



BEST BOATS 2021

DUFOUR 530

By Tom Hale, Adam Cort,
Zuzana Prochazka & Tom
Dove

The past year has been a strange and tragic one, to say the least. A funny thing happened, though, on the way to everybody just saying to hell with it and giving up. Namely, people—and sailors, in particular—didn't. Despite the uncertainty, sail-ors from coast-to-coast took to the water like never before, regardless of the almost complete lack of rallies, regattas and, of course, boat shows. Similarly, the marine industry didn't stop doing what it's always done, whether it be designing and building new boats, or reporting on the latest crop of boats to set sail here in North America. The result was a kind of low-key, nomadic boat show this past fall, as the *SAIL* staff made its way up and down the Eastern Seaboard at the same time those same boatbuilders who usually congregate at the Newport and Annapolis shows set out on a series of treks of their own making connections with potential customers. Truth be told, we (and I suspect the boatbuilders, as well) weren't entirely sure we were going to be able to pull it off. But the end result far exceeded any of our expectations, both in terms of the number of boats we were able to sail and the boats themselves. Annapolis, in particular, felt a little like a kind of low-key gathering of the tribes. We only wish more of our friends could have been there. Fingers crossed we'll all be getting together again the way we should in the fall of 2021. In the meantime, congratulations to everyone—the sailing public as well as the boatbuilding industry—for not losing faith. And congratulations, especially, to this year's Best Boats winners. Kudos on another outstanding effort in these challenging times.



BEST LARGE MONOHULL 50FT AND ABOVE

Dufour 530

Dufour has traditionally built two lines of boats: a performance line and the Grand Large line, the latter serving as the cruising option. Now, though, the French company has essentially merged the two in its freshly launched 530, a boat that melds a performance hull with plentiful cruising amenities. She's a lot of boat, but so well-mannered a capable couple should have no worries taking her out in pretty much anything.

The Felci-designed Dufour 530 is big on customization and personalization. To this end, there are five layouts available, offering three to six cabins, two to four heads, an option for an outdoor galley, two

keel depths and a choice of rigs. Three different "packages" have also been put together to get you started: an "Easy" package with minimal sail controls that will probably be used in charter; an "Ocean" version with upgraded sail controls for more serious cruisers and passagemakers; and a "Performance" package for those interested in racing, with more sail area and a deeper bulb keel.

Dufour aficionados will immediately recognize the open saloon with the split galley forward. Similarly, the master suite is in the bow with a shower compartment to port and a head and sink

to starboard. Crews can board aft via a drop-down transom and ascend to the cockpit along a set of the steps to port.

The outdoor galley, aft between the twin wheels, deserves a special nod, due to the fact that when not in use, it's topped by a cushion and becomes a great place to hang out. If you'd rather catch your rays closer to the bow, another pair of sun pads can be found on the foredeck.

The solid fiberglass hull was designed from scratch (as opposed to being derived from an earlier model), and the deck is infused to minimize weight and lower the boat's center of gravity. Best of all, the boat is a pleasure to sail, with a self-tacking jib for ease of handling and a Code 0 for downwind performance. Our judges lucked out, and for their test sail they had a solid 20-plus knots of breeze play with. The Dufour 530 not only made the most of the conditions, but felt downright regal, reveling in the chop like a kind of waterborne Cadillac. Nice! dufour-yachts.com