

Cranchi Zaffiro 36

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By ERIC COLBY JUNE 25, 2008

Admit it, you have landlubber friends you wouldn't mind bringing along for a cruise, but you cringe at the idea of having to tell them how to sit, what to hold, where things go, and everything else regular boaters already know. Cranchi's Zaffiro 36 can help bridge the gap in experience because this Italian builder simplified the boat and labeled many lockers. If you can read, you can crew.

In the cockpit, there's labeled PFD and life raft stowage. The washdown hose reels into a dedicated holder in the transom gate. The shorepower cord has its own locker. There's even a clip for the boathook outboard of the portside wetbar, plus a molded recess for cleaning supplies -- including the bucket -- nearby. On the backside of the helm seat is a swing-out stainless-steel arm to which the barbecue connects. Fenders slip inside dedicated racks in the bowrail. Belowdecks you'll find not only a fishing rod locker but a dedicated rack for champagne flutes as well. Not bad for a 36' day boat.

The Zaffiro 36's performance will please old salts and land-based folk alike. It ran at 38 mph in 2' to 3' seas with the tabs trimmed down to about -3 and the drives up at just above level with the bottom. The ride was smooth and settled. In calm conditions, the boat ran 40.6 mph at wide open. Turning was predictable. The boat zigged and zagged smoothly through slaloms and carved smooth arcs in both directions.

You'll get higher speeds out of Formula's twin-stepped 370 SS with the same power as my test boat, but you'll pay for it at \$483,620. Fairline's Targa 38, which will debut here this fall, runs 38 mph with the twin Volvo 300 EVC DuoProps. Retail pricing for the U.S. market isn't available yet.

Grand Central

Instead of pinning the controls against the starboard gunwale, Cranchi moved the helm of the Zaffiro 36 toward center by about 2'. This allowed for a dedicated pod for the controls, trim buttons, autopilot, and trip log, all to starboard. Everything is within reach and encased in a dark charcoal-gray finish, which reduces glare.

Cranchi's signature silver dash also cuts glare on the Volvo Penta instruments, which are protected by a 2"-deep eyebrow. Because the controls and all the other aforementioned components can be placed to starboard, there's room for an optional big Raymarine E80 chartplotter (\$7,277). The only part of the helm layout that's awkward is the compass location. It's forward of the gauge panel and I could barely see it.

The Zaffiro 36's new layout eliminated the portside chaise lounge that's popular on many express boats, but I didn't miss it. In its place is a convenient wetbar with a sink, refrigerator, and four-bottle rack. However, the edges of the cutting board cover that slips into the sink were rough. I found similar rough finish work in other spots on the boat, particularly in the lockers.

If you need to get away from the crowd, head to the bow on the wide side passageways. On the foredeck are two sunpads with headrests that can be raised on folding supports. The bow has a windlass, but access to the rode is difficult.

Big Easy

However, getting to the twin four-cylinder diesels couldn't be easier. The engine hatch consists of the aft lounge and part of the cockpit decking. On the underside is dedicated stowage for the cockpit filler cushions. Inside, the stainless-steel support for the motor mounts that span the gap between the stringers provides a stout foundation for the engines. A walkway formed out of StarLite material covers the batteries. Hard copper fuel lines won't chafe, and a new kind of plastic conduit that snaps together in sections protects the wire harnesses, making them easier to rig. Drive trim pumps are easily reached for adding fluid, but it's tough to access the pump for the Bennett tabs outboard of the port stringer. Cranchi uses single manifold-style through-hulls on each side, to which are attached numerous drain hoses. One gripe: I didn't like the use of a dark gel coat finish -- it makes it hard to trace spills.

For a lighter open feel, head belowdecks. The midship stateroom has twin athwartships-facing berths that convert into a large queen or open play area for kids. At the foot of the berth to starboard is an open countertop with a 3'-by-2'-by-1' drop-in locker, and you'll find two more large lockers in this area. To port, the galley includes a microwave oven, two-burner stove, sink, and refrigerator. I liked the circular overhead hatch that lets in natural light.

Across to starboard, you can relax on the lounge around the adjustable-height table. I loved the comfortable 5"-thick bottom cushions. Two lockers in the base house the ship's systems, and there's a manual bilge pump (to meet Europe's CE requirements). Above, at eye level, the entire main distribution panel opens on hinges so you can get to the rigging for the dash. However, some of the wire connections should have been made with heat-shrink tubing rather than crimp connectors.

Cranchi opted for a single head on the Zaffiro 36. The area offers good elbow room for showering when you draw the privacy curtain, and you'll like the 1'5"-by-3'8"-by-8" locker for stowing towels.

Forward, the master stateroom features a 6'8"-by-5' berth angled from the port side of the boat forward to the bow, which uses space better than an island-style model. Step up to it from the starboard side. There are stowage drawers in the base as well as access to the freshwater tank. A three-shelf cabinet at the foot of the berth is to starboard, and to port the hanging locker can accom-modate long dresses. Then again, only a landlubber would bring formal attire on a weekend cruise. Boating is supposed to be fun and the Zaffiro 36 will help introduce your landlocked friends to a whole new realm of enjoyment -- without ruining your time on the water.

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