

Explorer 54

Offshore cruiser

I admire this design. It's a purpose-designed boat for offshore cruising. The design is by Bernard Nivelt with the interior by Pierre Frutschi. I like the general proportions. It's a good-looking boat. Nivelt is a very skilled designer so I'm certain performance will be wonderful, and that retracting centerboard should appeal to those who sail in skinny water. So we have it out of the way: I like it. The boat is built in aluminum by Futuna Yachts in Bruz, France. Hull No. 1 will go to a Swiss family of four very experienced offshore cruisers.

The 54 has a D/L of 173 and an L/B of 3.32 so it's a moderate design according to those ratios. In keeping with modern design practice the ends are short, the stern is broad and the freeboard is high. Note though, that there is some rake to the stem, I presume to give some room for the anchor to swing without chipping at the bow paint.

Even with that bow rake there is a stout hairpin-style bowsprit to allow the anchor roller to move farther forward. The draft with the board up is 4 feet 1 inch, and with the hydraulically controlled centerboard down the draft is 11 feet 7 inches. Twin rudders reduce draft aft while maintaining good control.

This boat is laid out for a couple with two teenage girls. Each girl will have her own cabin aft. Stacked quarterberths are shown on the starboard side and a double quarter berth is shown to port. There is a pilothouse that has a nav station to port and a galley to starboard. There is no backslash on the forward counter of the galley where the sinks are. Not sure how that will work. I'd give it a 6-inch splash at least.

Going down from the pilothouse you enter the saloon with a big, U-shaped dinette to port nestled up against what I think is part of the centerboard trunk. To port there appears to be a small stateroom with a single berth.

There are two heads on this boat. One is a spacious head, but it does not include a separate shower stall. Forward of this there is the owner's double berth to starboard with lockers to port. The other head is aft the fo'c'sle.

The fo'c'sle is huge and this speaks of a true long-range cruiser layout. Stowage is critical and over the duration of the voy-

age this volume for stowage will prove more valuable than a few extra feet in each sleeping compartment. There is a large lazarette with large, flush deck hatches aft of the cockpit.

The sailplan shows a typical rig for this type of boat with the genoa and staysail on roller furlers and a cruising asym sail carried on a furler tacked to the short bowsprit. The SA/D is 20.54. There are forward and aft lower shrouds with in-line cap shrouds. Running backstays support the staysail hounds.

The cockpit extends forward to take advantage of the height of the pilothouse. Cockpit seats tuck under the overhang of

the pilothouse. There is a section of the transom that hinges open to provide a swim step and access to a stowage area for an inflatable dinghy. The dink can be carried on the davits when inflated. This will be a very comfortable cockpit with deep, contoured seat backs and plenty of room for the helmsman to stretch out.

Stout aluminum construction assembled from CNC panels will make for a very strong boat. While production boats try to be everything to everyone, this boat does not. The Explorer 54 is simply a well-designed offshore sailing yacht.

Explorer 54

LOA 55'9"; LWL 50'; Beam 16'2"; Draft 11'8", 4'1" (board up); Displ. 41,888 lbs.; Ballast 13,229 lbs.; Sail Area 1,442 sq.ft.; SA/D 20.54; D/L 173; L/B 3.32; Auxiliary Volvo 75-hp turbo diesel; Fuel 291 gal.; Water 264 gal.



Futuna Yachts
ZA de l'Eperon, 35130 Bruz, France
Tél: +33 (0) 982 300 471
www.futuna-yachts.com

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