

# Aquastar 42

Aquastar wants to change the way you see aft cabins. The 42 is certainly full of surprises, but do they work as good as they look? REPORT BY MARK TURLEY



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## The brief...



The AquaStar 38 has always been one of my favourite boats – tough, handsome and pleasingly straightforward, so will a larger sibling packed with features turn my head?

Mark

**LOA:** 42ft 0in (12.80m)  
**PRICE:** from £470,170 (with twin engines)  
**TOP SPEED:** 25 knots  
**BUILDERS:** Aquastar Ltd  
**ENQUIRIES** Tel: 01481 244711  
[www.aquastar.gg](http://www.aquastar.gg)

**T**he Aquastar 38 has been in production for more years than I care to remember (since 1978 actually), but in all that time if you wanted to stay with this Guernsey yard but change to a larger boat, it meant jumping up to its 48-footer at double the money. This gap has now been filled with an all-new aft cabin 42 that not only offers considerably more space than the 38, it has also dragged the aft cabin genre forward by a good measure.

## Design & build

Aquastar hulls always follow a semi-displacement format and the 42's has a full run of keel that pushes below the props, so with beaching legs it can take the ground, and a sharp entry to cleave through oncoming seas. The downside of this design is usually plenty of spray but in an attempt to mitigate this, extra hefty chines and sprayrails have been worked in. This 'all-inclusive' practical thinking runs right through the design,

ensuring it is a short hop between the pontoon and deck level for easy side-boarding and, with the radar arch hinged down, this very much all-weather cruiser will be at home on the Continental waterways too.

The true modernising stuff comes from Mark Tucker and his Design Unlimited studio. Tucker has been responsible for many a Sunseeker and has brought in a sharp, clean look that works in some far larger window areas and plenty of them. The saloon, accessed from the aft deck via a set of companionway steps, is one

beneficiary of the deep window line, not only letting in loads of natural light but giving a full-on view out while seated at the big, comfortable dinette. A large overhead opening skylight in the deckhead also contributes to natural light levels as does the expanse of forward screen that gives an atrium effect to the generous, well-spec'd galley directly under it.

When you enter the full-beam aft cabin you'll probably think you've boarded the 48 by mistake. It's big for sure, but the feeling of

space is spurred on by the fact that you're surrounded by three sets of large, eye-line height windows. But it's not just smoke and mirrors, the central berth is a full queen-sized double flanked either side by handy bedside tables to stash glasses and books. There's also a whole raft of attractively crafted stowage options, from nests of drawers and fiddled shelves in cupboards, right through to a generous dressing table complete with stool. Here, the en suite facilities are split between a good-sized shower stall on

PHOTOS: WILLIAM PAYNE



INTERIOR HELM



## Interior

Practical, comfortable and sturdy

The full model name is the slightly clunky 42 Panoramic, but it's certainly not short of a view, whether from the bright,

welcoming saloon that can be

fitted with an ultra-modern lectern-style helm station or the seriously comfortable aft cabin with its nice-but-nautical topside windows fabricated in 16mm bullet-proof glass. However, although Mark Tucker might have been keen to get a sharper, lighter, **contemporary feel** to the 42, it is very much a practical, **sea-going vessel** right down to the fact that every surface benefits from a fiddle, even down to the shelves in the numerous cupboards.



SCISSOR BERTHS



AFT CABIN



STORAGE



EN SUITE

LOWER DINETTE



SHOWER



GALLEY



TOILET COMPARTMENT



PILOT BERTH

one side and a smartly turned out toilet compartment on the other; both have plenty of headroom, something that is not always a foregone conclusion on this sort of layout.

Up at the sharp end the forecabin can be fitted out as a fixed double or for extra versatility with scissor berths that can be used as two singles or pushed together to make a double to suit. Headroom, whether standing or sitting up in bed, is good and while storage is less expansive than the aft cabin it is very adequate. The en suite is again smartly fitted out with plenty of joinery and a ceramic sink, and to protect the woodwork while showering there are a couple of fold out screen doors to form a shower cubicle.

The area between the forecabin and saloon is largely given over to the galley. This is biased to starboard and is well appointed, incorporating a sink, drainer and gas-powered cooking facilities (which can be upgraded to electric with a generator), plus stacks of stowage. If required, the galley can be extended to port, but in this instance the area was fitted out with a quarter berth. Alternatively this can make up a handy office area, tidying away the ship's papers and charts.

Back out on deck crew safety is superb with easy to negotiate side decks bordered by deep gunwales and solid guardrails. Boarding or disembarking has been kept as safe as possible too, with decent stairwells running up either side of the transom from the bathing platform and an amidships freeboard that makes hopping on and off a doddle.

The aft deck seating feels similarly secure, the U-shaped dinette with its chunky, folding table nestles behind a substantial coaming. When alongside the back of the double helm seat can be hinged over to give more face to face seating and there's also space for a BBQ and a fridge.



## From the helm

Futuristic but pricey lower helm

While the **optional lower helm** station looks like it's straight from the spaceship Enterprise, it's an extremely practical piece of design where everything is at your fingertips. With a helm seat that appears to move in every which way and great visibility, you can get very comfortable down here. However, it's a pricey extra and while its seat can be swung round and dropped to face the dinette it still encroaches on the saloon as a living space and most people will probably be happy with the equally tidy **upper helm** that is protected by a deep coaming and clip down pram hood. Up here the helmsman also gets the support of a navigator or two as there is room for a second person at the helm, plus a third on a further seat across the way. At both consoles there is plenty of dedicated space for electronics as well as bits trays and cup holders. The only downside concerns the upper helm seat which lacks any fore and aft adjustment.

## Performance & handling

The thick end of a Force 5 met us as we motored out of Guernsey's St Peter Port so we reckoned on some pretty testing conditions. But oddly the sea state wasn't too bad, or perhaps it just seemed like that from behind the wheel of this 42. Certainly there was nothing to stop us from using the whole rev range, with 3600rpm delivering a 25-knot top speed and a cruising speed of 21.5 knots at 3300rpm. Wind a bit of helm on at these speeds and the hull responds smartly, wind plenty of helm on at these speeds and the 42 turns through a tight, even circle as if its on tracks. Drop the revs further and you can work right the way back through the teens and into single figures and the hull – in typical semi-displacement fashion – doesn't give a hoot. Set what's comfortable and it'll march onwards without getting moody, even when it comes to



*"The sprayrails did an effective job of deflecting spray"*



fuel efficiency – locking onto around three-quarters of a mile per gallon and sticking to it. When it came to handling the slightly messy conditions, true to form the hull chopped through the tops of everything in its way but in this instance rather than the usual fountain of spray blowing back aboard the aggressive sprayrails did an effective job of deflecting it and only occasionally did we need the wipers. Turn down wind and you find the hull nicely balanced and responsive to its trim tabs; winding them up from their usual half-down setting brings the nose up to keep it out of trouble.



EXTERNAL HELM

## On deck

*Easy to move around and hop on and off*

As with most other aft cabin models the 42's **aft deck** really falls into the category of a cockpit, protected by deep gunwales where the seating tucked in from the boat's sides doubles as stowage. The helm area benefits from an easy to deploy clip

down **pram hood** to fill the gap between the radar hoop and screen. The rest of the 'cockpit' relies on the usual canopy arrangement. Boarding when alongside is particularly easy thanks to the **low freeboard** and built-in steps within the topsides. The fact that it is so easy to hop on and off, coupled with its **3.5m air draught**, means it is eminently suitable for the inland waterways of continental Europe as well as being a substantial seaboot.



WET-BAR



RAISED DINETTE



DECK WARE



SIDE DECKS



AFT STEPS



SIDE-DECK STEP



FUEL FILLERS



BACK-LIT TRANSOM



## Specification & value

There are a fair few boats – all with sound credentials – that fall into the 40ft aft cabin category. Aquastar are very much at the premium no-nonsense end of the market, adding seriously comfortable offshore cruising to the mix, and this is reflected in the price. The standard boat with twin diesels sits in just under £500k and although this includes a competent spec and hefty fittings it still needs a bow thruster and heating, plus teak decking and a generator perhaps. Hence, the total bill, which includes the £12,500 interior helm, runs to £550,000 – making it a good bit pricier than Broom's new 430, on a rough par with the delectable although smaller Dale Nelson 38 but less than a Hardy 42. A tough call between a great bunch of top-notch British boats. As an aside, the 42 is only around 10% more expensive than the Aquastar 38, which doesn't exactly bode well for my old favourite.

## Technical data

### KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	42ft 0in (14.80m)
HULL LENGTH	39ft 6in (12.04m)
BEAM	14ft 0in (4.27m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 9in (1.18m)
AIR DRAUGHT (mast down)	11ft 2in (3.40m)
DISPLACEMENT	14.4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	390gal (1770lt)
WATER CAPACITY	100gal (450lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	12in (30cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 5in (1.96m)
FOREGABIN BERTH	6ft 4in x 4ft 10in (1.93 x 1.47m)
AFT CABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 5ft 3in (2.00 x 1.60m)

### PERFORMANCE

Engines	twin Volvo Penta D6-370hp diesels
Configuration	6cyl 5.5lt, 370hp @ 3500rpm
conditions	wind SW Force 5, sea moderate
Load	fuel 100%, water 100%, crew 2

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
1500	7.0	3.5	16	2.00	624	69
2000	9.9	8.4	38	1.18	368	70
2600	12.9	16.5	75	0.78	243	72
3000	17.3	22.0	100	0.79	245	73
3200	19.8	26.4	120	0.75	234	76
3400	22.3	29.0	132	0.77	240	77
3550	24.8	34.3	156	0.72	226	78

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to Imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken on the aft deck.

### PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 370hp diesels	£477,714
BOW THRUSTER	£3480
HEATING	£5415
GENERATOR	£11,370
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	standard
INTERIOR-HELM	£12,500
COMMISSIONING & ANTI FOUL	standard

**BOAT AS TESTED £555,600\***

\*Boat as tested price may include alternative options

# Enginebay

The price list includes a single engine option but a boat like this would probably develop a complex if it wasn't given twins. The smallest twin installation is a pair of Volvo penta D4-225s but you really need to push into the world of six cylinders to get things moving – there is 20 tonnes of boat to shift after all. The test boat came with twin 370hp D6 and that is right option for us.

The set-up is straight-forward and beefy, the conventional shaftdrive engines sitting under the saloon sole. Access to the engine compartment for daily checks is easy, a central panel in the sole



pulls up to aid access between the engines. We also liked the way all four main filters – two raw water and two fuel – had been bought to this central spot, making inspection and any servicing so simple. Hinging up the steps down to the aft cabin also gives a measure of access but for more elaborate maintenance other panels in the saloon sole have to be lifted.

## THE VERDICT

This 42 does more than fill a gap within Aquastar's range, it delivers a shot in the arm to aft cabin cruising with its extra, window-clad lifestyle feel. It also offers a very capable alternative to the contemporary 40ft flybridge. Aquastar build no-nonsense boats with a level of comfort, finish and now style that ensure lifetime usage.

## Meet the family



**BIGGER**

**Aquastar 49 from £768,000**

LOA: 49ft 0in (14.94m)

A new 49ft model along similar lines to the 42 will replace the yard's beefy 48-footer.



**SMALLER**

**Aquastar 38 from £425,200**

LOA: 38ft 0in (11.58m)

A highly likeable and capable 38-footer available either with an aft cabin or rear cockpit.

## The rivals



**Broom 430 from £410,000 (with twins)**

LOA: 43ft 4in (13.21m)

The berth on Broom's new 430 has been swung through 90° so it runs athwartships and the en suite is more wetroom than toilet compartment.



**Hardy Commodore 42 from £532,650**

LOA: 46ft 0in (14.02m)

Big, robust and although it has an aft cabin its more of a trawler style boat than a raised aft deck.