

BOAT TEST

Is Fairline's lavishly featured new 58-footer really as good as it looks? We head for Southampton to find out

FAIRLINE SQUADRON 58

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ABOVE:
 There's grunt, grip and plenty of refinement on offer

BELOW: T-top and wetbar options transform the usability of the flybridge

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hen you first set eyes on the new Squadron 58, it feels impressively restrained. While competitor models from Sunseeker, Galeon and Absolute adopt all kinds of dramatic angles, curves and cutaways, there's a simple purity to the Squadron 58 that feels perfect for a brand whose success has been built more squarely on demonstrable seagoing substance than on tricks of the eye. Huge unbroken glazing sections dominate the superstructure and hull sides. The raked aft struts of the optional flybridge T-Top mirror the angle of the hull windows, and there's a stark, fuss-free contrast between the black and white that feels very forthright and confident.

That's not to say that the new 58 is without its own share of stylistic spice though, because however you feel about the relative absence of fanfare, there's plenty of fun to be had in the LED detailing. It's

sandwiched between the flybridge steps, it floods the deck spaces from low level and it picks out the contours at the aft end of the three decorative steel fins that have been a trademark of the Squadron line since the 90s. But what really excited the show visitors at this boat's Southampton debut was not so much the aesthetic as the leisure potential of the deck arrangements and that all starts with the 58's stupendous back end.

A BETTER BEACH CLUB

Boat Number 1 uses a range of very effective options to put alfresco fun firmly at the heart of the Squadron experience. The aft cockpit, for instance, features a glazed transom and modular furniture, which is light enough to lift and shift, should you want to change the view. Further aft, the new 'Slide & Hide' submersible bathing platform enables you to extend the

lower deck at the push of a button, virtually doubling its size, without the additional mooring fees that a lengthier boat would incur. There's also an ice bucket, a bin and some storage lockers back here, plus an optional slide-out barbecue that enables you to cook down at water level. And to help make the very most of this section of the boat, the optional transverse crew cabin, accessed beneath the steps at the port side of the swim platform, can also be specced as a day heads, which enables your expandable beach club to function as an all-day social hub, virtually independent of the rest of the boat.

Back up in the cockpit, the beach club vibes continue with a pair of big hydraulic drop-down terraces. Again, to help make the most of that, there's a fold-out bar with a pair of removable bar stools at the aft end plus an optional drop-down window on the port side so you can relocate the stools and use the port bar instead. As you might expect, this equipment doesn't come cheap. In fact, it adds more than £200,000 to the purchase price but it's such a great space (and such a key differentiator in a highly competitive sector) that it would seem like false economy to spec the 58 without it.

This big back end is not the only outdoor party space though. There's an alfresco bow lounge too, plus a flybridge that does a good job, thanks to a central dinette bookended by sun





There's a purity to the 58 that feels perfect
for a brand whose success has been built on
demonstrable seagoing substance

TOP: The upper helm is delightfully sociable BOTTOM: When fully specced up,
the Beach Club is among the very best you will see at this size



LEFT: Rotating walnut air vents are a gorgeous touch CENTRE: A neat little pocket for the remote is recessed into the worktop beside the pop-up TV RIGHT: The painstakingly polished maple inlays are exquisite

loungers fore and aft. There's also a starboard wet bar up here and in addition to an optional T-top with integrated lighting and sliding sunroof, there's a particularly neat feature at the aft end. The glass balustrade projects out at a very shallow angle and the sunbed cushions are undercut to marry up with that, creating some handy extra space, alongside an implicit but unmistakable sense that both the scale and the openness here are something out of the ordinary.

A FRESH ANGLE

At 16ft 4in, the beam of the Squadron 58 is wider than most of the competition so it's interesting to see that Fairline has adopted quite narrow side decks to further capitalise on its volume advantage. But again, it's not so much the outright space on offer as the freshness of the deck arrangements that really strikes a chord. In place of parallels, right angles and squared-off linearity, there are surprising angles all over this boat – and while they're easy to see on the fly, they're at their most pronounced in the main deck saloon.

Here, the back end of the superstructure is asymmetrical, pushing further aft to port

than to starboard. At a stroke, that frees up extra length for the internal port galley, while also creating extra cockpit space for the flybridge ladder. Quite aside from its practical merits, this playful integration of angles also transforms the general ambience of the Squadron's living environment, creating quietly diverting points of interest that some of its more conventional competitors simply can't match.

It's the same further forward, as you step up from the galley via a shallow diagonal step to the primary saloon. A subtly skewed port dinette faces across to an oblique starboard settee that juts further into the space at its centre. This furniture is also undercut and bottom-lit, which again helps expand the sense of openness on what is already a distinctly accommodating deck. But it's not just about clever design motifs, because this boat is remarkably practical for cruisers too.

A 700-litre water tank is designed to enable you to spend long spells away from shoreside support and the 58's refrigeration facilities also back that up. In addition to a big unit on the side of the main galley, there are two large fridges under the starboard worktop, plus a huge refrigerated chest, sunk deep beneath a lid in the worktop itself. It's easily enough to keep six people cruising for a fortnight at a time, and if you enjoy large parties, there's virtually no end of capacity for cold drinks on this boat.

In spite of the fact that the Squadron 58 uses D13s on shaft drives, there's decent capacity in that hull too. In addition to a big full-beam mid cabin with port ensuite facilities, there's a twin cabin to starboard and a VIP in the bow, with an ensuite to port that also functions as the day heads. Space is good, light is excellent and with its fusion of textures and fabrics, the decor also treads the ideal line between cool minimalism and homely warmth. But as boat number 1, it's not entirely perfect...

If you sit abruptly on the edge of the saloon settee, for instance, the undercut cushion can come away from its base. Some of the trim also needs a bit of tidying up, and there's currently no mechanism

The galley opens out onto the aft cockpit and the port side deck



LEFT: There is enough refrigeration here for weeks at sea without heading ashore for supplies

RIGHT: The fit-out treads the ideal line between indulgent luxury and pared back cleanliness

Both the scale and openness are something out of the ordinary



The Beach Club is about much more than just drop-down bulwarks

to secure the flybridge hatch open. On a boat of such evident ingenuity, we'd also like to see a bit more clever thinking on the starboard sides of the saloon and the owner's cabin, where in common with almost every other boat in this sector, you get an inward-facing settee. But while you might quibble with some of these design decisions, it actually feels oddly satisfying that the options here are so minimal. After all, Fairline has a very firm grasp of what it's aiming for with this boat so it makes good sense that the deck layouts, like the propulsive options, should be fixed.

AT THE HELM

You don't get all that wonderful Beach Club functionality without a lot of heavy-duty hardware and powerful hydraulics and that inevitably has an impact on your weight distribution. That's why Fairline has factored some extra aft buoyancy into the design of the Squadron 58 and, as we sit at rest out on the water, it certainly seems to have worked. The boat's natural trim feels very good, delivering near-perfect all-round visibility, even from the main deck. ▶



ABOVE: The fixed 3-cabin, 2-bathroom layout is easy to enjoy

INSET: The large VIP bathroom is also used as the day heads

BOAT TEST



It uses 900 or 1,000hp D13s on straight shafts



As we put the hammers down, things continue to feel good. There's plenty of urgency in the transition to plane, thanks to the more powerful of the two D13 engine options. You also get a profound sense from the helm that this is a very well-built boat. At cruising speeds, 66dB enables easy conversation and even at the 31-knot top end, the readings never exceed 74dB. But once you're up to pace, there is a distinct element of bow elevation, which sees us running at an angle of about 5.2°.

You don't really notice it from the upper helm, partly because of the extra height and partly because, in terms of pace, agility and handling, the boat behaves commendably well. It's only at the lower helm, where the view through those aft doors frames your wake rather than the horizon, that the nature of the running attitude becomes more apparent.

When we cancel auto trim and deploy the tabs manually, it's not difficult to improve that angle of attack. You can drop the bow and run at around 4° rather than 5° and that appears to bring tangible efficiency gains. In fact, from 16 to 31 knots, we see an extra half a knot for much the same fuel flow, for a cruising range of nearly 200 miles, so the Squadron's 'attitude problem' is by no means a problem at all. But the ideal situation would be a boat that ran at that kind of angle naturally, so you could maximise efficiency and comfort by deploying your tabs in response to the conditions.

On our test boat, the steering was also a bit undercooked at pace. It required a considerable distance to execute a 180° turn but Fairline has already attended to that by tweaking the rudder angles and the issue is reportedly now remedied. In short, as Fairline becomes more familiar with the set-up of the prototype, there's nothing about the helming experience that can't be addressed with a bit of fine-tuning. But even as things stand,

the signs are clear. This is a refined, heavily built and confidence-inspiring cruiser with a brilliantly devised superyacht-style Beach Club – and what's not to like about that?

VERDICT

If you're one of the many people who was excited by this boat at the Southampton Boat Show, then you'll be pleased to know that your excitement is justified. At £1.55m plus VAT for the base model, the Squadron 58 is certainly quite pricey, and it becomes all the more expensive when you spec it up with all the tricks and features that help set it apart from the rest of the sector. With its fully featured beach club, its uprated finishes, its top-spec galley and wet bar facilities and its high-end electronic, comfort and audio options, the test boat comes in at a VAT-inclusive price of around £2.86 million. But if you want something that marries Fairline's traditional seagoing qualities with cutting-edge day boating solutions and a deck arrangement that feels just that bit more original and charismatic, this new Squadron 58 is a delightful piece of work.

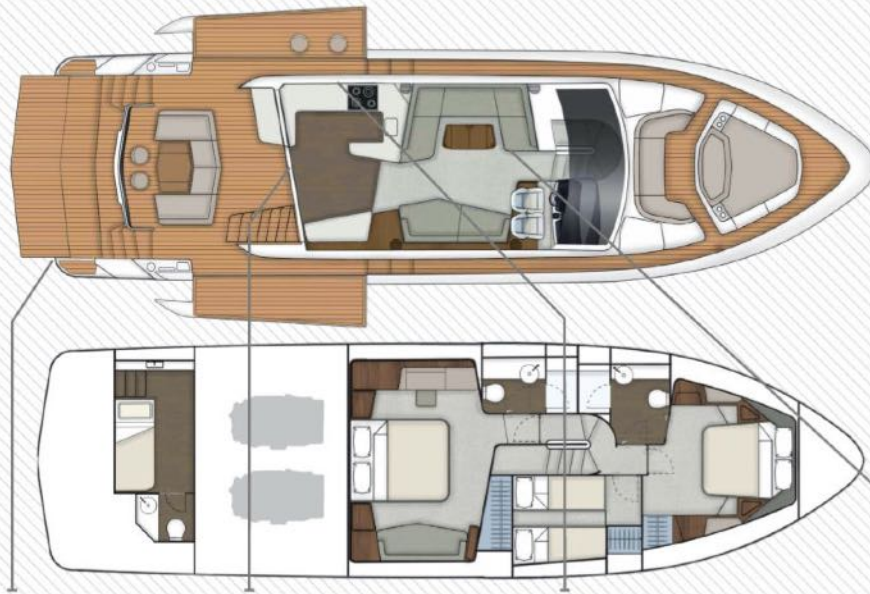
CONTACT: www.fairline.com



PORT WHEEL
The location of the wheel gives a more central view but hems in the co-pilot

BIG SCREEN
A single-piece windscreen ensures excellent visibility

HELM WINDOW
No side door but this window does drop down electrically



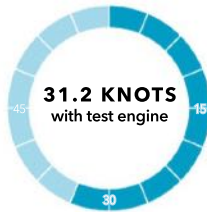
EXTRA SPACE
The "Slide & Hide" extendable platform retracts to sit flush with these aft corners

FRESH ANGLES
The angle of this bulkhead creates more space for the galley and flybridge stairs

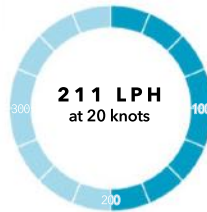
TWIN BAR
Drop-down windows aft and on the port side of the galley create two separate bar areas

DESIGN
Angled settees create a more engaging vibe while freeing up floor space in key areas

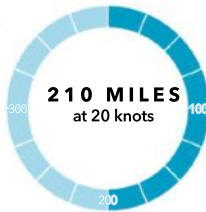
TOP SPEED



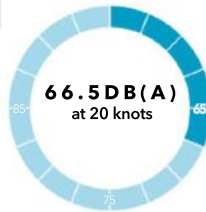
CONSUMPTION



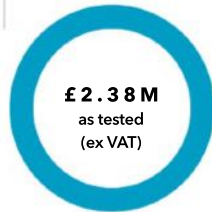
RANGE



NOISE



PRICE



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 58ft 4in (17.80m)
BEAM: 16ft 4in (4.99m)
DRAFT: 5ft 0in (1.52m)
DRY DISPLACEMENT: 27,000 kg
FUEL CAPACITY: 2,774 litres
RCD: B16

COSTS & OPTIONS

From £1,550,000 ex VAT
Test boat includes:
Submersible bathing platform: £64,950
Hydraulic side balconies and galley power window: £85,950
Modular cockpit furniture, glazed transom and bbq: £24,450
Hardtop with lighting & sliding fabric sunroof: £94,450
Seakeeper 9 gyroscopic stabiliser: £106,950
Air-conditioning: £60,950

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES: Twin Volvo Penta D13 12.8-litre inline 6-cylinder 900-1000hp diesels on shaft drives

	600	750	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	ECO	FAST	MAX
RPM	600	750	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,250	2,360
Knots	3.8	6.8	8.6	9.9	12.5	18.3	23.8	29.0	31.2
Litres per hour	11.6	20.4	48.0	88.4	154	207	273	339	382
Litres per mile	3.22	3.00	5.58	8.93	12.32	11.31	11.47	11.69	12.28
Range (Nm)	727	740	398	249	180	196	193	190	181

CALCULATED FIGURES based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices inc VAT. 90% fuel, 50% water, 8 crew + safety stores. 20 degrees air temperature, F3 and 2ft seas for sea trial.