

FIRST TEST

SALONA 380

From a yard that's still relatively unknown in the UK, the Salona 380 looks set to present the established performance cruisers in this size range with some serious competition

Words & pictures David Harding

SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE Salona

MODEL 380

PRICE FROM
£207,500 inc VAT

DESIGNER
Maurizio Cossutti

BUILDER Salona Yachts

If any sector of the new-boat market is tough to break into, it's the one for the 38ft performance cruiser. Look at the builders who are there already: Dehler with the 38 and Elan with the 380/E5, for example. Then we have the Arcona 380, the slightly more cruisy Xc38 and, arguably with a little less of a sporty tilt, Hanse's 388.

Given the availability of these, you might wonder why anyone looking for a sporty not-quite-forty should consider a boat from a Croatian builder that relatively few people in the UK have heard of. The reason is simple: the Salona 380 claims to offer pretty well everything its competitors offer and more. The builders are keen to stress the relatively low volume of production (around 35 boats per year across the range), the attention to detail and scope for customisation, the structural integrity (including the stainless steel frame in the hull to distribute the loads from the rig and keel), the uncluttered deck layout and, not insignificantly, the fact that you get a lot of boat for your money.

What's more, despite its lack of recognition in the UK, Salona is not an unknown quantity. The yard has been building boats since 2002 and has established a strong following in the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean, where many British sailors will have met Salonas on charter holidays. Dealers have also been active in Holland, Sweden, Germany, France and Spain but, although Salona has been represented on and off in Britain since 2004, it has yet to become a well-known name on these shores. That's all the more





The Salona's deck and cockpit layout make the boat well suited to short-handed sailing



Towing cars on the coachroof-mounted tracks allow easy control of the jib's sheeting angle



The keel is bolted through the stainless steel frame that stiffens the inside of the hull and distributes the loads from keel and rig



On its outboard sides the frame is bolted to stringers that form the bases for the saloon berths

An under-deck furling drum reduces clutter and maximises headsail area

Handling was precise and feedback from the rudder positive through the Jefa steering



LOGBOOK

TESTED

by David Harding

LOCATION

Solent

WIND

SW 8-12 knots

SEASTATE

Smooth

WHEN

October 2019

RIGHT: Winches for the German mainsheet system, together with the traveller control, are immediately forward of the wheels

surprising given that the 35 had just won its class in the 2012 Hamble Winter Series when I tested it back in 2013.

I joined the 35 for one of the races. Before that I had tested the 45 in 2004, followed by the 37 and 40, looked at various other models in Trieste and visited the yard in Split, where I sailed another 45. I thought they all had a lot to offer.

DESIGNED TO BE DIFFERENT

When I first got to know Salona, the range was designed by J&J. This was when J&J were best known for boats that placed the emphasis firmly and unashamedly on cruising comforts, so for those of us unfamiliar with their performance designs it was something of a revelation to find that the same design team was capable of producing such fast, well balanced and fun-to-sail boats as the Salonas.

While most of the current Salona models are still by J&J, the 380 is

from the office of Maurizio Cossutti. Like Salona, Cossutti will be unfamiliar to many British owners but, as well as working with Bavaria and now Salona, he has been designing for Nautor and Italia Yachts. His Swan 42 won Class B in the 2019 ORC world championship and the Italia 9.98 and 11.98 have both won the ORC worlds. When it comes to designing boats that win races, Cossutti is a force to be reckoned with.

The Salona 380 is not all about performance, however. It was conceived as a fast cruiser that's easy to sail short-handed and there's nothing extreme about any aspect of the design. That's not to say it's run-of-the-mill, because there are some notable features such as the flying bow. We don't see flying bows, with the knuckle clear of the water, that often, but they have been used to good effect on occasions (on Stephen Jones's SJ/Seaquest 320, for example) even if they have been known to slam in a seaway unless the crew weight is moved forward to keep them immersed. In the case of the Salona, the measurement of the static waterline is some way abaft the stem, which is well clear of the water at rest.



This is one reason why the keel looks a long way aft when you see the profile drawing, and in any event it's further abaft the mast than on many boats. The profile also shows a relatively steep rise to the transom, though by all accounts this doesn't hold the boat back downwind. We had

PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close-hauled	33°	17-19 knots	6.3-6.8 knots
Fetch	60°	14-16 knots	7.2-7.7 knots
Beam Reach	90°	11-12 knots	6.1-6.8 knots
Broad Reach	120°	8.5-9.0 knots	5.8-6.2 knots
Run	180°	8-9 knots	4.9-5.2 knots

*APPARENT WING ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED

A feeling of space is created by the double doorway to the forecabin, joinery in light oak, and generous windows



The German mainsheet is led aft under the deck

A recess for the sprayhood's frame lowers its profile and provides useful stowage troughs on deck

relatively light conditions on our test sail but the polar diagram shows a boat speed of 14 knots with 25 knots of breeze over the quarter. That's respectable by most standards. The foils – keel and rudder – are worthy of note too. The raked rudder is deep with a short chord, while the T-bulb keel consists of a cast iron upper section incorporating substantial cut-outs to save weight. A laminated fairing shell over the top helps optimise the shape. The lower section is a combination of lead and cast iron and, as you would expect, the bulb is lead. A low centre of gravity is the result. And although the boat's generous beam and low coachroof contribute to substantial inverted stability, the low centre of gravity helps ensure an AVS (angle of vanishing stability) of around 140°. Similarly, the maximum righting angle is higher than we often see at 65.5°.

beyond 120°. It's hard to imagine any owners not choosing a folding prop, such as our test boat's two-bladed Flexofold.

Handling was precise and responsive, feedback from the rudder being positive through the Jefa steering and twin composite wheels, despite the slight play in the cable linkage. A quick look under the cockpit sole confirmed that a few more turns on the bottlescrew were needed to take up the slack.

Helming is comfortable from the coamings and it's easy for the helmsman to trim the German-style mainsheet, which is led aft beneath the deck to a Harken 46 self-tailer (upgraded from a 40 in the 'limited edition' spec) immediately forward of each wheel. A neat feature back here is the recess for the full-width traveller that can be covered with a couple of panels to leave a flush cockpit sole in port or at anchor. The traveller's 6:1 purchase is led to cam cleats immediately forward of the helm consoles. This keeps it close to the helmsman, while the trimmer in racing mode would have to choose whether to work from between the winch and the wheel or from forward of the winch.

On the whole the cockpit works well. Foot-braces for the helmsman can be rotated to give a choice of bracing angles. Just behind them on the starboard side, a hydraulic tensioner comes as standard for the split backstay (all in 1x19 wire, like the rest of the standing rigging). A cascade purchase on a Dyneema split would seem a handier, more efficient solution.

Given the minimal overlap of the headsail, its winches (Harken 50 upgrades; normally 45s) are at

UNDER SAIL

A look at the numbers and drawings suggests the Salona should be a stiff and slippery performer, so what is she like under sail? Well, on a day with flat water and 8-12 knots of breeze in the Solent she didn't hang around. Our test boat – hull No.26 – clocked speeds in the high 6s upwind and tacked through what appeared to be well within 75° (interpolation being called for given the shifty northerly breeze and instruments that needed calibrating).

As we cracked off, the log peaked at around 8.5 knots with the wind still well ahead of the beam, dropping below 6 knots only when we bore away

BELOW: The flying bow, with the knuckle clear of the water, becomes immersed to lengthen the waterline under way

The cockpit works as well in harbour as under sail. A folding table in the centre can easily be removed



Electrics are neatly laid out behind a hinge-down panel above the chart table



Interior joinery is in light oak and all made at the yard. Drawers are in wood throughout and frames and fiddles are solid. The double-width door to the forecabin creates a feeling of space



Stowage is good in the galley. Lockers extend to the deckhead and there's plenty of light



The optional bowsprit for an asymmetric spinnaker retracts into a tube in the forecabin. A second water tank can fit beneath the berth



The most popular layout has the heads aft and a door opening into a wet locker

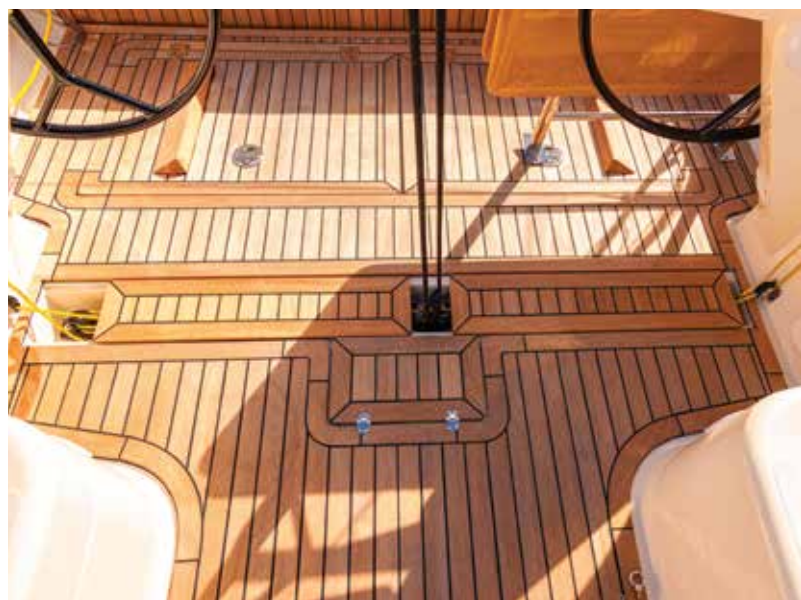


the forward end of the cockpit next to the control lines for the towing cars. For single-handed sailing you would want to program a tacking angle into the autopilot so you could leave the helm and move forward. An easily removable table provides a bracing point and hand-hold in the middle of the sole.

Returning to the performance and handling, I noticed no quirks, foibles or vices that would present a challenge in most circumstances to a reasonably competent cruising couple. The boat would eventually stall if pinched for long enough. With speed through the water down to half a knot, she crabbed gently with the sails filling and it took a while after the helm was put down for the foils to start working again.

Consistent with this was her reaction when asked to bear away in a gust with the sheets pinned in. She responded to the deep rudder until we were approaching gunwale awash. Then she rounded up and spun decisively through the wind. Rudders and keels like those on the Salona work extremely well to give you windward efficiency and fast passage times. Your side of the bargain is to sail the boat within their margins of tolerance which, in this case, are still greater than on many sporty cruisers.

Salona believes the deck layout, standard of hardware and attention to detail on the 380 sets it apart. For example, while under-deck mainsheets are often seen with the German system, it's not unknown for the tail to be lost in the tunnel. For that reason the block at the forward end is above the deck (though



ABOVE: Panels cover the recessed mainsheet traveller in harbour to leave a flush cockpit sole

largely recessed into the moulding) to allow easier re-reeving of the sheet. At the aft end, the Harken bullseye fairlead is also set into a recess in order to minimise the toe-stubbing hazard.

Most other lines are run below deck too, including the furling line for the under-deck drum, and the halyards and reefing lines led aft from the mast to the bank of Spinlock clutches and the Harken 46 self-tailers (40s are standard).

A moulded gunwale capping forms part of the hull-to-deck joint and the base to which the stanchions are bolted together with pad-eyes for spinnaker blocks. This type of raised, flat gunwale capping has become popular in recent years, largely displacing the once-almost-ubiquitous aluminium toerail. It helps avoid

BELOW: Upwind with 18 knots over the deck, the Salona clocked nearly 7 knots at times

BELOW RIGHT: Lighting and instrument space at the chart table are good, but there's no pilot book stowage

grey streaks down the topsides and the scuppers still drain as long as the trim allows rainwater to run aft.

In common with many modern boats, the Salona has flush hatches, no grabrails forward of the mast and smooth gelcoat on the outboard edges of the coachroof, so a few strips of anti-slip will probably be on most owners' list of things to add.

Moving aft again, potential additions in the cockpit might include more harness attachment points. Otherwise all the essentials are there, including a shallow locker to port over the aft cabin and a large full-depth locker to starboard. There's more space beneath the sole abaft the wheels, from where you can reach the steering linkage. On the starboard side, a drop-in moulding provides contained stowage for a liferaft so it doesn't slide around in the stern compartment. Aft this, the transom hinges down to form a bathing platform.

ACCOMMODATION

Salona's interiors have improved enormously over the past few years to the point where they now do the boats justice.

Most noticeable on the 380 is the feeling of space created by the double-width doorway to the forecabin. Combined with the joinery in light oak, the generous window area and ports in the topsides, this lends a bright, airy feel to the accommodation.

Our test boat had the most popular layout, with the heads aft to starboard and the chart table forward of the heads opposite the galley. Twin double aft cabins are among the options on offer.

The finish is neat and the woodwork all produced in-house. Fiddles and door frames are solid, and drawers all in wood throughout.

Beneath the cabin sole is Salona's trademark stainless steel frame. The six pairs of keel bolts (plus the single bolt at the aft end) are bolted through the frame, which is bonded to the hull and also bolted to moulded stringers that form the bases of the full-length saloon settee berths. A number of interior mouldings

form parts of the interior but are relatively small, allowing good access to the hull and skin fittings.

Tankage is aft, so most of the under-bunk space in the saloon is free for stowage except that occupied by the batteries (190ah for the services and 110ah for the engine). Overhead is a partially-moulded headliner with removable panels to give access to the underside of the coachroof.

Access to the Yanmar 3YM30 engine (which pushed us along at just over 7 knots) is as good as you would normally find, from the front and via panels on each side.



PROS

- Good performance
- Easy to sail short-handed
- Uncluttered deck layout

CONS

- Flying bow is a mixed blessing under power
- More non-slip needed on deck
- No stowage for books at chart table

SALONA 380

THE TEST VERDICT

There's much to like about the Salona, from the performance and handling to the level of specification and the reassuring construction. As well as being stiffened by the steel frame, the vacuum-infused hull with its PVC-cored topsides is laid up with vinyl ester resin and, as an extra precaution that's rarely seen these days, clear gelcoat beneath the waterline.

Until recently, the performance and structural integrity of Salonas was not matched by the interior finish or, in some respects, the attention to detail. The 380 reflects a substantial improvement in these areas and she has to be seen as a serious competitor to boats of similar size and nature from the better-known yards. She's fast, responsive, fun to sail, nicely finished, well thought-out and equipped to a good standard.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

If you're looking for a performance cruiser in this size range, there are good reasons to include the Salona on your list of possibilities.

Whereas the credibility of Salona as a company might once have been questioned by some in the UK, things have changed. The yard has now been building boats for nearly 20 years. It's owned (as it always has been) by AD Plastics, a leading European supplier of automotive parts, which in turn is part of the ASA prevent Group. The new UK dealer will be familiar to many, too – Russell Hodgson, who formerly handled X-Yachts and later Dehler in the UK, and has already covered several thousand miles on the 380.

These recent developments and improvements can only increase Salona's appeal to prospective British buyers. If you're tempted by the boat you will probably also be tempted by the Limited Edition package of extras and upgrades that takes the specification to step-aboard-and-go level. It could see you sailing a sleek and sporty 38 for what, in relative terms, is a pretty reasonable amount of money.

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE AS TESTED
£239,950

LOA 11.60m (38ft 1in)

HULL LENGTH
11.60m (38ft 1in)

LWL 10.01m (32ft 8in)

BEAM 3.72m (12ft 2in)

DRAUGHT
2.10m (6ft 11in)

DISPLACEMENT
6,200kg (13,668lb)

BALLAST
2,200kg (4,850lb)

BALLAST RATIO 35%

DISPLACEMENT / LENGTH 174

SAIL AREA
80m² (861sq ft)

SA/D RATIO 24.05

DIESEL
100 litres (22 gal)

WATER
180 litres (40gal)

ENGINE 30hp

TRANSMISSION
Saildrive

RCD CATEGORY A

DESIGNER
Maurizio Cossutti

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