

Salona ranger

The Salona 46 offers a performance cruiser with good looks and quality features at a very good price. Is it too good to be true? **Graham Snook** tests her to find out

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Salona Yachts might not be a household name like other, more established brands are, but that doesn't mean it should be discounted.

As performance cruisers go, its new 46 has a lot to offer those wanting a well-performing modern yacht with some quality build features found in more expensive yachts.

If you're unfamiliar with Salona Yachts, the company was founded in 2002 in Croatia and its line-up has five models, from 33'

(9.99m) to this, its new flagship, the 46 built in Solim, just north of Split on the Dalmatian coast.

With the 46, J&J Design has bucked the fashion of hard chines, lowering foredeck and twin rudders, instead, she has a modern but conservative hull shape. There is the hint of a soft chine in her aft sections along with a narrower and shorter waterline while at rest. Even with her wide clutter-free side decks, she has a modest rather than excessive beam aft, and she has a single deep speed rudder, to provide grip.

Before I continue, it would be amiss not to mention a few things about this boat. Firstly, she was hull no. 2, so still very early in the model's production life, also that she was shown at the Southampton boat show. I mention this because boat show boats can usually go one or two ways, they can be well kitted out and those viewing will find extras and a great finish on board or, due to whatever reason (supply, build time etc), the boat might have been rushed to make the show and therefore she might not be the best representation of the quality a customer will receive. Sadly, there was evidence that this boat was the latter (vener' sanded through on the saloon table, missing gas struts, and a few gaps where there oughtn't to be gaps), but she was by no means 'rushed' throughout. There were areas where the attention to detail was as a boat tester likes to see neatly finished under the slakes in the forward cabin, matching grain patterns along the locker fronts and plenty of nicely finished solid wood too.



There's an enclosed shelf above the table with room for instruments above that. The switch panel features the excellent SI marina battery monitor which is a nice touch. There were other really good features onboard, some, like the handrails overhead as well as lower grabrails at deck height, were easy to spot. Others, like the roving bilge pump in the galley locker or steel subframe to take the loads from keel, mast and chainplates less so. In the saloon, there is a 1.6m 5.6' bench seat to starboard (while it sounds short, the space beneath the chart table gives foot space - as long as the navigator isn't sitting at it). To port is the 1.9m 6.3' long U-shaped seating (with cushions in place) and the large saloon table. With the table open it's a bit of a squeeze past the chart table to get seated, but the table is vast. The central pedestal supports the unfolded table without the need for extra bracing. There's good under-seat storage aft with a large drawer giving simple access. There's also stowage under U-shaped seats to port, but the more easily accessible bench seat houses batteries. Beneath all the seating and furniture carcasses there are large vents to the bilge. The vents are flush with the floor so dust, hair, crumbs etc will end up in the bilge, as would dropped pens, jigsaw pieces, and small parts of children's toys etc. I'm in favour of bilges with good ventilation, but I'm unsure about grying detritus such as easy run. I'd be tempted to cover the inside of the vents with cloth and Hoover regularly. Into the forward cabin and the berth is long and wide. To port, the ensuite is a reasonable size with a separate shower compartment and it's all nicely finished. The head faces

ABOVE The J&J designed hull lines are conservative but modern for all and score up on all

BELOW Varying between 12.20kts we had plenty of opportunity to push the boat to its limits

ABOVE A hint of a soft chine aft and modest foredeck are a winning combination

BELOW (left) Ergo access is good while line work is a breeze (right) The J-shaped galley is well thought out and practical

so I'm going to err on the opinion that the way she had been finished was unfortunate for this boat, rather than a reflection of all Salona 46s. On a more positive note, we did have excellent conditions for our test, with a TWS ranging from 12-20 knots and an unseasonably warm day for October. We were able to seek out any gemmins she might exhibit in her performance, but even with full sail and 25 knots of wind over the deck we couldn't wrong-foot her; she remained impeccably behaved and in control even with the toerail awash.

On deck
The Salona has a good-sized cockpit with 1.88m 6.2' long seating and a 0.3m 1' high rounded coamings forward. There's a central cockpit table that can be easily removed - to give a race crew more flailing space - or kept to give excellent handholds and bracing for the cruising sailor. The cockpit has plenty of foot-boards, kind radii for comfort as well as soft-angled accidental bumps. There is a sole-depth cockpit locker on each side, these would normally be fitted with gas struts, without them one realises how solid the nicely-

finished the two-part moulded lids are. The mannsheet traveller is recessed below the cockpit sole level, teak-topped inserts fit over the gap once in harbour; to prevent it being a trip hazard. Aft of the traveller, the wheels are well forward of the fold-down transom. Beneath the helix's feet are pop-up-foot blocks integrated into the locker lids for the large lazarette locker to port (with watertight aft bulkhead), and the liferaft locker to starboard. The finish was good, even the parts you have to crawl into the lockers to see.

The side decks are wide, and thanks to under deck lines for the through-deck furler and German mannsheet system, clutter-free. There are solid teak toe rails that are through-bolted and reduce in height aft of the shrouds making it more comfortable for those on the rail. The foredeck arrangement is clear with the chain access from the offset bow roller; the windlass - with a decent vertical drop, and the through-deck furler (optional) all being hidden below decks, so any muck that comes on board with the chain is kept off the deck. The only issue is that to use the bow roller for a mooring, one cannot easily remove the anchor. There's a bosuns locker aft of the chain locker for sail or tender stowage and gave the reassurance of the crash bulkhead.

locks, the grain matched. There is also an abundance of natural light from overhead hatches and large hull windows in the saloon. The headroom was also good throughout (at least 1.9m 6.3'). The J-shaped galley offers excellent stowage and its shape makes it usable at sea as well as spacious in port. There's an aft locker that would take a coffee maker, and the workspace inboard of it is 2.62cm wide, it's great to have this sort of space without needing to move the stuff when you find you need to access the fridge/sink/bin. Beneath this space, there are two drawers as wide as the surface. The second drawer down is great to see on any yacht, it's 11" (2.7cm) deep and will benefit anyone who has played saucepan jenga - trying to extract the right saucepan from an open locker on a heeling yacht before the contents fall out. All the drawers have soft closures and have easily opened latches. I've found this style of latch like to catch straps and pockets on passing clothing, but these didn't seem as needy.

Outboard of the three-burner stove there is more handy stowage and a line of bottom-hinged lockers at deck level. There are two fridges on board, one top-opening the other front-opening below the sink. It was good to see downlighting, under the deck, that can illuminate the worksurface, stove and fridge contents. The return of the J also gives more work surface to work at and there is stowage below it. There wasn't a dedicated bin for the galley - another thing that may have been forgotten perhaps? The fiddles around the galley have a reassuring firm feel but are only 1" (2cm high) and a bit low to get a decent grip or to stop a wayward onion from getting airborne.

Outboard, to starboard, there is one of two heads compartments on board. It has a separate shower compartment and once the rail for oilskins has been fitted it will serve the crew well. Forward of the heads is the aft-facing chart table. At 54cm x 51cm 1.8' x 1.7' it's not the biggest of chart tables, but in a world where we find ourselves doing more and more electronic navigation, it was good to see. Amortyrightly, the table stops short outboard with nothing to stop things sliding off - the next boat has a wider chart table to prevent this.

There's an enclosed shelf above the table with room for instruments above that. The switch panel features the excellent SI marina battery monitor which is a nice touch. There were other really good features onboard, some, like the handrails overhead as well as lower grabrails at deck height, were easy to spot. Others, like the roving bilge pump in the galley locker or steel subframe to take the loads from keel, mast and chainplates less so. In the saloon, there is a 1.6m 5.6' bench seat to starboard (while it

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Boat Test ~ Salona 46

inboard but the toilet roll holder; in the locker beneath the sink, can't be easily accessed while sitting on the heads. Back in the fore cabin, large hull windows provide a wonderful view from the comfort of your berth.

The berth has stowage beneath it, accessed via a hinged board with the aid of gas struts. In this space was a battery; but I'd like to see its terminals covered. Above the berth, there are shelves on each side that runs into a line of four bottom-hinged lockers. Under the shelves was very neatly finished with a vinyl material coming up from the hull sides, its an area every owner will find themselves looking at – while in bed – and it's often neglected.

The two aft cabins mirror each other with hull windows and outboard is a shelf. The berths are 1.5m 4'11" wide and 2.08m 6'10" long. There was access to the engine from each cabin and from beneath the companionway steps too, little details like an engine room light were nice to see.

The cabins have hanging and shelved lockers. The doors create the fiddle for anything on top, but I fear they will be grabbed in place of a fiddle and the grab-ee will be relying on the latch fitting to take their weight, there is a fiddle a little outboard, but you have to know it's there. While I'm on the subject of fiddles, a square profile isn't the

most imaginative of shapes for the fiddles, especially in the galley.

Under sail

The rig was not a tuned as it might have been, the D1s on each side were slack (having been supplied too long). The weather for our test gave us a good breeze, ranging from 12-20kn TWS. At times we were hard-pressed with the overall awash, but she just gripped like a mountain goat, with no sign of losing her footing at all. Her J/sea steering was precise, smooth and light. As she became

ABOVE LEFT skimped on the wood

ABOVE RIGHT Masses of natural light in the forward cabin

BELOW

The rig required some tuning but the boat still behaved very well



overpowered, the helm would load up, but turning the wheel would still yield results. We recorded over 25 kn of wind over the deck while going to windward, and if the wind had remained high, we would have reefed. To windward, she was tracking at around 33°AWA in up to 20kn AWS making between 7.7-8 kn. Bearing away onto a fetch the speed rarely went below 8.5 knots. She is fitted with Lewmar 50ST winches for the genoa and 45ST for the mainsheet and halyards. The mainsheet is just about reachable from behind the wheel, although if you sit in front of it, it's possible to lean forward and grind/ease, but you would lose the bracing of the pop-up foot blocks.

On a reach, again she was making over 9 kn with ease in 17 kn TWS, only when the apparent wind was down to 10 kn did her speed drop to just below 8 kn. When she's heeling, either sitting in the side deck or standing you miss the backstay, but as her heel decreases then it can get in the way when standing behind the wheels.

Throughout the sail, she was enjoyable on the helm. Even when she was on her ear, there was no sense of urgency to let the main down the track or ease it to get her upright again. She had poise and remained well-mannered when some other yachts might not have.

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GRAHAM'S VERDICT

For her price, the Salona has some unexpected features: vacuum-infused hull, lots of solid wood, and of course the under-floor steel grid. More attention to the interior styling – and detail on this specific yacht – could have given her the 'wow' factor. Of course, the sea doesn't care about style, but owners do, and as the 46th market is highly competitive already, any new boat has to be at the top of their game to carve a niche.

It's on the water where the Salona scores – helped in part by her lighter than average displacement and hugely grippy rudder. She's a delight to sail, easy on the helm, perfectly mannered and easily driven and quick, all one could ask for from this style of yacht.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

BLUE WATERABILITY: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

Length overall (inc bowsprit):

14.14m (46'7")

Hull length: 13.50m (44'3")

Max beam: 4.20m (13'9")

Draft: 2.44m (8')

Displacement: 9,800kg (21,605 lb)

Engine: 57Hp (optional 75Hp)

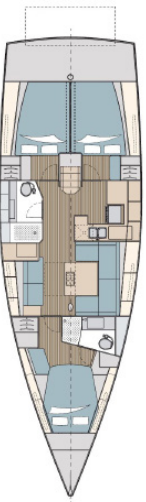
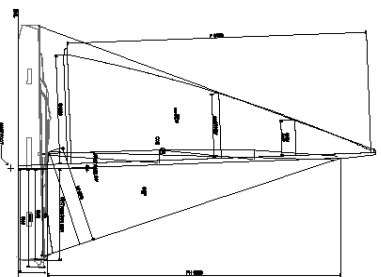
Mainsail: 63.9m² (688 sq ft)

Jib: 45.1m² (485 sq ft)

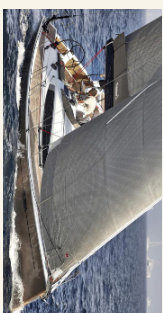
Price (base): €259,000

Price as tested: €354,825

Contact: salona@yachtsuk.com or salonayachts.com



ALTERNATIVE BOATS



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