

# The people's Princess

Some big seas off Plymouth gave us the ideal opportunity to trial the new Princess 50 but this boat's real test came when we invited three lots of existing Princess owners to have their say

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

BOAT REPORT

PRINCESS 50

## Tester says...



The 50ft class is already chock full of exciting, innovative models. So what can Princess, with its rather conservative approach, offer? A huge master cabin and a low price isn't a bad start.

## Meet the owners



**Ian and Carole** owned a Princess 38 and were looking for a three cabin cruiser, with the Fairline Phantom 48 looking like a serious contender. How would the P50 stack up?



**Andy Hobbs** owns a Princess 56, which he is very happy with, but feared this new smaller boat might upset his current contentment by feeling bigger and better.



**Neil and David** looked at the old 50 as a replacement for their 430 but didn't think it offered that much more. They want this new 50 to really up the levels of interior space.

The first things you notice when approaching the Princess 50 is its height and the line of topside ports that shouts 'midships master cabin'. Although still a true 50-footer, not a foot more or less, an increase of 8in in height over its predecessor really delivers with great headroom throughout the boat. And while pushing things up isn't always the best idea when it comes to aesthetics, its profile easily manages to stay sharp and sleek instead of just plain boxy. Up on the flybridge this extra size means you feel very much in contention with those who have splurged on a 60-footer – a point made by one owner Andy Hobbs who currently has a Princess 56. Staying up on the flybridge a moment the



**FACT FILE**  
Princess 50  
LOA: 50ft 5in (15.37m)  
PRICE: from £636,145  
TOP SPEED: 30 knots

**MOTOR BOATS TESTED**



## Ian and Carole Parker

Former owners of *Kismet*, Princess 38, new owners of *Chancer*, Princess 50

The Parker family have owned a Princess 38 for the past six years and have been very pleased with her. But now their two lads are grown-up and bring their partners aboard for cruising holidays, so they needed a boat that could comfortably accommodate six adults without using the saloon to sleep in.

They explored several possibilities and at one stage a Fairline Phantom 48 was very much on the cards but before a deal was struck, Ian heard that Princess were bringing out a new 50 and they held off to see what the boys from Plymouth could come up with. Ian and Carole were given a sneak preview of the plans and liked what they

saw, so much so they put off upgrading for a year until the P50 was in production and signed on the dotted line just prior to this test. So what swayed them? "We love all three cabins but it

**We really wanted another Princess**

was the combination of the master cabin and the fact that there is so much floor space and clothes storage in the adult-sized third cabin that made all the difference".

The generous proportions and sociable nature of the saloon was another driving factor, not least because all six of them can sit up around the helm area

thanks to the raised dinette opposite. Ian also praised the virtues of the lower, lounge orientated saloon. He loves the great view out and the huge amount of natural light that the window line gives.

Is there anything that they are disappointed with? "A bit more wardrobe space and

more draws in lieu of lockers in our cabin would be good," says Carole but on the whole they are over the moon with their 50 – even though Ian's head has found the side of the deckhead above the berth a couple of times. Both Ian and Carole also stressed that they really wanted to stick with Princess because of its "superb quality and service".

consensus was that its layout – with its generous dinette to starboard and raised sunpad behind – felt particularly well protected behind the deep coamings. Far better than the Fairline Squadron 55 in that respect. But there were slightly mixed feelings about the helm's double seat due to the fact that the skipper has to move to let his mate in and out. This is one area that Princess hasn't managed to crack, unlike Fairline who make a point of making sure its twin seats can be accessed individually.

### Spacious interior

However, it is the new 50's interior that does the show-stealing and everyone extolled the virtues of the saloon layout with its relaxed, generous lower lounge area complete with a long sideboard offering everything from specialist stowage compartments to a bar and ice maker. Even more impressive though is the comfortable raised dinette seating opposite the helm. The fact that the whole crew can sit up here with the skipper is a cracking bonus, almost regardless of the fact that it allows the master suite that lies beneath to enjoy some top-drawer headroom.

The second thing the whole test team liked was that wherever you are sitting or standing you have a great view out and the vast windows flood the whole saloon area with light.

The design's extra height is especially noticeable when it comes to the companionway down to the galley and cabins, this is a real staircase rather than half a dozen steps, a point picked up by Neil – joint owner of a Princess 430. Neil takes on most of the catering chores while afloat and said he could see himself loosing a pound or two if he was running up and down them at meal times. The galley itself benefits from plenty of counter space, is well appointed and has loads of useful eye-height cupboards. The only mute point is the single large sink, rather than a one and a half bowl type with a separate drainer.

Now for this boat's trump card. To our mind the 50's midships suite is the best in its class, a sentiment echoed by all our owners, especially Andy who said it's a "different world" compared to the forward master cabin on his 56. The cabin also helped sway Ian and Carole Parker – Princess 38 owners who were looking for something special by way of a three cabin boat – from sticking a deposit on a rival's 50-footer.

The only minor gripe we could muster was the deckhead overhang towards the end of the berth – a slight, if well disguised, intrusion from the saloon's floorplan above. Apart from this, we all conceded this cabin has all the space and luxury of a £1m yacht, not least because of that breathtaking panoramic view out the windows.

The one other bugbear our team picked up on was that the sliding door to the smart en suite has to be open to allow the cabin's actual entrance door to open out fully – but Princess tell us it is looking to modify this.



**New!**

360°  
online  
view

The split level saloon, seen here in the cherry wood finish, is incredibly bright. Our owners looked at the light oak option



Superyacht midships cabin offers excellent levels of space



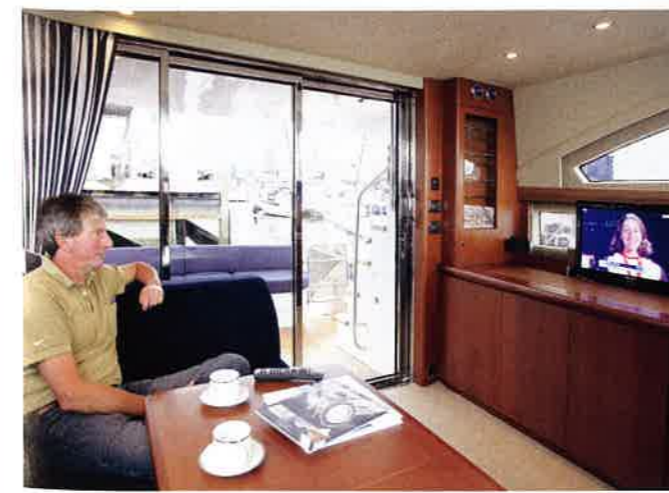
Plenty of storage and headroom to the forward VIP cabin



Space and stowage for third cabin



The raised dinette, opposite the helm, means everybody gets to share the fun and driving experience



Triple cockpit doors and a side cabinet complete with pop-up TV add class



Not the biggest ensuites, but smart



Plenty of space and storage but only one sink



**Andy Hobbs** Owner of *Lucky Ash*, Princess 56

"I'm really impressed by the clean design and finish of the new Princess range," said Andy before we even boarded the P50. "When friends come to visit me on my 56 they can't believe how glamorous she is, but I know that if any one of them stepped aboard this 50 they'd forget all about my old Princess!"

Sure enough his friend Mike walks into the saloon of the 50 and utters the words no skipper wants to hear, "Wow Andy, this is much better than yours". After

giving us a look somewhere between 'I told you so' and simple disappointment, Andy starts to have a dig around, starting on the flybridge.

"I spend most of my time up here and it's clear that the use of space on this smaller boat is put

to much better use than mine. The seating, sunpad and wet-bar are all miles ahead. It feels bigger up here too with more deck space."

Back down at deck level there was a slight reservation about the side decks. "They look a bit narrower than the 56's but they're still good and if it means more interior space, then so much the better".

Another area to impress was the enginebay. "I reckon my 56

"If we were going to change our 56 it would be for this master cabin. Compared to our forward cabin this is another world. And the 50's forward guest cabin is actually better than ours too – in the headroom department especially. The toilet compartments do feel a bit on the tight side, though.

"Looking at the saloon it is clear how boat build and design has changed. Everything is much more modular now. I reckon there must be ten times the parts and components on

my 56. There is no internal flybridge ladder here in the saloon but the two seating areas are exactly the same as on my larger boat. If I was standing on the flybridge and I didn't know how big this boat was I'd say it was about 56ft, or even a 60-footer."

wins on engine access but the actual room in the bay is far better on the 50. I can't get between the engines on my boat but here it's easy".

Moving inside the big differences started to ring out, especially below decks.

**The flybridge is far better than that on my 56**

However, it wasn't just the full beam master that convinced Ian and Carole that the Princess 50 was seriously worth considering, it was all three cabins. The third cabin – often a pokey affair with a couple of berths and little else – has a surprising amount of space to move around in and get dressed, plus a decent amount of storage. Part of the reason for this is that Princess has opted for bunks, rather than proper side by side berths, that could make up into a double. Recently Jeanneau has managed to do just this on its Prestige 50, but the extra volume is clearly a bonus here with superb headroom, even above the top bunk, and clear floorspace in the cabin.

All of the cabins have sprung mattresses and wide doorways. This last point is important as it is often where builders steal space from, making access around the boat painfully tricky, but not here. We were all pleased to find that the forward cabin hasn't suffered on account of the midships suite's expansiveness either. It is much the same as you would expect if this was in fact the master cabin, except that it shares its en suite facilities with the third cabin.

When it comes to the quality of the fitout, you would be hard pressed not to praise the craftsmanship and attention to detail – from the finely executed joinery to the sensible labelling of pipes and wires in the enginebay – this boat has been soundly engineered and put together. Styling, of course, is a much more personnel issue but most of us felt that Princess's sharp and clean lines are easy to live with – contemporary without looking cold – while offering some real big boat power and presence.

**A real performer**

That on-water presence, though, could have its drawbacks. With plenty of beam and height to contend with, not to mention some serious weight, the performance and handling could suffer and along with it the comfortable sea-keeping and sharp handling that we associate with Princess. But we are pleased to report that its reputation stays assuredly intact. Sure, it's not the quickest, just making it to 30 knots, and it does no better in terms of speed or mpg than its predecessor but, as we've just remarked, this is one of the biggest, most accommodating and generous 50s you will find.

It's quick to answer the helm and the extra height doesn't effect its poise at all. In fact, its head sea performance and ride comfort need a special commendation and, if anything, this is a hull that clearly prefers to run in the mid twenties rather than dawdling around in the teens. Even so you can expect a useful and pretty swift cruising economy of around 0.7 mpg.

The two helm stations are excellent, the lower one having particularly good visibility. Our only real gripe with the flybridge helm, which was echoed by a couple of our owners, is that the helm seat is positioned too close to the console, making it difficult for the skipper to stand.



The new P50 is a big boat but she handles beautifully, with a sublime upwind ride

**SEE IT**  
at the London Boat Show  
Stand S26 and berths 80-82



The large, comfortable flybridge seating is very well protected



The optional tender crane is housed in the transom



Space in the aft cockpit for an extra table and chairs



We think engine bay space is slightly down on the old 50



Easy to get at stern cleats



Separate rope and chain lockers



Lazarette or crew cabin access



Tucked away filler caps



Andy notes the slightly cramped helm but likes the wet-bar



Not much non-slip on the coachroof



## David Hutchinson and Neil Mountain

Owners of *AquaVit*, Princess 430

Business partners David and Neil actually considered buying the old Princess 50 but it didn't offer them much more than the 430 they already own. Would the new P50 fare any better?

David and Neil started their tour in the saloon. "The light wood works very well," said David. "The whole interior seems to light up and feels much bigger than the old 50. It has a Scandinavian, more modern feel to it. I'm 6ft 2in and there is good headroom throughout."

Neil agreed, "It's good to see Princess interiors becoming more contemporary, yet still warm". David tried out the lower helm and commented, "There's tremendous visibility, far better than the old boat. It's a proper double helm seat too and it's good that the dinette opposite is at the same height as the helm, keeping everyone involved."

Remarking on the boat's extra

height, David notes that, "The steps are quite steep down to the galley." Neil considers the trip up to the flybridge with mugs of tea en passage to the Channel Islands. "It's a shame there is only one sink but there is plenty of work surface and cupboards and

better than our 430."

The third cabin was a real winner not least because it has the biggest wardrobe on the boat, just right for stowing foulies.

Out on deck Neil noted, "The flybridge layout is similar to the 430's, which means there are no seats forward facing other than the helm and navigator's, and the latter can't get out without the helmsman moving first. I end up climbing over the back of the seat on our 430 but I couldn't do that here as the barbecue is in way. It's good to see there are lots of good grabrails, though. You do feel very safe up here".

Neil and David worked hard to find fault with this Princess 50 but were both amazed by the build quality and the design of the boat. David said, "It's a great cruiser, a massive improvement on the old 50 and everything we hoped it would be."

**The new 50 feels much bigger than the old model**

the stainless steel back to the hob is nice touch."

Moving into the master cabin David banged his head on port side of bed but he put this down to bad navigation on his part, saying that there was plenty of room for three down there!

"The side ports are a great feature and give loads of light. The sliding toilet door is a neat idea but it needs to open more fully. The compartment itself is far



Clean easy to view console with good all round viz



The BBQ is uncomfortably close to the helm

## P50 technical data

### specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	50ft 5in (15.37m)
HULL LENGTH	48ft 10in (14.91m)
BEAM	15ft 0in (4.57m)
DRAUGHT	4ft 2in (1.27m)
DISPLACEMENT	20.4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	500gal (2273lt)
WATER CAPACITY	130gal (591lt)

### key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	10in (25cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 5in (1.96m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 3in x 5ft 0in (1.91 x 1.52m)
MIDSHIPS BERTH	6ft 2in x 5ft 3in (1.88 x 1.60m)

### performance

Engines	twin Volvo Penta D11-670 diesels
Configuration	6cyl, 10.8lt, 670hp @ 2300rpm
conditions	wind SW'ly, Force 3, Sea slight
Load	fuel 75%, water 50%, crew 3

Rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1800	18.6	25.8	117	0.72	288	72
1900	20.5	29.5	134	0.69	276	74
2000	23.5	34.5	157	0.68	272	75
2100	25.6	39.0	177	0.66	264	76
2200	27.5	44.3	201	0.62	248	77
2350	30.1	53.0	241	0.57	228	79

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 in the saloon.

### prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin Volvo Penta D11-670 diesels	£636,145
BOW THRUSTER	STANDARD
HEATING	£6063
GENERATOR (7kW)	STANDARD
TEAK COCKPIT	STANDARD
TRANSOM CRANE	£11,084

**BOAT AS TESTED £680,500**

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Tel: 01752 600657 [www.princessyachts.com](http://www.princessyachts.com)

## MBM verdict

So there you have it, the P50 is a real corker of a boat and that's not just our opinion either. Everyone that steps aboard this boat seems to love it, so much so that one of our couples actually bought one. Unfortunately, we at MBM couldn't go quite that far but it is hard to imagine how a genuine 50ft cruiser could get any better than this.

