



ABSOLUTE 64 FLY

More glazing than a greenhouse and a masterclass in the use of IPS, can Absolute's new clever cruiser steal customers away from the big British yards?

Text: **Jack Haines** Photos: **Absolute**

Absolute is an interesting beast. The Italian yard does wonderful things with IPS, produces rakish, interesting, if slightly divisive designs, and always delivers when it comes to interior space, especially in the cabins. But can it do enough to prise buyers, especially those in the UK, away from home-grown talent?

The 64 Fly is the second largest boat in Absolute's flybridge range so this is a great opportunity to see what it can do at this premium and highly competitive end of the scale. Every European manufacturer worth its



salt has a 65ft cruiser as a cornerstone of its range. It's a crucial rung in a yard's ladder – a boat of this size can still be handled by two people but has the space, comfort and technology for long stints on board.

Design and styling are always key talking points when it comes to Absolute and with the 64 we may have hit a critical mass when it comes to on-board glazing. If it managed to fit any more glass into the hull and superstructure then you would essentially be cruising around in an IPS-propelled greenhouse.

Inside the cabins, all of that glass has a transformative effect on the amount of light that streams in. The master suite amidships and the ensuite VIP get three panes of glass on

each side of the cabin plus an opening porthole to provide ventilation. They are also set at the same height as the headboards so you have a lovely view out over of the water from the comfort of your bed. The effect is greatest in the VIP where the funky, angled berth means the port-side window is actually at the end of the bed. The position of the berth means the dressing table can go on a raised plinth in the point of the bow, where the bed would be in most forward cabins. It's a neat idea, which I'm surprised hasn't been done before, as the area is the perfect shape for it.

In the saloon, despite how large the windows look from the outside, the view out didn't quite meet expectations. The internal

structure obstructs what should be a fantastic view but light does flood in to brighten the area.

The amidships galley works very well on a boat of this length meaning the person in the galley not only gets an elevated view out but the central location means they can still interact with those relaxing in the saloon. It's actually a very good compromise between having the galley tucked away and out of sight, as in a galley-down layout, and having it located at the aft end of the saloon. You get the benefits of having the kitchen on the right deck to serve the saloon and cockpit without a set of stairs in the way, yet it's hidden away enough that you don't have stacks of plates and food prep gubbins staring at you from just inside

Inside the cabins, all that glass has a transformative effect and you even have a lovely view out across the water from your bed

the cockpit doors. A domestic fridge/freezer and abundant storage – including individual fiddles for cutlery and crockery and an illuminated glassware cupboard in the lounge area – are great for longer cruises.

The seating aft of the galley is spacious and comfortable and a more formal dining area forward is handily located adjacent to the galley, making it easy to pass food over. A couple of adjustments are needed, though, one being the somewhat redundant open shelves just inside the cockpit doors, which will deposit their contents all over the floor at even a hint of a beam sea. And the small bench adjacent to the helm isn't really big enough for one person, never mind the two it's designed for, and would be more valuable as an area to stow and study paper charts.

A SECRET SUITE?

There's only the four-cabin layout available, which isn't an issue but some rivals do offer a more spacious tri-cabin layout at the owner's request. Thankfully, the master cabin on the 64 is already gigantic. There's enough headroom to host a rugby team's social and good storage including a large hanging locker, low-level cupboard storage and a compact vanity unit. The test boat had a small sofa beneath the port hull window but I would specify the two-person dinette, as seen on the 56 Fly, because I love the idea of a quiet spot for a couple to have breakfast away from guests, especially as this cabin has its own fridge.

The VIP cabin stands out thanks to its offset berth, which means you can walk around the bed easily, and the space where the head of the bed would normally be is a spacious vanity unit. The crew cabin also deserves a mention because thanks to its twin berths (single is an option), good ensuite and generous natural light from the transom glazing, it could be considered another, very private, guest cabin.

The flybridge is accessed via sturdy steps with large, safe treads and a handy railing at the top to clutch on to on the way through. A comprehensive wet-bar including griddle, fridge, sink and icemaker is opposite the main bulk of seating and a three-person forward-facing bench, which converts quickly into a sunpad, is opposite the twin helm.

Aft, our test boat had clear space for a pair of sunpads but this area can hold the tender if you don't want it on the optional hi-lo bathing platform. It's good to see two large dedicated storage bins here too, invaluable on the top

deck for stowing canvas and other kit. One cool feature is the large showerhead built in to the radar arch for a quick flybridge refresh and there's even a proper drainage grate below to whip the water away.

THE BEST FOR IPS?

Absolute has always been a big advocate of Volvo's IPS pod-drive system and has stayed loyal to it on the 64. The standard engines are twin 750hp IPS950 but we tested the 900hp IPS1200 upgrade.

We started the sea trial from the flybridge, where you notice just how astonishingly quiet the 64 is. If they had told me it was running on a pair of electric drives I wouldn't have been surprised, such is the calm on the top deck. The steering is light and positive but certainly more sedate than the Princess 64 or Sunseeker Manhattan 63. For easy, laid-back cruising, though, it fits the bill perfectly. The driving position is good at both helms but, unlike the lower helm, the upper driving position has the throttles outboard of the IPS joystick and personally I would want that the other way around, as it's a stretch to adjust the speed.

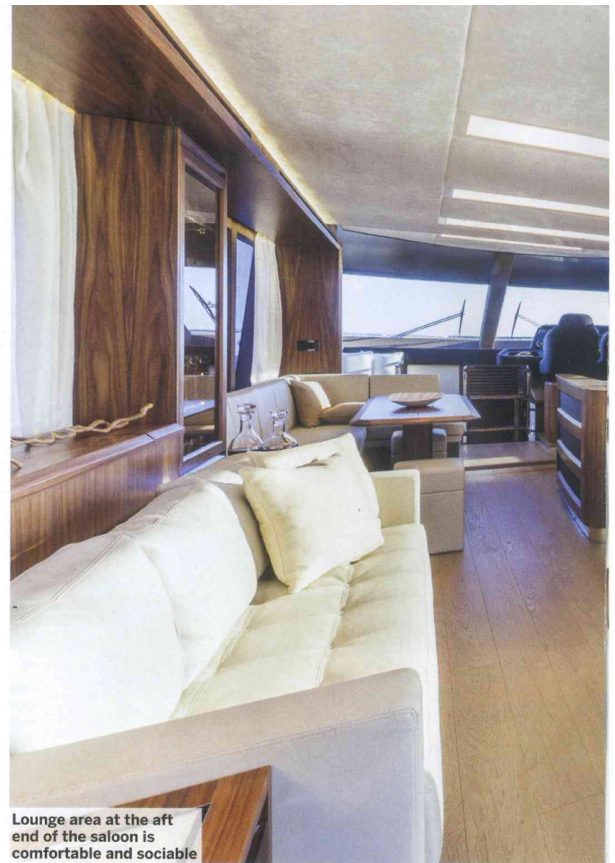
We managed a healthy top speed of 33.8 knots on test with the engines burning a modest 73gph but throttle back to a lazy cruising speed of 25 knots and the thirst reduces even further to just 49gph. Compare that to the shaftdriven Fairline Squadron 65 with twin 1,200hp MAN V10s, which burns 67gph at 25 knots, and you begin to see how effective IPS can be when it comes to making your fuel go further.

The sea off Genoa was extremely kind; the only waves in sight being created by our own props and the odd fishing boat plodding across the horizon. Any waves we did take on were dispatched comfortably with soft landings but the odd squeak did emerge from the dash and some parts of the furniture.

VERDICT

So where does the Absolute fit in to the array of talented European 65ft cruisers? It has four good cabins as standard (five if you include the excellent crew cabin), a refined and sophisticated ride, a 30-knot-plus top speed and the benefit of joystick control – ideal if there will regularly be just two of you on board. But is it a viable alternative to its rivals?

At first glimpse there doesn't seem to be an individual knock-out blow that would persuade you away from the more popular



Lounge area at the aft end of the saloon is comfortable and sociable
Midships galley is in a great spot with excellent views out for the cook



Angled berth in the VIP cabin means the dresser is in the point of the bow





Spacious master ensuite gets marble tops and a very large separate shower cubicle



Huge amounts of floor space in the master



A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

CREW CABIN

A £12,745 option but one that is well worth a tick. It's so light and spacious it could easily be used as an extra guest cabin, especially for kids and it has an ensuite.



GALLEY STORAGE

Nothing brings a smile to our faces like some dedicated fiddles. These, as you can see, are for the boat's crockery but even individual cutlery gets a slot.



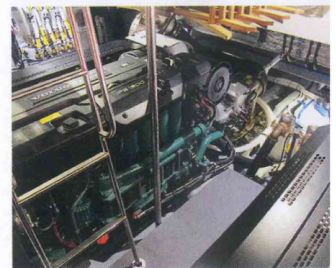
STRANGE SEATS

This area seems a bit rushed. The seating is awkward and uncomfortable, it would have been better to include some sort of chart area instead.



ENGINE ROOM

Access is excellent from a door in the transom and there are clever details like extensive labelling of pipes and parts plus bespoke storage for the folding cockpit chairs. Access to the pods is also good.



THE RIVALS

SUNSEEKER MANHATTAN 63 Price from £1.74m

A real hoot to drive for such a large machine and beautifully made too.

BUY THE TEST

AZIMUT 64 Price from £1.63m

No IPS option but an effortlessly classy customer packed with Italian flair.

BUY THE TEST





The aft end of the flybridge can stow the tender if needed. We love the shower built in to the radar arch



Tall windscreen is close to the helm and provides good protection from buffeting

Flybridge helm is clean and classy with plenty of space for instruments but I would move the throttles inboard



THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 64ft 0in (19.5m)

BEAM
16ft 11in
(4.91m)



If you don't want the crew cabin option this area can simply be used as a vast storage space

Majority of the master cabin floor is totally flat, adding to the feeling of space

The dressing table in the VIP fits snugly in the space in the bow left by the angled double bed

FUEL CAPACITY

660 imp gal (3,002 litres)

WATER CAPACITY

143 imp gal (651 litres)

DRAUGHT

5ft 4in (1.6m)

RCD CATEGORY

B (for 16 people)

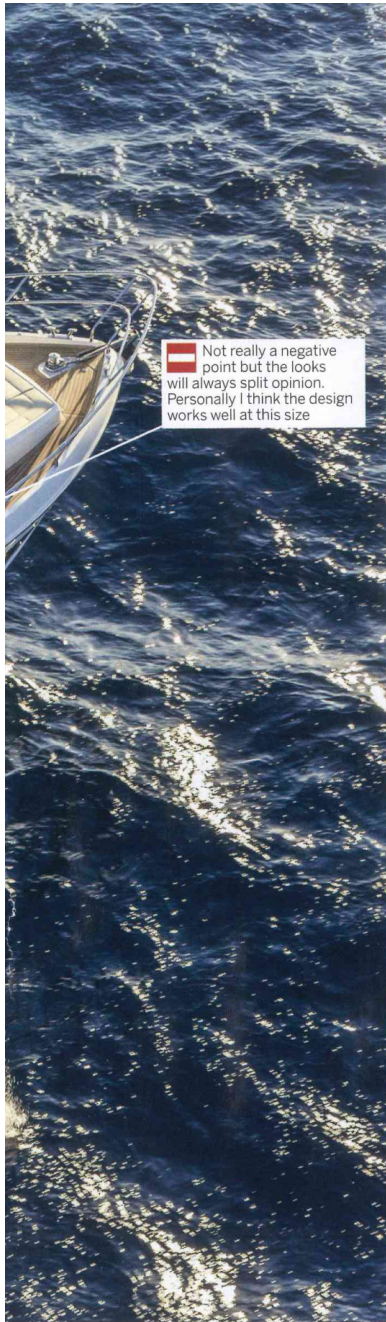
DESIGNERS

Absolute

DISPLACEMENT

33.3 tonnes

Not only does the Absolute 64 use IPS, it uses it very well with fuel figures that would embarrass most of its rivals



Not really a negative point but the looks will always split opinion. Personally I think the design works well at this size

brands. It does everything well but not so well that it overshadows the competition. The Italian yard is also off to a tough start because it doesn't currently have a UK dealer, although British buyers can go directly to the factory.

However, if you want IPS at this size then apart from the Sunseeker this really is your only option. Not only does it use IPS but it uses it very well with fuel figures that would embarrass most of its rivals.

It is a well-priced package, too. Gone are the days when an Absolute would start off looking great value until you discovered the amount of option box ticking that needed to be done to

get it up to a respectable spec. It starts at £1.85m with the largest IPS1200 engines and the standard spec includes such goodies as air-con, generator and a dishwasher. The only notable option being the £12,745 crew cabin fit-out and it seems a little churlish to make people pay over £6,000 for a cockpit table.

Absolute faces an uphill battle tearing people away from the big names in the UK but on the evidence of this test and the yard's ongoing success in Europe, the 64 Fly is doing far more than simply making up the numbers. **MBY**

Contact Absolute. See Absolute website for dealers www.absoluteyachts.com

THE HELM VIEW



Mock carbon fibre looks a little cheap as do the exposed screw heads holding it to the dashboard

View out from the lower helm is excellent throughout the rev range. I didn't touch the tabs once

Boat management system sensibly supplemented by rocker switches for major functions

Mercedes-style air vents look good and keep the skipper cool when things get stuffy

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Volvo Penta IPS1200. Twin 900hp @ 2,370rpm. 6-cylinder, 12.8-litre diesels.

MBY TEST FIGURES						ECO	FAST	MAX
RPM	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,370
Speed	9.5	11.3	12.7	17.0	20.3	25.3	30.0	33.8
LPH	45	74	112	150	185	223	270	333
GPH	9.9	16.3	24.6	33.0	40.7	49.1	59.4	73.3
MPG	1.0	0.69	0.52	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.51	0.46
Range	507	367	272	272	263	272	267	244

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauges, your figures may vary considerably. All prices include UK VAT, 40% fuel, 50% water, 6 crew + safety stores no tender, 15°C air temp, calm F1 for trials.

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from	£1.43 million (IPS900)
Price as tested	£1.86 million (IPS1200)
20kW generator + air-con	std
Crew cabin fit-out	£12,745
Cockpit table plus four chairs	£6,422
Teak flybridge	£17,290
Electro-hydraulic flybridge bimini	£14,326
Third joystick in the cockpit	£11,856
Bow thruster	£8,398
Passarelle	£23,021
Raymarine E125 plotter + repeater	std
Seakeeper M8000 gyro stabiliser	£126,453

= Fitted on test boat