

ITALIAN SPECIAL



ABSOLUTE NAVETTA 73

The bravest design yet from this Italian yard has paid dividends in terms of space, light and fuel efficiency

Words **Alan Harper**





The comprehensive upper helm station



A transom locker keeps your lines and fenders tidy



The flybridge is immense and has access from both the cockpit and saloon



The master cabin sits forward on its own level, down six steps from the main deck



The main deck saloon and free-standing dining table wouldn't look out of place on a 90ft superyacht



The wide side decks and cockpit are exceptionally safe and sheltered

From down on the pontoon, it seems huge, inelegant and angular. Moored stern to the quay, it appears roomy and inviting. Seen out on the water, it looks purposeful and businesslike. There is no angle from which the new Absolute Navetta 73 can be described as pretty, but I doubt the yard's design department is losing much sleep over that. Absolute has always enjoyed ploughing its own individual furrow and in the 15 years of its existence, it has created a unique persona for itself as a company whose boats are often unusual and sometimes brilliant, but never boring.

The Navetta 73 is not an especially beamy boat for its length, but with its massive square stern, it looks like it is. That impression is heightened by a huge full-beam flybridge which completely shades the cockpit and, for most of their length, the side decks too. It was unveiled at the Cannes Yachting Festival last September and sat among the gleaming, sleek and delicate-looking boats like a bouncer surrounded by bridesmaids.

Any larger-than-life exterior is, naturally, built around an equally voluminous interior. The Navetta's hull carries its beam well forward, at both gunwale and waterline, and with the engineroom bulkhead situated some way aft of midships, there is plenty of room for accommodation.

The layout is unusual. The master cabin sits forward on its own level, down six steps from the main deck but significantly higher than the lower deck – a decision forced on the designers by the limited space available down in that narrow bow. So it has flat floors, a spacious head and shower compartment behind glass double doors in the bows, and gigantic rectangular windows. A properly usable walk-in wardrobe and plenty of ancillary lockers and drawers provide plenty of stowage for clothes, albeit with a lack of full-length hanging space. The bed is enormous and in common with all the guest cabins, headroom is a generous 6ft 6in (1.98m). It seemed perverse not to fit under-berth drawers as well – why ever not? – but the reason for that became plain soon enough.

Down on the lower deck, which is reached via the companionway on the starboard side of the saloon, the midships

VIP cabin can't quite compete with the owner's, but it nevertheless shares a luxurious sense of space. Placing the sink under the port-side window and putting the shower and heads in separate compartments either side of it, clearly places a higher premium on light and space below decks than on keeping the plumbing hidden from view, which evinces a proper sense of priorities.

SPACE TO SPARE

At first, the port VIP cabin hardly seems to merit such a title, but slide open that forward door and it turns out to have a vast dressing room, down two steps. Although it's tucked into the void space beneath the master cabin's double berth (aha!), it still has more than 6ft (1.85m) of headroom. This area obviously doesn't show up on the layout diagram but I can assure you it's real, and with shelving, lockers and hanging space, it has much to recommend it.

The fourth cabin is a twin berth on the starboard side with just a hanging locker in which to stow your stuff, but the beds are a full 6ft 6in (1.98m) long. If you asked nicely, the shipyard might fit a door to provide it with ensuite access to the day head at the bottom of the companionway.

That vertical windscreen isn't just purposeful-looking and easy to see through – it also allows the wheelhouse to be set pretty far forward, without encroaching on the foredeck. This, of course, leaves plenty of space on the rest of the main deck, while big side windows ensure the saloon feels as spacious as it looks, even while sacrificing width to the Navetta's excellent side decks. These are 18in (46cm) wide and secure behind a guardrail height of 32in (81cm).

Set between saloon and wheelhouse, the galley has its own access to the side deck and wheelhouse, while the sliding door to starboard means that crew and guest areas can be separated if necessary. It is rather long and thin, but well endowed with refrigeration, freezer and stowage space. Drawers and lockers for crockery and glassware can be found in the lobby outside. The wheelhouse has its own flybridge companionway for rapid access to the upper helm, and is also reasonably well placed to use the galley's door out to the side deck.

If you do cruise with crew, you shouldn't have too many complaints about the cabin

Our wake came in useful for trying out that fine entry, which sliced through it like butter with no discernible check on our progress

in the stern. On our test boat, it was equipped with a single berth – more can be fitted on request – a separate head and shower compartment, a convertible dinette, a washer-dryer, some useful lockers and extra fridge and freezer space. Headroom comes in at 6ft 7in (2.01m).

Various choices of interior finish are available. The boat exhibited at Cannes had Minotti furniture inside and Paola Lenti chairs up on the flybridge, with dark gloss walnut and elm veneers used throughout the interior, floors of oak, fabric-clad bulkheads and leather and lacquer trim. Fitted as standard, the yacht's magnetic surfaces are a fun party piece: both the dining table and the flybridge table are constructed with a thin steel sheet beneath the veneer so that the yacht's compatible wine glasses – each with a small magnet set into the base – don't fall over and smash.

Like all of its Absolute stablemates since 2008, the Navetta is designed solely around Volvo's IPS system. It might seem a surprisingly big and weighty craft for pod drives and indeed, its only engine option is the largest available, the 1,000hp IPS1350, which compares with the 1,400hp or 1,550hp units that you might expect to find on more conventional shaftdrive yachts of this size.

PERFORMANCE

With its plumb bow and very fine entry, the 73's hull shape has a faintly Edwardian look about it, although the naval architects of 100 years ago would never have tried to match the Navetta's ample bulk with any ideas of high performance – which, by the standards of those times, the Navetta possesses in abundance. As an understanding of planing hull characteristics began to mature in design circles during the

1930s and '40s, it was realised that simply marrying a knife-like bow with load-bearing midships and aft sections was not the ideal compromise. If the deadrise angle changed too abruptly, the resultant impact zone could pound both the boat and its crew to pieces, as many a young seaman in the torpedo boats of the time could testify.

Of course, the Navetta is not designed to achieve the 40 knots or more of the plywood navy, but to ensure a soft ride in a head sea, its deadrise still decreases at a fairly restrained rate, as seen in the line of the chine, which starts high and proud on the stem and meets the waterline around a third of the way back to the transom as the bottom flattens out, quite gradually, to a shallow 7.4° right aft.

Another potential side effect of a superfine entry is the deluge of spray which it throws up at speed, and to counter this, the Navetta has a broad flat at the chine that continues right around the stem, helping keep the sea where it belongs.

As so often seems to be the case whenever there is an intriguing and unusual hull to test, conditions on the day were about as challenging as the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens. A light breeze could lift no more than a modest chop on the waters of the Baie de Cannes. It would have been fun in a RIB, but the Navetta simply didn't notice.

Acceleration was steady and linear with no discernible 'hump' as the broad, flat lifting surfaces did their thing. The boat simply climbed out of the hole and kept going, longitudinal trim increasing gradually once hull speed was exceeded and reaching 5° at our maximum of 25.6 knots. Acceleration had a surprising urge to it. A low planing speed can be useful in a cruising yacht, as it allows you to make progress even if conditions have forced you to ease back on the throttles. The



Note the flat floor and generous headroom in the main deck owner's cabin

Navetta's flat aft sections kept it securely on the plane at just 14 knots – although the massive wake spreading out astern was a quick antidote to any delusions of hydrodynamic efficiency.

Of course, our wake came in useful for trying out that fine entry, which sliced through it like butter with little vertical acceleration and no discernible check on our progress. It felt quite impressive. We kept the Seakeeper gyro stabiliser switched off and the trim tabs fully up, and the Navetta handled quite conventionally, turning with a slight inward heel and proving more nimble and enjoyable to drive than it looks.



The main VIP cabin is as big as some master cabins



The port VIP cabin has its own dressing room



A CLOSER LOOK

ABSOLUTE NAVETTA 73

FINE FLOOR HATCHES

Held securely in place by their own weight on soft rubber seals, these thick access hatches in the soles have a mix of quality and practicality.



ROOM WITH A VIEW

A view while brushing your teeth is nice, but why not share it with the rest of the cabin? It lets light into the main VIP suite and makes it feel more roomy.



A REAL DRESSING ROOM

The port VIP's fab dressing room has lots of shelves, hanging space and 6ft 1in headroom (1.85m), plus room to turn around and even get dressed.



His and hers sinks in the owner's ensuite bathroom



All four cabins have their own bathrooms

Even the twin cabin has plenty of headroom



ENGINE ROOM

With easy access, flat-mounted engines, 6ft 2in (1.88m) of headroom over the treadplate walkways and plenty of space to get at everything except the IPS drives which are rather buried down the back, the engine room is a terrific space.

The main deck galley has access from the side decks as well as the saloon so that when professional crew are employed, they can come and go without disturbing guests



The flybridge hardtop has a large fabric sunroof over the helm and bar/dining areas



Cutaway bulwarks maximise views while sturdy twin grabrails maintain side deck safety and make it easy to hang fenders

Chine flats deflect spray away from the slender stem and increase space in the master suite

THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 72ft 8in (22.19m)

BEAM
18ft 4in
(5.60m)



There's plenty of space behind the engines for a generous full-beam crew cabin

The sink is in the VIP cabin but the loo and shower compartments are separate

The master bathroom's position in the bow means it is far larger than the usual midships affair

FUEL CAPACITY
880 imp gal (4,000 litres)
WATER CAPACITY
244 imp gal (1,110 litres)
DRAUGHT
5ft 4in (1.62m)
DISPLACEMENT
57.7 tonnes (light)
RCD CATEGORY
B for 18 people
DESIGNER
Absolute

You don't build a boat with such attention-grabbing looks if you want it to blend in

VERDICT

At first glance, it's clear Absolute's Navetta 73 is offering something out of the ordinary. You don't build a boat with such attention-grabbing looks if you want it to blend in. And the shipyard is right to demand your attention, because this is an innovative craft which is worth seeking out for lots of reasons, especially the way in which the forward accommodation spaces are handled. The master cabin being on its own deck level creates lots of usable space below without the need for a separate, raised wheelhouse. Necessity is the mother of invention: the bow's shape forced the designers to raise the level of the forward suite, and their solution works brilliantly.

The Navetta also has an effective hull design which is notable not just for the way its razor-sharp bow slices through a chop, but because its acreage of flat lifting surfaces helps make it more fuel efficient than most of its counterparts. The low drag IPS pods also play a part. Packing less power, the 73 might not have the top speed of a Princess 75 but from tickover to 25 knots or so, it is burning much less fuel.

That just leaves its looks. But beauty isn't always an absolute. As Ayckbourn put it in *The Norman Conquests*, "Anybody I love is automatically beautiful." **MBY**

Contact See website for dealers.
Web: www.absoluteyachts.com

A sun awning on carbon-fibre poles can be deployed to provide shade for the foredeck seating and lounging area

THE HELM VIEW

A compass seems a bit of an afterthought, and should be easier to see

Lots of adjustable air conditioning vents to keep things cool

Moulded recess for Garmin GPS watch is fun, until you get another watch

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Twin Volvo Penta IPS 1350, 1,000hp
@ 2,400rpm, 6-cylinder, 12.8-litre diesels

		ECO	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	FAST	MAX
RPM	600	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,250	2,470
Speed	5.5	9.1	10.9	12.3	14.5	18.3	22.5	25.6
LPH	10	40	64	105	166	232	323	385
GPH	2.2	8.8	14.1	23.1	36.5	51.0	71.0	84.7
MPG	2.50	1.03	0.77	0.53	0.40	0.36	0.32	0.30
Range	1,760	728	545	375	279	252	223	213

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)

Helm	53	54	55	56	60	62	62	66
Master					60			
Mid cabin				69		74	76	

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures in imp gal. Range in nmi, allows for 20% reserve. Figures based on on-board gauges; your figures may vary. Limited sound figures due to time constraints. All prices include 20% VAT, 60% fuel, 80% water, 14 crew, safety stores only, 18°C air temp, F2-3 for sea trials

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from €2.78 million ex VAT

Price as tested approx £3.79 million inc VAT

Hydraulic passerelle	£33,108
Stern thruster	£14,204
Additional 9.5kW generator	£19,224
Seakeeper 16 gyro stabiliser	£156,996
Volvo DPS digital anchor	£33,322
Hardtop plus lighting	£65,148
Six screens at two helm stations	£75,828
Hydraulic bathing platform	£38,982
Engine room door from crew cabin	£4,058
Stainless-steel anchor upgrade	£5,981
Satellite TV dish	£17,088

= Options fitted (all prices converted from Euros at €1 = £0.89 and inclusive of 20% VAT)

RIVALS

AZIMUT MAGELLANO 76

Price from £3.52 million

More conventional-looking and beautifully finished with an advanced and efficient Bill Dixon hull design.

LAGOON 78

Price from £3.44 million

Twin hulls create vast deck spaces but similar levels of internal accommodation. Good for 19 knots from 1,020hp.

