

# ABSOLUTE 50 FLY

It might not have the looks of a Princess or the shining reputation of a Sunseeker, but this beautifully finished boat may just surprise you

Words Jack Haines

**W**hile a lot has been made of the likes of Princess and Sealine launching their first ever IPS-powered flybridge boats,

Absolute was most likely wondering what all the fuss was about. The Piacenza-based yard has been installing Volvo's pods on its flybridge models for years and has proven its knowledge and application of the system is excellent.

Here's the thing, though. Even with its extensive knowledge of IPS, is the decision to have the 435hp IPS600 units as the sole engine option short sighted? This is a big 50ft boat and when you consider that even the smaller and lighter Princess 49 uses 550hp IPS700s, you can see where the Absolute may fall short. The Sealine F530 we tested had the 600s and felt underpowered but it does have the option of the larger motors, and Sunseeker, to avoid any doubt, only fits 725hp engines whether you choose shafts or pods.

The conditions for our test were hardly taxing, with bright sunshine, light winds and a Mercury-smooth sea greeting us outside the Marina di Varazze on Italy's Liguria coast. In such wonderful weather, any potential lack of power wasn't noticeable in the slightest. The 50 rose on to the plane without fuss and remained quiet and refined all the way up to a top speed of 28 knots with the engines pulling 50rpm short of their maximum. That, however, was 28 knots without waves to contend with, a clean hull and no cruising gear whatsoever. The concern is how the performance might be affected by some weed growth on the hull and pods and your average family's cruising kit.

Absolute has plastered the smartly laid-out engineroom with soundproofing and that shows in the sound readings. Even though one would think the engines are working quite hard to shift such a hefty boat, the hushed ride is one thing that stands out on the 50. It helps, of course, that IPS sets the engines such a long way back in the hull so on top of insulation, a deck hatch and cockpit doors, you have sheer distance on your side too.

The lower helm is excellent and mimics the design of a couple of the larger Absolute flybridge boats I've tested. What I like most is that you can very comfortably stand to drive, something I always like to do if the conditions are rough. The 50 is a tall boat and to my eyes not the prettiest, but once inside – and this is a theme with many of the yard's boats – the space is remarkable. So yes it looks top heavy, but being able stand up at the helm and escape through a side door on to the decks is particularly useful. The helm looks great too, with a clean and simple switchgear layout, quality materials and space for two 12in screens.

The combination of average performance and sedate steering means the 50 isn't the last

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word in sporty handling. If you want a more exciting driving experience then the 36-knot Princess 49 or beautifully balanced Sunseeker Manhattan 52 are going to be more to your taste, whereas the Absolute sits alongside the Sealine at the more sedate end of the spectrum. In fact, at times, the huge turning circle and lazy steering became quite tiresome with even the increased exposure and height of the upper helm failing to up the enjoyment levels. Again, the lack of dynamism is compensated for by a helm station on the flybridge that is well designed, comfortable and endowed with plenty of adjustment. The twin helm chairs are lovely, with comfortable bolsters and plenty of lumbar support. Both seats slide and, like downstairs, it's easy to flip the cushion up and lean if you want a better view forward.

### BOAT FOR YOUR BUCK

As well as a chair in front of the helm for a navigator, there is also an L-shaped seating area to port where two or three could sit and enjoy the journey and even more could congregate on the sunpads forward of the helm if conditions allow.

The hardtop fitted to our test boat is not standard but the yard is unlikely to send many out of the factory without one. It doesn't help with the boat's skyscraper styling but it adds some finesse, and a sliding hatch means you can open the top deck up to the sun.

No new 50-odd-footer worth its salt goes without some sort of foredeck seating area, and true to form, the Absolute has its own take. Furthest forward there is a triple sunpad with hinging backrests and aft of that is a low bench with a backrest and slim walkway to allow quick movement from side deck to side deck. Absolute does fine detail well and the inclusion of large cupholders, speakers and a repeater for the Fusion stereo system are a good example of that. It really is a quality piece of kit all over. Mouldings are smooth and substantial, the stainless steel is immaculate and cabinetry is top notch. Crockery and glassware is stowed in fiddled drawers on soft-close runners, the bathroomware is high end and stylish and doors click shut on to anti-rattle pads.

The Absolute is not a cheap boat; the starting price is around £75,000 more than an equal-spec Princess 49 (though the 49 is quite a bit smaller and has no crew cabin) and there's an even bigger gap between the Italian boat and the Sealine F530 with the same engines. It has to be said though, that the Absolute feels the more expensive product with a finish that is a level above the Sealine and on par with the Princess and Sunseeker. The Sunseeker is

nearly £180,000 more than the Absolute, though it is substantially bigger (and feels it) and has 650hp more. Whether these differences are worth that much more money is up for debate, especially when there is such an undeniable overlap in styling.

With all the excitement around foredeck seating, it's important not to forget the role the cockpit plays in the way a flybridge cruiser works. With its galley located aft in the saloon, the cockpit is easily served and with a decent overhang and the option to have full covers, it's an outdoor area that can be used come rain or shine. At first glance, it seems odd for the yard to have squeezed a small sunpad into this area, but what's not immediately obvious is that you can slide the headrests towards the cockpit, slot in some cushions and end up with a full-size three-person sunpad. On the transom is the option of a concealed grill for waterside BBQs and unlike the Sunseeker, this bar also has a sink so you can clean up easily.

Inside the saloon, a step up from galley level takes you into the main internal seating area, where you feel the benefit of those gigantic saloon windows the most. The seating is spread across the full width of the saloon with the television stowing neatly behind the sofa on the starboard side. There are more quality touches here, like the table which has a chunky walnut top, a pedestal that looks like it could take a direct hit from a missile and beautifully machined supports that slide out to sit beneath the unfolded table leaves.

### ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is where you feel the most benefit from the boat's height, especially in the midships master cabin which has bags of headroom and an almost totally flat floor, save for small ridges on either side of the bed. There's no messing around with chaise longues or mini dinettes, just a compact sofa and a big dresser opposite with a decent amount of drawer storage. The ensuite is lovely and gets a really spacious shower cubicle with an offset sink tucked in the corner.

The VIP cabin is a beauty and as well as a fabulous ensuite (that is also the day heads and shared with the twin guest cabin), it has huge amounts of natural light thanks to the massive triple windows on either side and a large, round opening port to supply a bit of ventilation.

The crew cabin is an €11,800 option but it's a good one to have. Its size and the fact that it has its own toilet means you could host guests here for the occasional night. And if not, just pack it full of gear and use it as a very well-furnished lazarette.



A frosted glass panel can close the galley off from the saloon



Those huge saloon windows have the best effect at the dinette



Triple windows and an opening port on each side of the VIP cabin



The twin cabin feels plush and classy; it shares the VIP ensuite



The VIP ensuite

Plenty of storage



There are small ridges on either side of the double bed but the headroom is still good



## A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

### COCKPIT SUNPAD

The sunpad in the cockpit extends forward to create enough space for three to stretch out. The optional sunshade, as well as deflecting prying eyes on the quayside, offers protection from low-hanging evening sun and keeps the heat at bay.



### A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

The basics are done well on the 50 Fly. All of the boat's crockery, glassware and cutlery is stowed safely in dedicated fiddled drawers, fitted with soft-close mechanisms and tucked away in the cabinet opposite the galley.



### WASHER-DRYER

Absolute provides a washer-dryer located outside the master cabin as an option, but charging €4,026 for the privilege seems a little steep for what is essentially a standard household appliance.



### ENGINEROOM

The engineroom is accessed via a hatch in the cockpit and though there is a steep ladder to negotiate to get into it, once in, the amount of headroom and space around the engines is impressive. There's lashings of insulation in situ and all pipework and cables are neatly labelled, including flow direction for fluids.



*The fit and finish is very impressive and a genuine air of quality helps justify its bullish pricing*

**VERDICT**

The 50 Fly is a boat with a lot going for it but there will be that question mark over mid-season performance with the solitary engine choice and no option to upgrade. That being said, on the evidence of this test and this test alone, the performance was perfectly good, unless you're after a boat that can cruise at 30 knots. And if it's an enticing driving experience you're after then the laid-back 50 Fly may leave you feeling a little cold with its woolly steering and ponderous turning circle.

If you're satisfied with the performance then there's an awful lot to like on board and a massive amount of space to enjoy. The deck spaces are cleverly designed and equally generous, and the interior is as spacious and

comfortable as it is bursting with natural light. The fit and finish is very impressive and a genuine air of quality helps justify its bullish pricing. The two things which may hold it back, at least in Britain, is the lack of a UK dealer and a brand name that many British buyers still consider to be a fringe player.

These things can all be changed, of course – in many Mediterranean countries, Absolute is already held in high esteem, but it will take time and money to lure British buyers away from the wealth of homegrown talent. Make no mistake though, the 50 Fly is a very good boat that deserves to be considered alongside the likes of Sealine, Princess and Sunseeker. **MBY**  
**Contact** Absolute. Tel: +39 0523 354011.  
**Web:** www.absoluteyachts.com

**THE HELM VIEW**



The dash is covered in class materials and their dark colour reduces glare well

Space for two 16in displays at the helm is great to have

These exposed screwheads let the side down a little. A neater solution would be better

The simple steering wheel design looks the part and it feels fantastic in your hands

The flybridge wet-bar gives you the convenience of being able to cook and keep drinks cool without going to the galley



The market demands a hardtop option but it does nothing for the 50 Fly's top-heavy looks

The sunpads with tilting headrests are optional but the bench beneath the windscreen is a nice touch, as is the walkthrough



Some will see this as a gimmick that will go unused but at least this transom wet-bar has a sink so it's easy to clean up



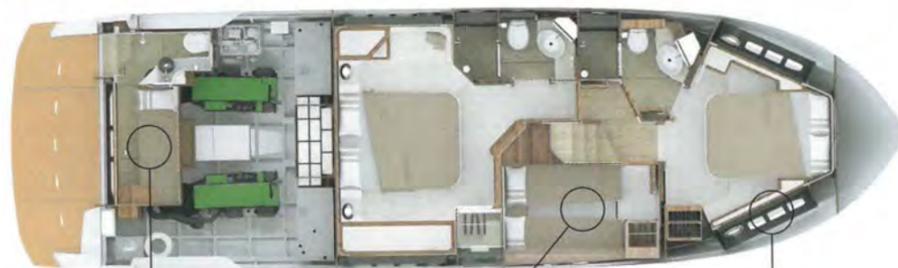
Nothing overly flash about the design of the flybridge helm but it looks smart and is easy to use. Seats here are excellent



**THE DATA**

LENGTH OVERALL 49ft 10in (15.20m)

BEAM 14ft 6in (4.43m)



The crew cabin is a €14,000 option but it is useable as a guest cabin on an ad-hoc basis

This cabin is a good one thanks to a pair of single beds and impressive light and ventilation from large ports

The size of the windows in the forward sections of the hull make for a very bright VIP cabin

**FUEL CAPACITY**  
352 imp gal (1,600 litres)  
**WATER CAPACITY**  
99 imp gal (460 litres)  
**DRAUGHT**  
4ft 3in (1.3m)  
**RCD CATEGORY**  
B for 14 people  
**DESIGNERS**  
Absolute Yachts  
**DISPLACEMENT**  
22.6 tonnes

**PERFORMANCE**

**TEST ENGINES** Volvo Penta IPS600. Twin 435hp @ 3,600rpm. 6-cylinder, 5.5-litre diesels

FIGURES	ECO	1,200	1,400	2,000	2,600	2,800	FAST	MAX
RPM	1,000	1,200	1,400	2,000	2,600	2,800	3,200	3,600
Speed	5.2	6.3	7.6	9.7	12.9	15.8	24.5	28.1
LPH	6.0	8.8	17.1	45.2	99.2	114	140	169
GPH	1.32	1.94	3.76	9.94	21.8	25.1	30.8	37.2
MPG	3.94	3.25	2.02	0.98	0.59	0.63	0.80	0.76
Range	1,109	916	569	275	166	177	224	213

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)	Helm	55	52	53	58	63	63	65	67
Saloon	56	58	59	65	68	68	70	73	73
Cockpit	68	70	71	73	76	77	78	79	79

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures taken from on-board fuel gauges; your figures may vary considerably. F1 and calm seas for trial. All prices include Italian VAT @ 22%

**THE COSTS & OPTIONS**

Price from	€804,000
Price as tested	€1.09m
Bow thruster	€7,608
Crew cabin fit-out	€14,396
Upgraded electrical system, 20kW generator & 60,000BTU air-conditioning	€70,882
BBQ and sink on transom	€4,270
Hardtop with sliding hatch	€18,300
Privacy shade in cockpit	€3,660
Hydraulic bathing platform (450kg)	€23,668
Teak side decks	€9,760
Full set of crockery and cutlery (x6)	€5,280
Bow sundeck with reclining backrests	€4,880

= Options on test boat

**RIVALS**

**Sealine F530**  
**Price from £548,544**  
 The looks are an acquired taste but the F530 is brimming with space and natural light.  
**Buy the test:** mby.com/F530



**Sunseeker Manhattan 52**  
**Price from £908,400**  
 Available with shafts or IPS and feels very big inside, but it is expensive.  
**Buy the test:** mby.com/m52

