

MOTORBOAT & YACHTING

THE X FACTOR

PRINCESS X80
ON TEST



MOTORBOAT

AS TESTED IN JUNE 2023 ISSUE

*Alex Smith heads to Plymouth for the world's
first sea trial of the mighty...*

PRINCESS X80



WORDS Alex Smith

BELOW: Open stairwells and glass bulkheads keep the light flowing

BOTTOM: In the absence of a main deck helm station, the forward dining room is a major treat

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hen the Princess X95 first hit the water in 2020, it certainly wasn't quiet about it. With its confrontational elevation, fulsome forward superstructure and full-length 'super flybridge', it didn't just feel like a radical tangent from the gentlemanly motor yachts of the Princess Y Class. It felt like a radical tangent from the rest of the players in its sector. But while the upright trawler-cum-expedition aesthetic was

challenging for some, the fact that it delivered around 30% more volume than most boats of a comparable length won it a lot of fans. Couple that with the fact that it was able to integrate some authentic superyacht-style luxuries into a sub-100ft platform and a couple of things became inevitable. Firstly, it would go on to sell extremely well, shifting more than 30 units in just three years. And secondly, Princess would attempt to transfer that same winning concept onto a more compact X Class model.

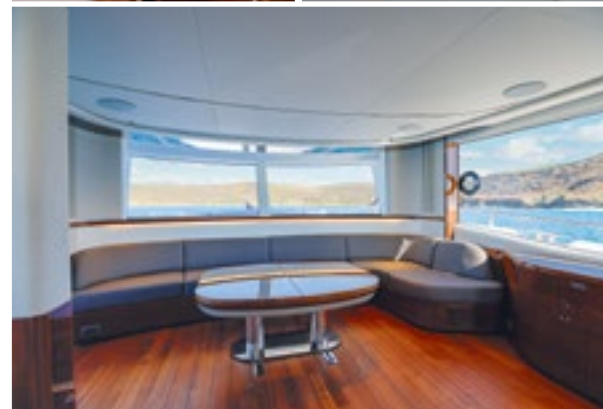
SAME BUT DIFFERENT

The smaller boat's approach to the X Class ethos differs markedly from that of its big sister. In spite of the fact that it measures 13ft shorter and 2ft narrower, it replaces the full-beam superstructure with a more conventional walkaround main deck layout. That of course narrows the main deck accommodation but it still employs an extraordinarily long superstructure with an inverted screen for maximum volume. More to the point, it makes best possible use of that volume by side-stepping a main deck helm station and using the space instead for a forward dining area, that can also be specified as a second master cabin, in addition to a permanent port day heads and a versatile starboard galley.

The impact of all that is not to be underestimated. The fact that you have a proper main deck day heads enables every one of the four lower deck cabins to retain its own private ensuite facilities for the sole use of those guests. The galley meanwhile can be integrated with the main saloon space by means of a set of stools at the bar;

or it can be cordoned off for extra guest privacy thanks to a push-button screen, while still retaining easy access to the starboard side deck through a pantograph door. And ahead of all this, the fact that you get the option of a main deck forward cabin with vast sea views and private access to the bow dinette feels like an item from the aspirational wishlist of a much larger custom superyacht.

The core idea is not just to upgrade the volume but also to fine-tune the quality of it



BELOW: The sky lounge can also be specced with a dining table

BELOW RIGHT: The sheltered alfresco fly deck still has a surprisingly large footprint



While all of this internal versatility does of course limit the scale of the main deck's outdoor spaces, they still boast some very worthwhile socialising zones in their own right. Up at the bow, the optional Jacuzzi comes with its own dedicated calorifier to ensure an undisturbed supply of hot water for the galley and the lower deck guests. And back in the aft cockpit, the big C-shaped dinette gets full overhead shelter from a flybridge that extends further aft than the trailing edge of the stern settee and right out over the bulwarks. That certainly does good things for the scale of the upper deck – and as you would expect, there is a cockpit staircase to take you there. But it's the internal staircases that are particularly revealing in terms of what this boat's all about.

QUALITY AND VOLUME

The core idea is not just to upgrade the volume but also to refine the quality of it. In pursuit of that, the X80 uses just two internal staircases to link its three decks. That means there's no private stairwell for the owner's cabin and no crew staircase to access the upper helm. But what you do get is oceans of light and space. Even from the aft end of the saloon, you can see light flooding through the forward window of the main deck dining space. With its raked glass bulkhead, the upper staircase also has the feeling of a custom artwork in a presentation case. And in a similar vein, the lower staircase opens up a two-storey glass-lined



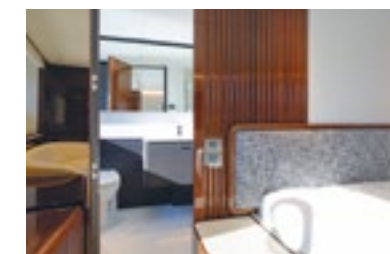
atrium that floods the lower deck with natural light.

All this light is beautifully manipulated too. There are machined furrows in solid walnut linings that throw out gleaming blades of sunlight as you move around the boat – and there's a subtle asymmetry in the use of that walnut, just as there is in the mix of fixed and freestanding furniture. There is also some playful integration of diagonal wood grain on various lids and hatches to contrast with the linear fore-and-aft pattern of the teak decks. And in addition to some lovely stainless steel detailing, the artificial light is also well managed, with a sense of omnipresent glow without any harsh spots or overblown glare.

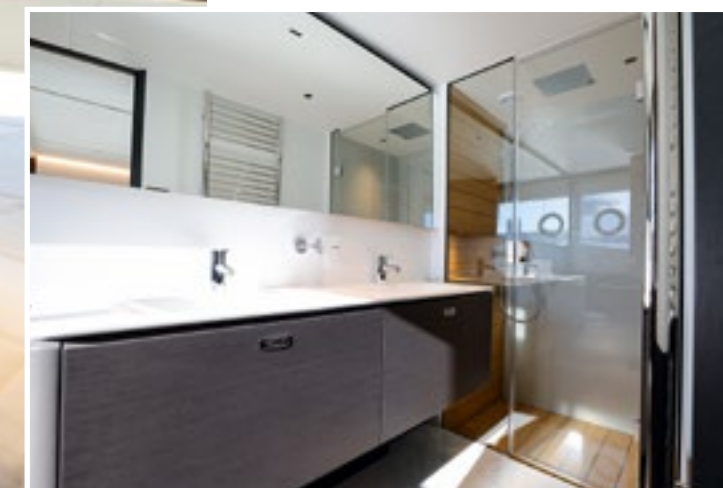
As intimated, the only real compromise in terms of your enjoyment of these spaces revolves around the fact that, should you want to employ crew, the absence of a purpose-built stairwell to link the upper helm station to the main deck means the ▶

ABOVE: The starboard galley can be opened up to the saloon or cordoned off with discreet access to the side deck

RIGHT: The long flybridge overhang provides ample shade for diners in the cockpit



LEFT AND BELOW: The huge lower deck suite stays the same size even if you opt for the extra main deck master cabin



It takes all of 20 seconds to appreciate how easy the X80 is to helm

skipper has to traipse through your sky lounge to get to the wheel. Once in position, they can of course close up the sliding bulkheads to give you and your guests some privacy but we've certainly seen more discreet crew routes on boats significantly smaller than this.

FROM BOTTOM TO TOP

The lower deck adopts the same highly effective arrangement as the Y80. It comprises a midships full-beam master, a starboard double, a convertible port twin and a forward VIP. Three of the four spaces include dressing tables and all of them provide hanging storage, big views and stylish bathrooms with swept stone sinks and decadent rain showers. It's clear that Princess's resin infusion build processes help maximise the volume throughout and, in spite of a very generous engineroom containing a pair of big MAN V12 1900s, as well as the main tanks, electrics, hydraulics systems and generators, there's still an option for up to five crew aft.

But if the lower deck's effectiveness is anchored in established formula, the super flybridge feels like quite a special tangent. Behind the helm station, the climate-controlled sky lounge can be rigged either with a casual settee and coffee table or as a dining area. In either case, there's a pop-up TV built into the port sideboard plus good views in

spite of those big Y-Class-style 'S-shaped' external mouldings. Accessed via the side deck to starboard of the helm, there's also an intimate forward sundeck on the X80, with a pair of sunpads and an optional control to convert them into sociable inward-facing benches. And further aft, the three-part sliding doors open the sky lounge up to an alfresco fly deck that retains an impressive footprint, thanks to the length of the superstructure and the breadth of the upper level as it extends out over the lower side decks.

There are configurable L-shaped seating and sunbathing units out here, plus the option of two wet bars and another pop-up TV so you can accompany your sundowners with a film. It's usefully sheltered too, thanks to a push-button sunshade that extends aft from the hardtop – and thanks to the sky lounge structure itself, which does such a good job of protecting the alfresco deck that you can sit here in comfort, even at 30 knots.

PASSAGE-READY CRUISER

It takes all of 20 seconds to appreciate how easy the X80 is to helm. The Sleipner hydraulic fin stabilisers are so effective that the only reason I can see for using the trim tabs would be to pin the bow into a particularly aggressive head sea. But even with the fins deactivated, the X80 shows itself to be a very stable and well-behaved boat, regaining its natural

trim with commendable speed as you power out of a turn or make your way across a rolling beam sea.

It's cruise-friendly in other ways too. The sound readings run from as little as 50dB(A) to just 62dB(A). And with our uprated fuel capacity of 8,800 litres, the range is also impressive. A 20-knot cruise drinks 400 litres per hour for a range of 352nm. Drop that to 10 knots and the fuel flow drops to just 60 litres per hour for a range of 1,173nm. And if you ease back again to 8 knots, the fuel flow halves to just 31 litres per hour (3.9 l/Nm), extending your range to more than 1,800nm. And the great thing is that, even at these easy cruising speeds, the boat runs beautifully flat and the noise is so minimal that you find yourself questioning whether the engines are actually running.

In terms of its conviviality, it's also good to see that the helm comes with an optional second pilot seat, plus a port bench big enough for three. The fact that the four-part sliding doors open it up to the sky lounge is also a bonus but on a boat as lavishly appointed as this, it would be good to see some extra cup holders here, plus some trays, glove boxes and cubbyholes for small items like phones, keys, wallets and books.

It's also important to note that, with its central position and its limited visibility of the aft quarters, the second and third fold-out helm stations are very valuable supplements to your aft-facing cameras. They're intelligently positioned too with one on the starboard side deck just forward of the skipper's door and the other on the port deck, just forward of the aft cockpit. ▶



RIGHT: The starboard guest double actually has a bigger hull window than the forward VIP



RIGHT: It might look lofty but the use of carbon fibre up top keeps the weight low and the handling crisp

INSET ABOVE: The crew area includes a handy mess and galley



The X80 is a bright and conspicuous sweet spot in a famously capable fleet

THE X80 IN PERSPECTIVE

Everything on the X80 is orchestrated to maximise internal volume and to optimise your ability to enjoy it. True, the crew routes are relatively prominent, there is no open-air helm station for self-drive owners in sunny climates and, at £7.8 million as tested including VAT, it costs a lot of money. But if you view it in relation to its immediate siblings, the value of the X80 is much easier to understand.

For instance, it costs much the same as the Y80 – and while the Y-Class boat is likely to retain serious appeal for Princess-loving traditionalists, its main and upper decks are neither as spacious nor as versatile as those of the X80. The X80 also costs little more than half as much as the X95 – and while the X95 offers more outright space and volume, it's neither as pretty nor as rapid. More to the point, the

X95 actually offers very little that the smaller boat can't match. Sleeping for up to ten people in five ensuite cabins? Check. A wide-open main deck with dedicated day heads? No problem. A flybridge with a sheltered sky lounge? All part of the package. In short, given that the difference here is one of subjective margins rather than outright provision, the upshot for the X80 is clear. This is not just a stand-out boat in a competitive sector. This is a bright and conspicuous sweet spot in a famously capable fleet.

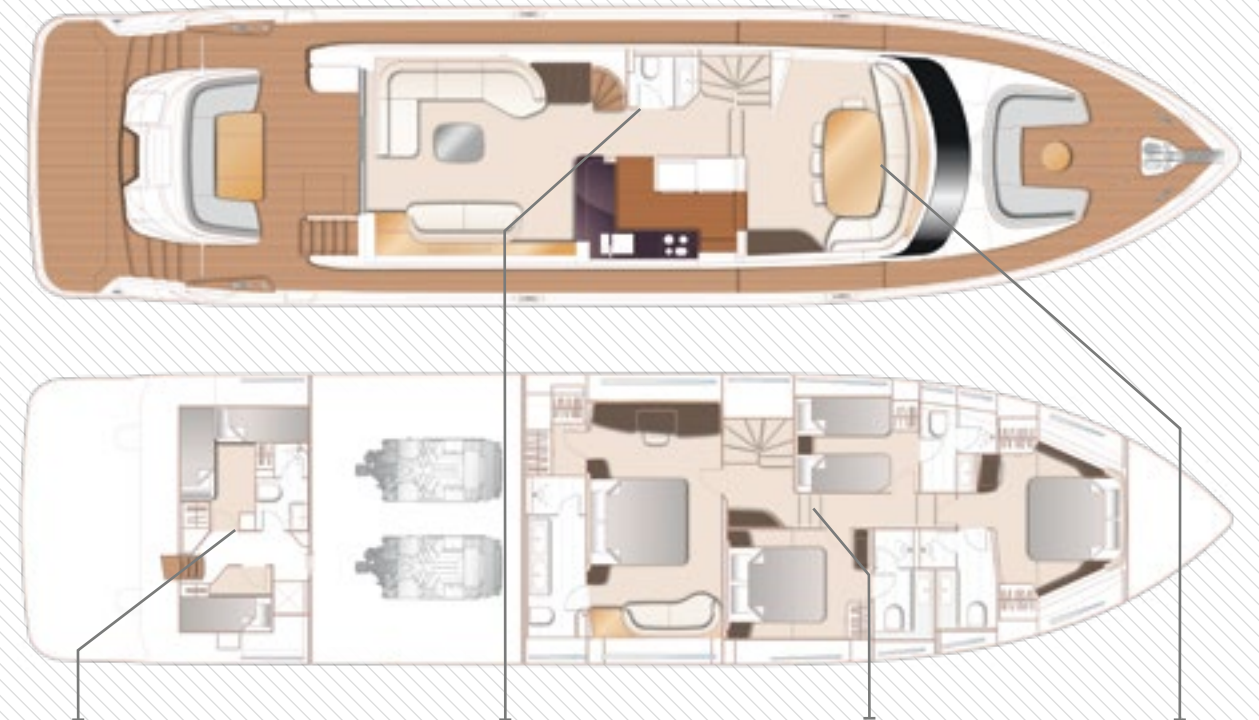
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SEATING FOR 5
The port bench and optional second helm seat keep things pretty sociable

QUIET CRUISE
At no stage do the sound readings exceed 62dB(A)

CUBBYHOLES
The helm lacks cup holders and quick-access cubbyholes

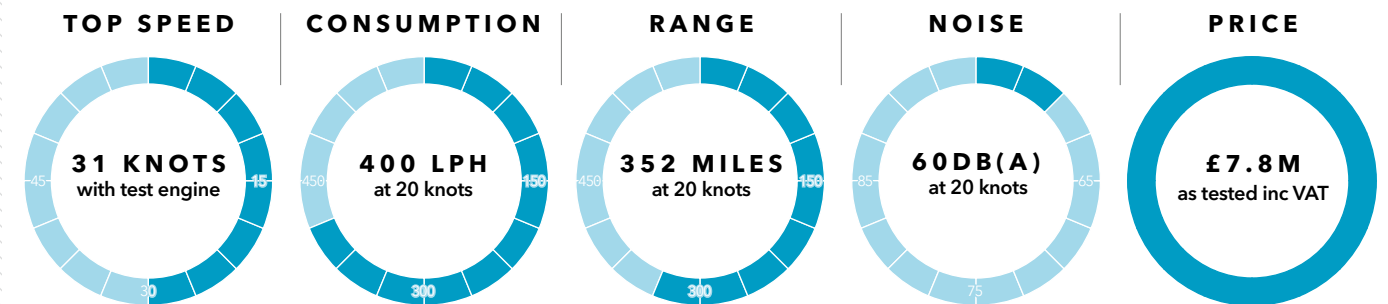


FIVE CREW
Options at the aft end include a crew mess and sleeping for up five (see photo above left)

DAY HEADS
This main deck day heads keeps the ensuite cabins fully private

PROVEN LAYOUT
The X80 uses the same lower deck layout as the Y80 even if you opt for a main deck master

HELM-FREE
You can opt for a forward dining room or a main deck cabin in this space



SPECIFICATION

LOA 82ft 7in (25.18m)
Beam 19ft 11in (6.06m)
Draft 5ft 10in (1.78m)
Displacement 62.5 tonnes
Fuel capacity from 7,000-8,800 litres
Engines MAN V12 1650s, 1900s
or 2000s on straight shafts
RCD Category A for 20 people

PERFORMANCE

Test engines twin MAN V12 1900 24.2-litre diesels on straight shafts

	ECO	FAST	MAX
RPM	750	2,000	2,380
Knots	8.0	24.0	30.8
Litres per hour	31.0	498	725
Litres per mile	3.88	20.75	23.54
Range (Nm)	1,817	339	299

Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Figures allow for 20% reserve. 85% fuel, 79% water, 7 crew + safety stores. 7 degrees air temperature, F3 and 3ft seas for sea trial.