

ABSOLUTE 68 NAVETTA

Behind its bold exterior the 68 Navetta demonstrates some outside-the-box design and a quite brilliant interior layout. We head to its home turf to put it to the test

Words Jack Haines



The 68 Navetta will cruise comfortably at 22 knots and manage 25 knots flat out



To appreciate Absolute's eye for detail you have to head to a cupboard in the 68 Navetta's galley. An odd place to start, I'll admit, but inside there you find the boat's elegant stemware, each piece fitted with a magnetised circle on its base. The reason for this becomes abundantly clear when you place one of the glasses on the dinette table, where a thin strip of ferrous metal housed within the table top clamps it down hard on the surface, meaning the glass won't topple over if the boat sways. It's the same story with the flybridge table, too, and within the cupboard itself, meaning all of the glassware can be stored upright and safely glued in place by this brilliant design.

Evidence of Absolute's boat-building flair is on show throughout the 68. Take the engineroom, which can be accessed via a deck hatch in the cockpit or watertight door in the crew cabin bulkhead and has near-standing headroom around the two neatly installed Volvo Penta IPS1200 engines. From here you have to prod yourself and recall that this boat isn't even 70ft in length. How about the space forward on the lower deck, beneath the raised master suite? Some shipyards would leave this space to go to waste but Absolute has transformed it into a utility and dry storage space, and even integrated rack storage into the boat's structural frame. Then there is the abundance of deck storage, 23in-wide side decks with covered walkways, the substantial mooring gear, hefty stainless steel with smooth, rounded top rails and gates in the aft bulwarks to ease side-to boarding. The list is practically endless and endows the 68 Navetta with the air of a serious long-range cruising machine, which contradicts its bombastic appearance and pod-drive-only powertrain.

SPEED AND FINESSE

Despite the best efforts of the press to pigeonhole the Navetta range as trawlers, Absolute has never subscribed to this enforced genre. Navetta translates into English most directly as "shuttle" and when you see the way the 68 goes about its business that appears an apt description. IPS (still) has its critics but the way the twin 900hp IPS1200 units quietly and without raising the bow propel this boat to the horizon is reminiscent of a high-powered bullet train in its effortlessness and quite staggering refinement.

There's something of the Shuttle about the lower helm as well, where deeply upholstered chairs for the captain and navigator sit before a towering, businesslike dashboard, which sprouts three 21in Garmin MFDs that can be configured to display whatever information the skipper requires. To port, there is another 24in screen – again customisable – that is in the perfect position for the navigator to do detailed route planning or keep a close eye on the radar when cruising in fog or after dark. A control pad on the arm of the captain's chair gives the skipper fingertip control of all four of these screens without having to move away from the seat or take their eyes off the route ahead for too long.

Visibility is outstanding thanks to the single-piece windscreen and despite being so far forward in the wheelhouse the view aft is given a significant boost by a drop-down panel in the bulkhead, which allows those at the helm to see astern before making hard turns. This same partition and the fact that the bridge is a couple of steps up from the main deck means that captain and crew can section themselves off from the saloon if the owner and their

Soft curves and subtle lighting in the spacious saloon create a relaxed atmosphere



guests in the saloon want some privacy on passage. Head down the short run of steps away from the helm and you can either move aft to the bright, contemporary saloon, out on to deck via a watertight side door or down a spiral staircase to the lower deck and the guest accommodation. We will come to the master suite later (it's worth the wait) but, with the 68, Absolute has in effect created two master cabins. Many craft of similar dimensions would be happy to deliver the owner the sort of cabin that sits amidships here, never mind guests. With the full extent of the boat's beam in play there is space to include a walkaround double bed, vanity station, large wardrobe and an ensuite that occupies the entire port side of the cabin with opaque sliding doors for privacy. Behind them, the toilet and

shower compartments are split so they can be used by two people at the same time and a typically Absolute touch is the vanity mirror, which drops down behind the sink at the touch of a button to unveil a round, opening porthole.

The twin guest cabins can't match this level of opulence but they are still comfortable spaces and the use of sliding doors throughout the lower deck opens up the communal areas and allows an easy flow between the cabins and day heads.

What of the actual master cabin, then? It is without question one of the most luxurious cabins you'll find on a sub-70ft boat and, again, it's Absolute's smart design that makes the very most of the space afforded by locating the suite forward on the main deck. Instead of mounting the bed in the traditional position at ▶



LEFT The central flybridge helm is very well designed and flanked by seating RIGHT There's a great connection between the galley and cockpit



The partition at the forward end of the saloon slides down to reveal the raised bridge

The way the twin IPS1200 units quietly propel this boat is reminiscent of a high-powered bullet train

the forward end of the cabin, the island double berth sits on the centreline, backing on to the aft bulkhead. This leaves space forward for a quite spectacular ensuite with twin sinks shrouded in sumptuous marble and a walk-in shower with a rainfall head embedded with LED spotlights and featuring a huge square window so you can have a wash with a view. It is a beautifully appointed bathroom, as practically executed as it is good to look at and worthy of a high-end hotel, never mind a boat. The interior suffers few compromises, and every cabin from the jaw-dropping master to the guest twins are designed intelligently and peppered with thoughtful touches.

PERFECTLY HONED HELM

Things are no less impressive on deck where the Navetta's extended flybridge is divided into open deck space aft for free-standing furniture and high-quality fixed seating amidships. I love the combination of low-slung, laid-back seating beneath the aft sunshade and the more upright seats around the table better suited to dining. The hardtop is an option that 99.9% of customers will tick and rightly so – it may cost €60,000 but it makes the top deck far more usable in all conditions thanks to its retracting fabric sunroof and aft sun shade.

The upper helm isn't quite as sophisticated as the one downstairs but it's still an equally fabulous place from which to drive this over-50 tonne beast. Though this is a boat suited to straight line cruising at about 22 knots Absolute has still taken

the time to consider the driving position and dash ergonomics. As such the single helm seat is fully adjustable and has a bolster function, the chunky steering wheel is mounted on a tilt base and an adjustable wind deflector pops up from behind the dash moulding to improve protection from the breeze. Upper helms can so often be an afterthought on boats of this nature but the 68's is nigh on perfect. There may only be a single helm seat but because there is seating curved around both sides of it guests are able to sit up front with the skipper and enjoy the ride.

The 68 Navetta has a relaxed attitude to performance and handling, which suits the boat's nonchalant nature. There is the option to upgrade to a pair of IPS1350s with 1,000hp per side but personally I would put the €50,000 extra they cost towards the hard top because I don't think you'll feel much difference in day-to-day performance. In the midst of a stifling heatwave on a breathless day in northern Italy the hull had a particularly easy ride but my experience of the Navetta range leads me to believe that the 68 would be solid and confidence-inspiring in more challenging sea conditions. The steering is as light as whipped cream with very little feel, but this is par for the course with big IPS boats. Unless negotiating a particularly big swell it's probably best to let the autopilot take the strain of steering and leave the optional €154,000 Seakeeper 16 gyro stabiliser to earn its keep and iron out any creases. At least you can be safe in the knowledge that between the gyro and your magnetic wine glasses you're not going to waste a drop of wine through spillages.



The stunning main deck master suite sets the 68 Navetta apart



There is space for a bureau in the VIP cabin, amidships



One of a pair of well appointed twin guest cabins



The ensuite in the VIP has a split shower room and toilet



The vanity station to starboard in the VIP ensuite

The dashboard at the upper helm is clear, attractive and very well laid out



The Navetta range seems to improve with every new model that is introduced



Note the textured moulding on the flybridge wetbar, yet another classy touch



On the main deck, the cockpit and foredeck offer very comfortable areas to relax that are at opposing ends of the sun protection scale. The cockpit hunkers down beneath the considerable flybridge overhang and can be cordoned off from prying eyes by a sunshade that drops down between the flybridge supports. It's a big space that, thanks to a portion of the saloon doors that slides down into the countertop, connects well with the galley in its position aft in the saloon. Steps either side lead down to a full width hydraulic platform with mounting points for a tender.

The foredeck is the place to catch the sun or enjoy the breeze if cruising at displacement speed on a warm day. It's another intelligent area with sunpads that have adjustable backrests and a deep sofa arranged around a teak table that is large enough to span the walkway so that guests can perch on the aft end of the sunpad opposite. True to form Absolute has its eye on detail; integrated into the mouldings up here are large cup holders with drains in the bottom, pop-up LED lights and scalloped trays for holding loose items securely.

VERDICT

The Navetta range seems to improve with every new model that is introduced. They all feel far bigger than their LOA suggests and benefit from Absolute's thoughtful approach to design, even the little 48, but the 68 is the most complete package that I have tested in this line-up.

Not only that but, despite how big it appears as it looms above the quayside, the 68 would still be perfectly manageable as an owner-run boat, which is another reason why those super refined IPS pods and their joystick control make this the right drivetrain for the boat. If you are comfortable with the IPS engine options and can see past the divisive styling, the 68 Navetta has the potential to be a hugely rewarding boat to own. And you'll never get tired of showing off that magnetic wine glass trick to friends and family.

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ROOM WITH A VIEW

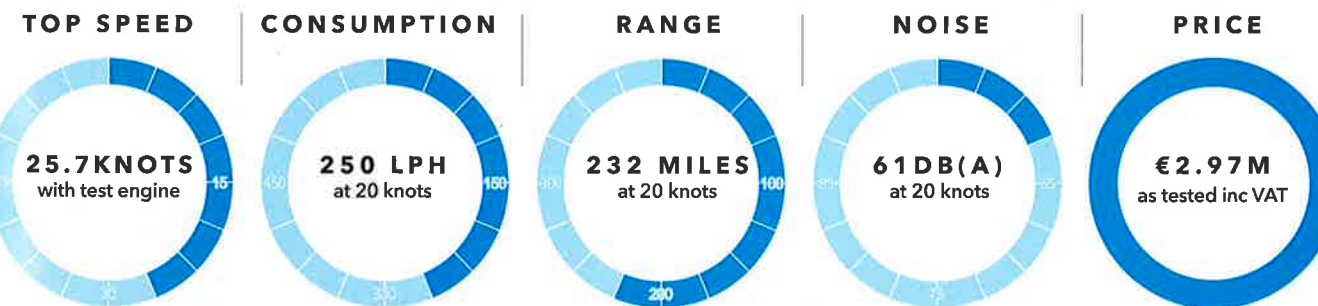
The single-piece screen gives a commanding view over the foredeck

SCREENS
The three 21in MFDs are well positioned at the top of the dashboard

TAKE CONTROL
This keypad gives full control of the MFDs from the helm chair



- CREW SPACE**
Twin berths here plus a bathroom and direct access to the engine room
- ENGINE ROOM**
The engine installation is immaculate and access to service items very good
- SLIDE AWAY**
The twin berths in the port guest cabin slide together to make a double bed
- FOREDECK**
Big seating area and sunpads make for a comfortable private living space



SPECIFICATION

- LOA 67ft 4in (20.53m)
- Beam 18ft 6in (5.63m)
- Draught 5ft 9in (1.75m)
- Displacement tonnes 52.2 tonnes (light)
- Fuel capacity 3,500 litres
- Water capacity 800 litres
- RCD B for 16 people
- Designer Absolute Yachts

COSTS & OPTIONS

- Price from €2.3m ex VAT
- Proportional bow thruster €12,100
- Electro-hydraulic passerelle €28,000
- Twin generators (27Kw + 19Kw) €25,400
- Seakeeper 16 gyroscopic stabiliser €154,000
- Flybridge hard top €62,000
- Solid teak on flybridge floor €41,000
- Hydraulic bathing platform (600kg) €44,000
- KVH satellite TV €16,200
- 80kg Ultra anchor €6,000

PERFORMANCE

Test engines Volvo Penta IPS1200. Twin 900hp @ 2,300rpm. 12.8-litre, 6-cylinder diesels

	ECO	1,500	1,700	1,800	2,000	FAST	2,250	MAX
RPM	1,000	1,500	1,700	1,800	2,000	2,100	2,250	2,300
KNOTS	8.4	12.0	13.6	15.2	19.0	20.7	22.6	25.7
LITRES PER HOUR	35.5	107	156	174	227	250	281	326
LITRES PER NM	4.22	8.92	11.8	11.4	11.9	12.1	12.4	12.7
RANGE IN NM	462	314	244	245	234	232	225	221
NOISE IN Db(A)	55	55	60	60	60	61	60	63

Speed in knots. Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices exclude VAT. 32% fuel, 28% water, 4 crew + safety stores. 31 degrees air temperature, F1 and calm for sea trial.