

On board

Nauticat 39

A motor-sailer with 90s styling



Siltala, a Finnish company with an enviable reputation, does not introduce new models lightly. The Nauticat 33, for example, was launched 27 years ago and 1,200 have been sold. She is still in production along with her original sisters, the Nauticat 38 and Nauticat 44. They were, are, motor-sailers in the old style, more motor-boats that yachts, though quite capable of making decent progress under sail, particularly in a fresh reaching breeze.

A range of three large (52ft, 43ft and 40ft) Sparkman & Stephens-designed yachts were added in the 80s, still with motor-sailer styled tops but finer underwater profiles. Even more sail-orientated designs at 35ft and 32ft from the company's in-house design team followed. Then, 18 months ago, Kaj

Gustafson, chief designer and now owner of Siltala, produced the Nauticat 39, which he has described as the start of a third generation of motor-sailers.

Design

Within the hull form of a moderate cruiser and a wheelhouse deck line she has a liveaboard accommodation, including two double and one generous single/possible double cabin.

Despite her rather high and full appearance, she is neither a particularly heavy nor beamy boat. Indeed, the statistics suggest a design which falls closer to the fast cruiser end of the scale. Nevertheless, below the waterline she is still full with soft, easy sections and a deep, bulbed fin keel cast in lead.

The forefoot is deep and there is little

At a glance

For

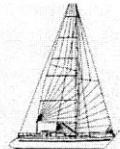
- High-quality finish
- Roomy wheelhouse
- Heavy weather handling

Against

- Galley in passageway forward
- No separate chart table
- Fiddly main hatch and washboards

flare to the topsides, so internal volume is maximised despite the narrow beam at deck level. She has a semi-balanced, skeg-hung rudder with a semi-elliptical trailing edge and the propshaft is supported by a P-bracket.

Above the waterline she has high topsides below a gentle sheer. This is topped by a coachroof and wheelhouse



which is less 'high-rise' than it might be. Indeed, it conforms very much to the dimensions of other modern yachts of this ilk (of which there are surprisingly few at this size). She has left behind the square profile of earlier Nauticats.

Below decks

In the wheelhouse, at least, the term 'below decks' is a bit misleading. Having climbed up and over a substantial bridgedeck, you have a view through the wheelhouse windows well above the level of the sidedecks. The seating in the raised dining area is only just below deck level.

The wheelhouse is the heart of the yacht, whether for enjoying an evening meal, drinks with friends, or just sitting and watching the oceans of the world

glide by. If the weather is cold and wet, the whole crew can shelter below and still keep a good watch. Visibility extends through virtually 360 degrees.

The steering position to starboard also has deck hatches giving a reasonable view of the luffs of both sails. It is not supplied with a seat, but if you want, one will be supplied.

Ahead of the wheel is a small work-top suitable for pilot books and other references for inshore work, but too small and inaccessible for proper chart work. This will be carried out on the saloon table, whose role as surrogate chart table is emphasised by the full-sized chart drawer underneath it.

Outboard of the wheel is a panel for navigation instruments, with sailing and engine instruments arranged ahead of the wheel. The helmsman is supplied with a splendid teak wheel which is linked to the rudder hydraulically. The number of turns lock to lock can be adjusted from three to six. He also has the master engine controls.

There is 6ft 1in headroom throughout the wheelhouse and bags of stowage around and under the dinette, which can seat five in comfort, six at a pinch. There are also spacious lockers outboard of the wheel.

While the helmsman can feel very much part of the group in the wheelhouse, the cook is slightly isolated at a lower level, forward and below the wheel. The galley runs along the outboard side of the passageway to the forecabin. It is not the most generous galley for a 39-footer, but it is well supplied with a variety of well-designed lockers, a large, top-opening icebox and a three-burner cooker and oven. Corian work surfaces are attractive and easy to clean. The drawers, despite good looking teak fronts, have plastic bodies which were sticky on their runners. There is a single, circular sink.

A panel by the galley gives access to the exceptionally well-organised electrical systems, which include shore power and a battery charger.

Across from the cooking area, the single cabin gives the accommodation valuable flexibility - two double cabins are not always appropriate for a four person crew. The 6ft 6in long bunk itself runs under the wheelhouse, but at the head is a standing area with 6ft 2in headroom. Stowage is a bit limited, though space is available for more if required. There is, however, a small hanging locker, shelf and cave locker. An overhead hatch provides ventilation and there is both an overhead and reading light. A large mirror does wonders for the apparent size of the cabin.

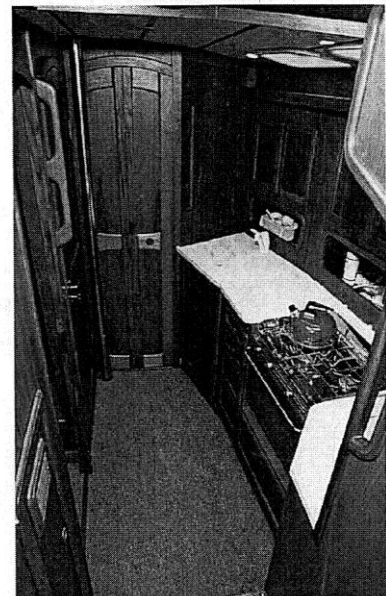
Between this and the forecabin is the forward heads, which is of generous proportions and is fitted with a shower

Construction

The hull and deck are both hand-laminated using isophthalic resins and alternating layers of chopped strand mat and woven rovings. There are two gelcoats. The hull is balsa-cored to the waterline and reinforced internally with moulded frames and stringers. In addition, some internal mouldings are used to add strength and the bulkheads are fully bonded to the hull.

The deck is also balsa-cored, solid in way of fittings, and bonded and bolted to the hull through an aluminium toerail. The windows are all of toughened safety glass in alloy frames. Deck gear such as winches are bolted to pre-drilled and tapped stainless steel plates.

Below: well-equipped but rather constricting galley



unit including screening and a mosaic tiled floor, but the shower water drains into the main bilge rather than having its own sump.

Of the two main sleeping cabins, that aft is the superior. Not only does it have an *en suite* heads, but it has more standing room, better stowage and a chair. Two opening hatches plus large windows let in plenty of light and air. The bunk is 6ft 5in long and 5ft wide and there is full headroom in the standing area.

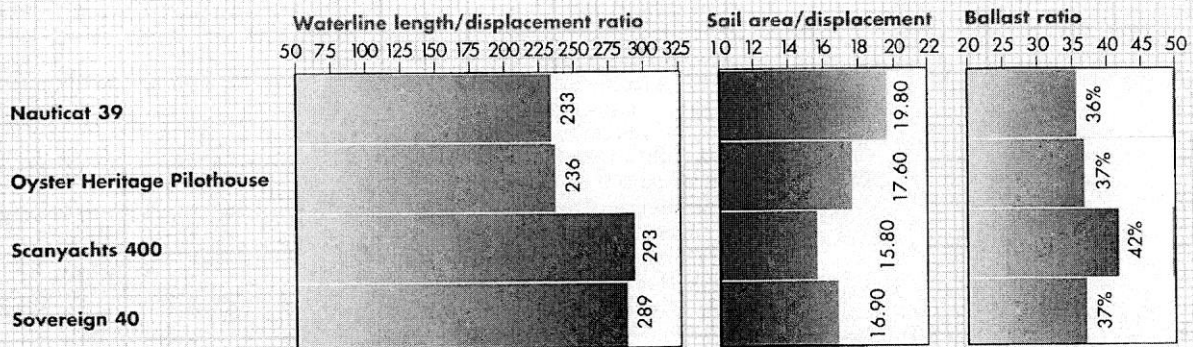
The after heads is reached by ducking under the cockpit sole, which is no particular problem. The arrangement creates much more of a feeling of a self-contained suite. Once inside the heads, there is 6ft 1in headroom. It is not as spacious as the forward heads overall, but the floor area is greater. Once

On board

Comparisons

	LOA	LWL	Beam	Draught	Displ	Ballast	Sail area	Berths	Engine hp	Inv	Price
Nauticat 39	11.85m 38ft 10in	9.80m 32ft 1in	3.50m 11ft 6in	1.83m 6ft	7,600kg 16,720 lb	2,700kg 5,940 lb	75m ² 807sq ft	5	50	A	£170,000
Oyster Heritage Pilothouse	11.28m	9.51m	3.66m	1.60m	7,316kg	2,727kg	65m ²	7	36	A	£180,598
Scanyachts 400	12.32m 39ft	9.91m 32ft 6in	3.76m 12ft 4in	1.47m 4ft 10in	7,925kg 17,752 lb	3,300kg 7,260 lb	62m ² 668sq ft	8	61	A	£174,899
Sovereign 40	12.20m 40ft	9.76m 32ft	3.92m 12ft 10in	1.68m 5ft 6in	9,673kg 21,280 lb	3,615kg 7,953 lb	75m ² 807sq ft	7	50	A	£180,950

1: Sail area is taken as main and working jib. Price may include a larger headsail 2: Inventory is graded from A to D A: excellent and includes luxuries beyond sailing necessities A*: as A but does not include sails B: good and includes all items for managing the yacht C: average including some essentials such as warps D: below average excluding many essentials 3: The quoted engine hp is that offered as standard or, where there is a choice, the one we consider most suitable to its role 4: The price is the standard manufacturer's retail price inc VAT, the engine quoted above and the standard sail wardrobe which may differ from the quoted sail area

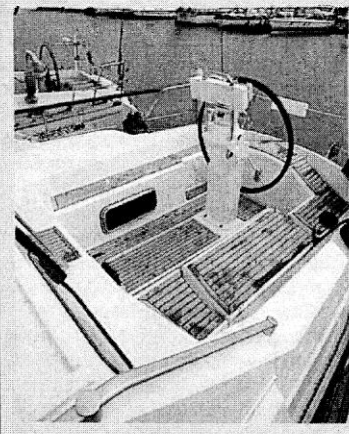


What the figures mean

Waterline length/displacement ratio: $D/(0.01 \times L)^3$. Where **D** is the displacement in tons and **L** is the waterline length in feet. This indicates the performance characteristics of the hull - how easily driven it will be. Yachts over 300 fall into the traditional heavy displacement category. Those over 250 are moderate cruisers, while performance cruisers and cruiser-racers rate from about 220 upwards. Flat-out racing craft and ULDBs are under 200. **Sail area/displacement ratio:** $S/Dv^{0.4}$. Where **S** is the sail area in sq ft (main and 100 per cent jib) and **D** is the displaced volume in cubic feet [displacement in pounds divided by 64]. It is a power to weight ratio and indicates how quickly the yacht will accelerate. Motor-sailers tend to be below 15, medium cruisers between 15 and 18, fast cruisers 18-22, and racing yachts over 22. **Ballast ratio:** $B/100D$. This expresses ballast as a percentage of displacement and is an indication of how well a yacht will stand up to her canvas. But it is a figure which must be used with caution, since a number of other factors affect a yacht's stability. Most cruising yachts have a figure between 35 and 45 per cent.

The right angle

Designers are finally getting around to realising that a sailing yacht spends most of its time heeled over at an unsociable angle, and Nauticat seems to have given this more attention than most on the new 39, not only with its well curved steps in the companionway, and nicely domed helmsman's seat, but also with its comfortably raked cockpit seats which slope back by 30 degrees or so - keeping the crew firmly settled whilst heeled well over.



again, there is a fully installed shower but it drains into the bilge.

The forecabin has two long V-berths and a reasonable amount of stowage but there is no standing room except with the infill removed. There is provision for installing a third, pilot berth for emergencies.

The quality of build and finish on the Nauticat is high. The company takes great trouble with its joinery, to the extent that all the teak, whether for laminating to marine ply or solid joinery, is cut from a single log to ensure an even match of colour and grain. Even the unseen woodwork is well finished. Lockers are all lined in wood and most have courtesy lights in them as well.

Plumbing and electrical work is also to a high standard and accessible. On a yacht like the Nauticat these systems can become extremely complex, particularly the electrical wiring, so a well-organised and labelled network of cabling and pipework is essential. All circuits were protected with circuit breakers, while the myriad valves, junctions and changeover switches for the fuel and water plumbing were accessible. To cope with the electrical demands there are two 170ah domestic batteries and a 120ah starting battery.

Providing light and air to the wheelhouse is no great problem, but the lower levels of cruisers like this are liable to be dark and airless. The white deckhead linings in the Nauticat enhance the natural light which comes through a generous number of deck hatches and opening ports.

In terms of design layout, there is nothing particularly special about the Nauticat. It follows well-proven principles which work well within the context of the wheelhouse cruiser and will suit a couple cruising on their own or with a couple of friends. What lifts the yacht above the average is the joinery and the way in which the services have been installed.

It is important to understand that all Nauticats are built to order and can be customised to almost any requirement provided the structural integrity of the hull is not affected and Siltala is happy the result is at least workable.

For extended offshore work the accommodation is not, perhaps, ideal. The single cabin and the wheelhouse settee can be used as seaberths but they are on the same side. The after double can be split by a lee cloth and would probably make a reasonable seaberth, although even at half-width, it is a bit



The light and spacious wheelhouse with secondary steering position

Origins of the species

The Nauticats have evolved considerably over the 30 years they have been in production. The earliest models had full keels and keel hung rudders, as in the 44. The 38 was somewhat shorter keeled with a finer forefoot and a separate rudder. When Sparkman & Stephens was called in, the traditional, upright, side entrance wheelhouse was abandoned for something lower and sleeker, though still with a motor-sailer-type cockpit and ketch rig, as typified by the 40. The underwater profile however, had definitely shifted to the sail end of the motor-sailer scale. The four-year-old 32, and her still more modern sister, the 39, complete the metamorphosis with powerful sloop rigs, sailing cockpits and powerful underwater lines.

wide. The galley is rather far forward and would prove lively during a hard beat. However, there are good grabrails throughout and the protection provided by the wheelhouse would do wonders for crew stamina. The danger of losing the glass from one of the large windows is less with modern materials and techniques, but is still a fear which lies in the back of the minds of deep-sea yachtsmen. In practice, Nauticats are frequently used for extended voyaging.

On deck

The cockpit is set high compared to most cruising yachts yet is still acceptably deep and secure. It has been designed for comfort at sea with its sloped seat bases as well as backs. We felt the wheel was a little close to the helmsman's seat but access around the modest diameter of the rim was good and the binnacle is equipped with a useful instrument pod.

There are large lockers under the side and after seats. Sidedecks are rather narrow but it is not intended they should be used while at sea except on rare occasions. Grabrails are generously supplied including particularly good ones round the companionway, a priceless handle on the binnacle and long rails on the coachroof. The usual guardwires are replaced with a proper teak rail, making the decks doubly secure.

The foredeck is equipped with a windlass and deep anchor well, which is also home to the gas bottle. There are pairs of mooring cleats bow and stern but none amidships.

Under sail

She has a double spreader rig with split, adjustable backstay, swept spreaders, inner forestay and a powerful rod kicker. In cruising terms it is highly tunable - perhaps more so than

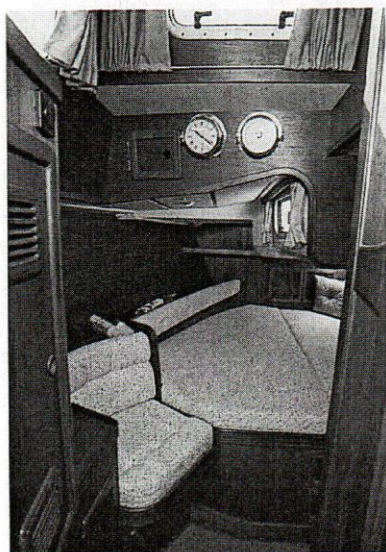
most owners will need. The sail wardrobe is left to the owner to select. The suggested plan includes fully-battened main and roller-reefing headsail. Halyards and reefing pennants can be handled at the mast or from the cockpit. Our boat had an in-mast furling system with the halyard at the mast and other controls at the cockpit. The main is sheeted to a traveller across the coachroof. Lewmar 48 self-tailing winches are specified for the sheets and Anderson 16 self-tailing models for the halyards. Other winches and gear depend on the system employed. Our trial boat was also fitted with the deep keel option.

Our trials were conducted in demanding conditions with a steady wind between 28-33 knots (Force 7), giving nearly 40 knots (Force 8) over

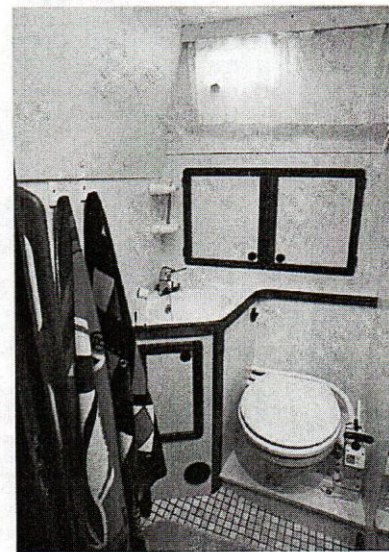
the deck to windward. If this yacht is going to have any shortcomings, it will be in the light wind department, and certainly there was little to criticise about her heavy weather handling.

To windward she had a soft, easy motion. The rod linkage from the cockpit wheel was delightfully positive but she was, in any case, well balanced under much reduced canvas and tracked well. Visibility over the wheelhouse is good and the helmsman has a comfortable seat in either quarter of the cockpit. The sloping seats made life much easier for the crew.

We found she was making between 6.3-6.5 knots on a beat, tacking through 85 degrees despite a choppy sea, of which she made light work. She tacked reasonably quickly - a nice balance between slickness and giving the crew time to winch in the headsail. She held her way well and was soon back up to



A good size aftercabin with seat and standing headroom



En suite aft heads with shower

On board



speed. While not having quite the fluency of a true performance yacht, she dealt with the conditions impressively suggesting the long-legged, easy speed which, while not exceptional, can be maintained without bruising the crew for the duration of a long passage.

Off the wind we found the wheel awkward to stand behind because of the short distance between wheel and seat. The helm also became a little heavy with Force 7 blowing over the quarter. She was not quite as straight running as we might have expected, but she was a long way from being skittish. On a close reach we had her powering up the Solent at close to 8 knots, and she maintained this speed until the wind was brought well aft of the beam. She remained under reliable control as the wind went further aft and we gybed in good order.

With a bitter chill in the wind and rain in the air, these were the conditions to encourage the use of the autopilot, and there was certainly nothing we found to suggest it would not have coped very well.

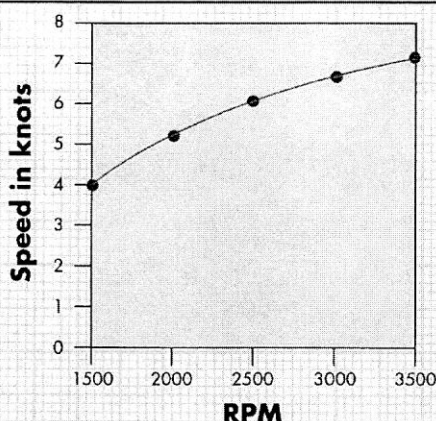
As it was, we retired below for a while to the interior steering position. Although there is no real feel to the hydraulic linkage, it was still quite positive and certainly acceptable for steering to windward in a non-competitive way. The luffs could both be seen through the hatches and the steering position was comfortable enough, even at 30 degrees of heel, though the starboard tack was somewhat more comfortable and had better visibility.

There is sufficient visibility astern through the clear washboards and quarter windows to make it feasible to keep watch down below in open waters, provided the narrow blind

Swell joinery

Siltala's pride in its joinery, while entirely justified, can also prove its undoing in an unexpected way. Unlike many builders whose doors and locker fronts shut with a generous allowance round the edges, Siltala makes doors which fit exactly, we are told. In Baltic and Mediterranean countries with low humidity levels this philosophy is much appreciated and admired.

In damp Britain the company occasionally gets accused of making doors which are too large, and either won't shut or get stuck. The fact is that the doors swell in British air. Siltala compensates by building special 'British' doors, a millimetre or so smaller. Occasionally, as was the case this spring, it gets caught out even so and doors need slight easing on arrival over here. On our review boat, the forecabin door was just a little tight. That's their story anyway.



Engine

Yanmar 4JH2-E diesel, 50hp, driving conventional sterngear

Capacities

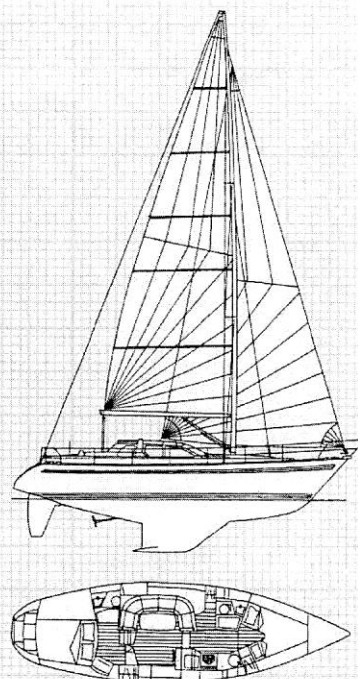
Water 500 lit (108 gal) in two stainless steel tanks
Fuel 350 lit (77 gal) in two stainless steel tanks
Batteries 2 x 170ah domestic, 1 x 120ah starting

Builder

Siltala Yachts Oy, Riihikiski, Finland

UK agent

Nauticat (UK) Ltd, Mariners House, High Street, Hamble, Southampton (Tel: 0703 453900)



spots were checked from time to time.

The rig is not overlarge even with a fully-battened main, and the roller furling main reduces it further, so it is likely that she will be comparatively less lively in light airs. But with 50hp of diesel engine under the sole, this is unlikely to worry many owners.

Under power

The Yanmar 4JH2-E marine diesel is mounted beneath the large, double-layer, sound-proofed floor panels in the pilothouse sole. Access to all sides and serviceable components is simple, and raw water and fuel filters are placed within easy reach for maintenance. The 50hp/3,600rpm fresh water-cooled engine transmits its power via mechanical transmission, with 2.6:2 reduction gearing, through a steel shaft, to a 16in x 14in bronze three-blade fixed prop.

The water-cooled exhaust system now has a double anti-syphon loop to prevent any seawater backflow, and proved to be so quiet at low rpm that we did not realise it was still running with the sails set until we spotted the exhaust water.

The boat seemed to handle very positively astern, albeit with a very slight kick to starboard. Turning in a tight circle presented no problems with the hull spinning around its reasonably short keel with ease. She favoured port turns to starboard, but the difference was not unduly worrying.

Driving down through the Hamble against the tidal flood one had the feeling that there was enough reserve horsepower to get you home through the worst conditions, and this was borne out with the effortless way she cruised to 6 knots at only 2,400rpm. At full revs, with the counter displaying a reading of 3,500rpm, a top speed of 7.2 knots was attained with only a slight drone permeating below.

Conclusions

Essentially, this is a comfortable cruising yacht which offers all-weather protection and a big engine when sailing, for whatever reason, is proving unrewarding or uncomfortable. Sailing purists will have to make few concessions to accept her handling and performance, while those who enjoy the arriving as much as the getting there will appreciate a well-built and equipped, cosy and top-quality interior with the added bonus of being able to see out from the saloon.

Siltala has had difficulty shrugging off the heavy displacement, motorboat image it actively courted in its early days. This model will do its search for a sportier character no harm at all without compromising its reputation for finely built interiors. She has the fuel and water tankage to allow extended cruising and sufficient stowage to carry the food and clothes to go with it. JJ