoisted the mainsail using the coachroof Lewmar winch, leaving the huff tension light to match the 8 knot breeze. Then, unjamming the starboard deck jammer for the furler, the self-tacking jib was set as we glided off towards Mosman Bay. Clicking reverse gear to fold the propeller was the last task before I took my seat on the starboard gunwale, to watch the telltales go horizontal. The numbers on the Raymarine showed 4.1 knots in the dying breeze of 6 knots, which was impressive for an 11 ton family cruiser with handkerchief sized headie. The 108 percent genoa would be my preference, easily done with the existing winches thanks to the double-ended German mainsheet. However, our simple sail plan allowed for easily done manoeuvres, with no need to touch anything as we tacked to windward at about 35 degrees. For gybing in strong winds, the low boom and sturdy alloy vang is welcome but our light-wind day couldn't test this. Persuading our onboard Socceroo to take the helm, Craig's first ever experience on a yacht, went well as he quickly grasped the concept of steering and keeping the telltales horizontal. Not to be overshadowed wife Lara did the same, something they plan to do with their three small children one day soon via a syndicate organised by Matt Hayes company Sydney By Sail. For sailing newbies the GL460 may be a wee bit large but it has all the essentials: bow thruster, powerful engine, simple sail plan and cavernous interior to house a growing family; and all contained in a very elegant and functional package. ⚓

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REFINED DESIGN
Above: A Dufour GL460 using the genoa, with its larger sail area; The forward galley frees-up the beamiest part of the Dufour for lounging and there's lots of storage, including in the deep bilges.



MODEL	Dufour GL460
LENGTH OVERALL	14.15 metres (46 feet)
BEAM	4.50 metres
DRAFT	2.20 metres (1.95 shallow)
DISPLACEMENT	(light): 10,760 kg
BALLAST	2,850 kg
ENGINE	55 HP sail drive (75HP option)
WATER	530 litres
FUEL	250 litres
SAILS	Mainsail 52.80 m ² , Genoa 47 m ² , Asymmetric or Code 0
PRICE	\$440,000 base boat (\$495,000 for review boat)