

The largest flybridge space in her class is just the start for the Azimut 66.

BY PHIL DRAPER



Redefining Moments



Midrange motoryacht developments are mostly about evolution rather than revolution. But you'd be wise never to underestimate the former. Evolution has

taken us from lolling around in the primordial soup to planing over it at 30-plus knots, with all the comforts of a 21st-century home. Take Azimut's 66: Replacing the 64 that, in turn, replaced a 62 that dittoed at least two previous incarnations, the 66 is the latest interpretation of a successful formula. Azimut usually builds around 25 yachts per year of this 60-something model. There must be several hundred of them scattered around the world's marinas. They're popular because they work — on so many levels.

Outside Perspectives
EVOLUTION
OF THE SPECIES
An Azimut collaborator

for many years, naval architect Stefano Righini drafted the 66's beautifully proportioned lines with his usual signatures: plenty of silvery-blue mirrored glass (a panel of which runs up into the hardtop supports), the Spock ears at the back end of the flybridge, the snub-nosed bow. I've always liked Azimut profiles. Few other flybridge motoryachts look this sexy. Studio Plana was responsible for the proven hull form: deep-V, large chines and spray rail. It works.

Expanded Flybridge You would never know it, but the 66's hardtop and flybridge molding, as well as a big chunk of the foredeck, are carbon fiber. Obviously,

the black stuff contributes to general weight reduction, stiffness and stability, but the real payoff is flybridge maximization. Take a good look, and you'll see exactly how far aft it extends. Then drop your gaze to the cockpit dimensions. Both are sizable for this class of yacht — and where flys are concerned, big is often a prerequisite of beautiful. The fly is 28 feet 2 inches, which is 12 percent bigger than the 64's and, Azimut says, 25 percent bigger than the market average.

In my opinion, the use of carbon fiber is a nice match for a brand as sexy as Azimut. I hope the designers tease us with it here and there a little more in the future. The results should be eye-popping.

Favorites Outside I like the small boarding gates on either side of the cockpit. There's a teak deck tread that can't really be seen until the gate's opened. The bow lounging area's semi-automatic, electric Bimini top is mighty cool.

Inside Perspectives LIGHT-DARK

Carlo Galeazzi and team have been responsible for Azimut interiors for at least 20 years — and probably quite a bit longer. That's a huge amount of experience. And it shows.

Azimut interiors always wow. High-gloss sycamore and silky, dark oak veneers define the split-level interior aboard the 66. Another two-tone option is *decapé* (scoured) oak and a high-gloss ebony. I'm a big fan of this light-dark approach, all made splendid with the usual exquisite palette of leathers, marbles, glass and stainless steel that Azimut favors. This type of styling is what the Italians do best.

Not surprisingly, the layout is Euro-style. Inside the aft deck doors is a two-sofa lounge — a properly comfortable space — and up a couple of steps are a galley and dinette. Tucked beneath the windscreen is a helm station to starboard, with a Treben driver's seat as standard and a companion as optional.





A mini booth is to port with an optional, height-adjustable table; this area can also be a corner bar with stools. Whichever you go for, this is the place for a quiet coffee.

Favorites Inside

Everybody has a favorite place aboard, a spot where you go to zone out or chat or read or relax. For me, aboard this 66, it's the starboard-side of the main salon: feet up, back nicely supported by the corner sofa, nuzzled in next to the notch in the glazing. Dining table for a drink. Great views. Magic.

Owners and Guests

Conventionally located forward of the engines, the owners' stateroom has the bed placed athwartships with the headboard beneath the rectangular hull window to port, so the views are out through the mirroring window to starboard. The owners' bed was on the diagonal in the 64. The adapted configuration on the 66 looks good.

There are three more staterooms: an en suite VIP forward and two twins amidships that share a head/shower.

Crew Access

The L-bunk crew cabin

and head/shower compartment is accessed via the swim platform. It's unusual to see a transom door on a yacht of this size, but it should be a popular feature with crew who want a little distance from the rest of the boat. The machinery is through a hatch in the cockpit sole.

Driving

RUNNING ON AIR

We conducted our sea trials off Savona, a historic port northwest of Genoa, Italy, which is home to perhaps the most famous navigator of all time, Christopher Columbus. Azimut has a facility there that handles pre-delivery work for most of its models.

The 66 comes with twin six-cylinder 1,150 mhp Caterpillar C18s hooked up to straight ZF boxes, 3-inch-diameter shafts and five-blade props. The quoted top speed is 30 to 31 knots, depending on climate and condition variables, but the test boat we got to play with in late September was significantly friskier. I was impressed by a 34-knot average established over reciprocal courses — until I checked the Raymarine display, particularly the fuel-tank graphics. They were flat-lining. We were running



On Space

Carbon fiber was used to construct the 66's flybridge and superstructure. Doing so reduced the amount of material required compared to an all-fiberglass build, which, in turn, created more interior space and volume.

on air, said the yard captain, who was at my elbow and confessed that he'd been concerned enough to dip the twin fuel tanks prior to our departure.

Handling was distinctly sprightly, a combination of light ship loading; the resin-infused hull, deck and superstructure; the absence of a gyro-stabilizer; and having the power steering on a sporty setting.

Helm Stations

I like the anti-glare gel-coat around the flybridge consoles. To my eye, it was taupe, somewhere between beige and gray-brown. I love the steering wheels too; they are one of the most important touch points aboard. Controls fell under my palm within easy reach.

Must-Have Extras

The hi-lo swim platform is a must. It will carry a Williams 325, de rigueur aboard yachts this size. Then there is the hardtop with or without Opacmare electric sunroof, which means the best of both worlds of sun and shade. Last but not least is the Seakeeper, which, alas, our Turkey-bound test boat did not have. Skimping on stabilization, whether for cost or weight, doesn't make sense to me. You might gain a knot without the unit's weight, but that decision will come back to bite you on the brokerage market. Nowadays, everyone wants to rock, but no one wants to roll. ♣

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