



# Sporty Swede

Sam Fortescue gets blown away by the rapid new Arcona 380

“She’s pretty nippy,” the photographer tells me afterwards. “Nice clean hull, too.” And he should know, having spent the best part of five hours in a RIB trying to keep up with us. He probably saw more of her hull than anything as she heeled into the 20 knot plus gusts.

Arcona’s new 380 is billed as a performance cruiser and she fits the role with great aplomb. Designed by Swede Steffan Qviberg – “who only works with us,” according to Arcona’s UK dealer Tony Bottomley – she has really clean, graceful lines. Her low-profile coachroof keeps her lean and she has a powerful, wide stern – though not as much so as some modern yachts, which carry their beam to the transom.

She’s the sixth boat in a concentrated range that runs from 34ft (10.4m) to 46ft (14m) in length, all owing their origins to Torgny

Jansson, the son of Arcona’s founder, who took over the business 14 years ago. Tony puts the emergence of the brand as an international success down to Torgny’s vision. “The boat is designed with two things in mind,” he says. “First, sailing joy and second, stiffness and durability.” Potentially contradictory, these two aims have been well reconciled here.

Powering upwind towards Weymouth beach in what the B&G wind instrument claims is only 15 knots true wind, we easily make 8 knots of boat speed under the main and small jib. Later still, after an incident that saw us break the outhaul at the rope-wire splice (blame the electric winch), we manage over 7 knots reaching under jib alone – a true jib, at that: a parsimonious little thing.

There is minimal feel from the twin wheels – just enough to know what’s going on – but the boat tracks well, so there’s little feedback to give. Just occasionally a stronger gust rolls in and there is nothing I can do to stop her from broaching to windward. Her powerful centreline rudder soon wins out and gets her back on track with minimum drama. We’re slightly over-pressed, and should have taken a reef in – easily done from the cockpit using the single-line slab reefing system.

## 40 years of boatbuilding

Arcona has built boats in the Stockholm Archipelago since the 70s with design input from Steffan Qviberg since the 90s

ALL PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY

**Super stiff**

Arcona is very proud of its rigid hull, achieved by laminating a steel frame into the boat to connect keel, mast and chainplates

1

**Open transom**

A fold-down bathing platform can be fitted, but Arcona prefers this hybrid step with aft lockers and ladder

2

**Hidden lines**

The coachroof is kept clear and tidy by passing the lines from the mast foot under the deck to the halyard winches

3

*'Despite her 2.1m draught, it feels as if we're barely skimming across the surface of the sea'*

is to increase hull stiffness and deal with the dynamic loading from the keel-stepped mast and the shrouds. The hull itself has a Divinacell core for lightness (and great insulation properties) and is laid up with multi-axial layers of glassfibre.

**Sensible cockpit**

She has a fairly open cockpit, by which I mean the coaming isn't over-high and the standard configuration has an open transom. Arcona will put on a drop-down bathing platform if customers insist, but refreshingly prefers not to – citing aesthetics and already good access to the water via a teak-covered step and a bathing ladder. Two

lockers partly enclose the stern and provide a seat for the helmsman. There's also a narrow, low coaming alongside each wheel which makes a narrow, cramped perch for the helm, but gives better access to the aft-most winches and the mainsheet traveller line, which is bolted to the cockpit sole just ahead of the wheels.

**Stiffer sails**

For an extra £4,800, you can upgrade to sails with carbon tape to stiffen them. They hold their shape better and last as long

**Responsive rig**

The standard rig is pretty straightforward, but carefully thought-out controls should keep even obsessive sail-trimmers happy. The jib sheets are routed through a carbon eye on a Dyneema strop before running into standard deck travellers. Tightening the strop allows you to bring the sheeting point right inboard, almost to the centreline – making for better close-hauled performance.

We got a bit tangled up with all the control lines in the cockpit, but a more fastidious sailor wouldn't have had this problem. All the lines from the foot of the mast are fed under the deck to keep things tidy. One niggle was that the mainsheet traveller line became a cat's cradle because the cam cleat was on the traveller itself, rather than at a fixed point at the side of the cockpit. And while leaving the track proud on the deck creates more space below, it adds an obstacle on deck.

Our test boat had upgraded to carbon-taped sails for better performance and this is an option that Tony advises. The sails last as long as cruising Dacron but keep their shape better thanks to the stiffening effect of the lattice of carbon tape. This allows us to point up to 25° off the apparent wind and, though the sails are stalling a little, we manage an impressive 7 knots at about 40° off the true wind, giving us a useful tacking angle of around 80°.

I would like to have seen some foot blocks here for stability – otherwise you have to hang onto the guard wires. Short-handed sailors would be wise to upgrade one of the Harken ST40 winches on the coaming by the helm for an electric version. This makes sheeting in the main on its double-ended German mainsheet system more feasible without losing control of the wheel. Two further ST46s deal with the jib sheets, with a pair of electric halyard winches on the coachroof.

There's stowage in cave lockers in the coaming and some nifty rope-tidying cubbyholes. But there's no lazarette under the seats unless you choose the interior configuration with just one aft cabin. However, there is a whopping liferaft locker under the cockpit sole aft of the helm. With its semi-open transom, the cockpit would quickly drain any green water, but a sensible lip at the top of the companionway makes absolutely certain that the cabin stays dry. And the washboard slots neatly into a cradle here.





**Modern classic**  
The aesthetic is unashamedly woody, with rich Khaya mahogany finish and simple cream upholstery

**Sliding nav station**  
With a bit of grunt, you can slide the chart table aft to free up more seating and a good long saloon berth

**Calm comfort**

Part-time racers and serious-minded sailors will find much to admire below. The mahogany finish is to a high standard, without being fussy, and there are two modest hull lights for brightness. The standard set-up provides two double cabins aft with a cosy heads and shower to starboard and another double in the fo'c's'le. A semi-horseshoe galley to port has plenty of

deep fiddles to hang on to and boasts an oven with double hob and a top-opening fridge with two large compartments. A series of drawers is topped by a slide-out chopping board/trivet for hot pans. The nav station lies to starboard, forward of the heads. It offers a modern-sized chart table – to my mind a little on the small side – and access to the VHF and any instruments set into a hinged panel

full of very tidy wiring. Cleverly, the chart table slides back and forth on rails set into the side panelling. When it's back, it opens up room for an infill to extend the seat or berth.

The drop-leaf saloon table is large enough for eight people to eat. And it harbours another really nice design feature: a drawer for the ship's grog supplies. A custom-built mould is cut to fit bottles of the owner's favourite tipples. There's an inner drawer containing glasses too.

The boat is Ocean category A-rated, of course, but for serious offshore cruising, Tony recommends some modifications – there is space for a fuel cell (see ST209) in the cockpit locker, and room for a watermaker under the port saloon berth forward of the water tank. It would be a hard task to fit windvane steering on the open transom, but there is plenty of space for a wind or tow/hydro generator on the pushpit.

**FOR VIDEO** of this test, and for dozens more new boat tests, see [www.sailingtoday.co.uk](http://www.sailingtoday.co.uk)



**VERDICT**

Arcona's sensible design team and quality shipwrights have produced a boat which would happily cross oceans. Like a Volvo, she's stiffly built, but fast and agile too. You could even win round-the-cans races in her when you finally arrived at the other side of the world. Though she makes the most of modern technology, with her vacuum infusion and clever rig, she has a solidly traditional feel to her. Perhaps it's more to do with the aesthetic below, with woody bulkheads and sensible galley, but I think it's more as if the team that designed the boat disdain the trends in production boatbuilding and firmly opted for a more seamanlike design. You'll find cheaper 40-footers, but you'd be hard-pushed to find a better compromise between looks, performance and stability. Or one that's more thrilling to sail.

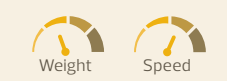
**LOOKS:** ★★★★★  
**PERFORMANCE:** ★★★★★  
**BLUEWATER:** ★★★★★

**THE SPEC**

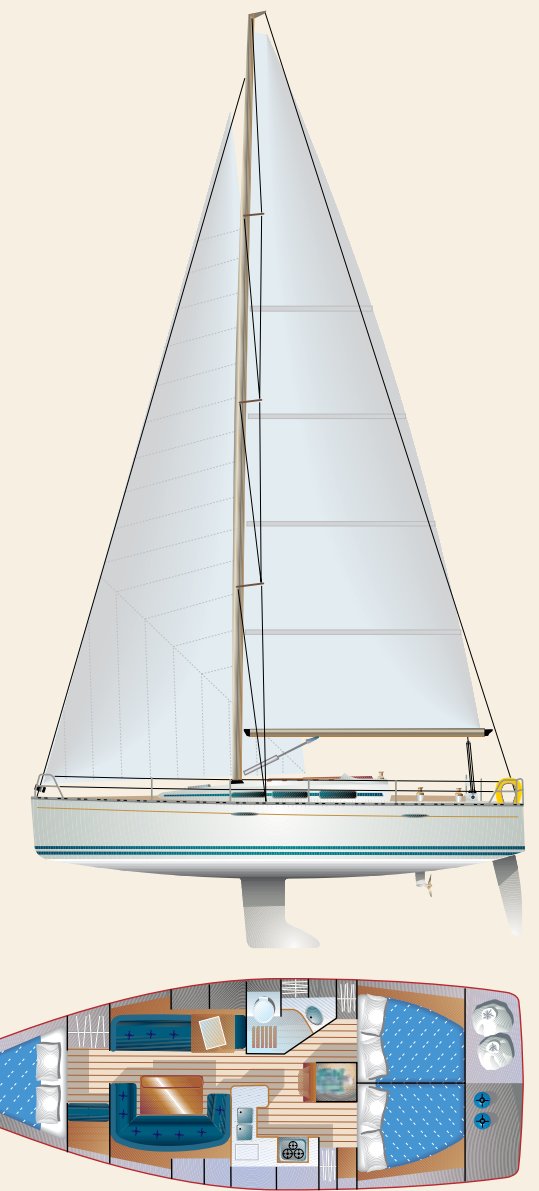
- SAILAWAY PRICE FROM** £249,000  
**AS TESTED** £268,000
- LOA:** 37ft (11.3m)
- LWL:** 34ft 9in (10.6m)
- Beam:** 12ft 6in (3.8m)
- Draught:** short 6ft 3in (1.9m); standard 6ft 11in (2.1m); deep 7ft 10in (2.4m)
- Displacement:** 15,100lb (6,850kg)
- Upwind sail area:** 941sqft (87.4m<sup>2</sup>)
- Fuel:** 32gal (150Lt)
- Water:** 43gal (200Lt)
- Berths:** 6 or 8
- Engine:** Yanmar 3YM/SD20
- Designer:** Steffan Qviberg
- Builder:** Arcona Yachts
- UK supplier:** Arcona Yachts UK  
02380 457770, [www.arconayachts.com](http://www.arconayachts.com)

**PERFORMANCE**

**AVS:** 126°  
**Displ/LWL ratio:** 159  
**Sail area/Displ ratio:** 23



For a fuller explanation of stability and performance figures see [www.sailingtoday.co.uk](http://www.sailingtoday.co.uk)



IF THE ARCONA 380'S NOT RIGHT FOR YOU...



**XC-38**  
**On the water** £263,000  
Medium to heavy displacement, with a deep hull sections for better headroom, the XC-38 is a 'luxury' performance cruiser. She has an uncluttered deck and small fold-down bathing platform; twin wheels with a central instrument console. Optimised for a two-cabin lay-out.  
[www.x-yachtsgb.com](http://www.x-yachtsgb.com)



**HALLBERG-RASSY 372**  
**On the water** £247,156  
Optimised for comfortable and fast family cruising, the 372 will take you anywhere. She has the trademark windscreen and high cockpit coaming, and a high quality woody finish below. Probably the most popular model of Hallberg-Rassy.  
[www.transworldyachts.co.uk](http://www.transworldyachts.co.uk)



**GRAND SOLEIL 39**  
**On the water** £235,000  
Teak-decked Italian style with bags of performance to boot. She features a carbon composite frame for stiffness. Twin wheels with a wide, open transomed cockpit and an elegant, customisable interior. Sleeps 4 to 8 in 2/3 cabins.  
[www.keyyachting.com](http://www.keyyachting.com)