



# Aquanaut

## European Voyager 1300

**This stylish open-plan steel cruiser is perfect for exploring Europe's inland waterways. From £269,740**

**I**n our world, talk of going Dutch has nothing to do with splitting the bill and everything to do with buying a laid-back, steel cruiser. And it's easy to see why more of us are doing it than ever before. Steel

usually means economic cruising suited to inland as well as coastal work. But times are changing and so is steel boat design. In place of the usual aft cabin boat with a raised deck, come models with run-through cockpits and saloons

with very few steps. The upshot is an easier, open-plan liveaboard arrangement, while on the downside you lose out on that full-beam aft cabin.

Aquanaut's European Voyager range, from 42ft to 56ft, embraces

this aft cockpit thinking, while delivering a few additional and very interesting twists of its own. For example, the 1300's superstructure is tiered to provide a very pleasant raised inner helm which incorporates a U-shaped settee



**MBM SEATRIAL**  
**AQUANAUT EV 1300**



Steps either side hinge clear when not in use, however, they can get in the way

have been left down, moving about is relatively easy and safe. As well as the patio door between the saloon and moderate-sized aft cockpit, the wheelhouse also has a door out onto the port-hand side deck. The starboard side doesn't enjoy the same access as a settee runs along this section, but it's a decent swap as the seating, wrapping around a central helm, is one of the highlights of the boat. Just watch yourself when getting up as headroom is fairly low.

The position of the helm on our test boat has been modified by the owner, usually it is set to port. Either way, though, the view astern is compromised by the upper portion of the wheelhouse's rear bulkhead, which isn't helpful, as you're probably going to be overtaken most of the time and it's comforting being able to check what is approaching. There is, however, plenty of room for navigation gear.

The owner of this boat also chose to have the galley down



where the whole crew can enjoy the view. By stepping the cabin roof line, a forward coaming is also created, which allows the design to provide a low-slung flybridge and helm station. Usefully, the screen is engineered to drop so it doesn't get in the way.

However, the bridge still has to be a bit mean on height if the boat's air draught is to slide under Europe's waterway bridges; the bench mark being a tad over 11ft (3.4m). Accomplishing this has meant that the wheel and console are distinctly on the low side, and you are left to find some seating that follows suit. Access to this upper deck area is either via a set of steps from the wheelhouse or up a couple of

**Aquanaut is very willing to customise its craft**

stainless steel ladders that hinge down from both side deck overhangs. At first this seems like a nifty idea because it allows the skipper to nip down from the upper helm and lend a hand with the lines. However, once dropped in situ they rather block the

decks, impeding easy movement back and forth, which could become annoying. We also found it odd that the breaks in the side deck stanchions for boarding when alongside are sited at the highest point of the deck, making the average pontoon quite a distance away.

The height of the coamings and the width of the side decks are equally generous and, as long as you don't run into one of the ladders that



A low coaming and helm position work to keep the air draught down

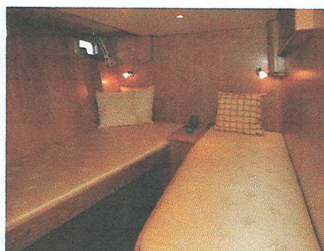
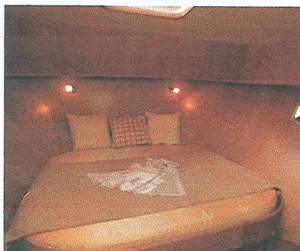




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The split-level delivers a great raised seating area as well as a saloon to decant back to, but could it be improved on?



A bespoke, below decks design suits the owner's needs but feels rather pinched on space and stowage

the starboard side of the lower saloon. The standard arrangement sets the galley in an L-shape up in the wheelhouse, behind a port side helm. Setting the galley aft has given it more room, but at the cost of the saloon, which loses a sideboard flanked by a couple of small armchairs across from what is

usually a far longer arc of sofa.

It all goes to show Aquanaut's willingness to customise but it also reflects how compromising it can get when you move into bespoke territory.

Certainly our test boat's layout detracts from an otherwise social lounge that would still enjoy the raised seating forward, for dining or to simply watch the world go by from.

With no aft cabin, the sleeping accommodation is clearly going to be tighter. But this isn't helped by the fact that three cabins are squeezed in up forward. And while there is room to sleep two in each cabin there is seriously limited standing room and not a wholly convincing amount of clothes storage for longer voyages, unless you were to turn one of the two side-by-side cabins into a dressing room. However, this rather makes a nonsense of trying to cram in three cabins in the first place.

Again, in fairness, Aquanaut is able to re-jig this area to two decent-sized cabins, which to our mind would be more sensible.



This social helm area is perfect for a spot of laid back passage making

As it stands, the six-berth layout featured here is serviced by a tiny day toilet and an en suite to the forecabin, so it is imperative you all get on or at least work out some sort of rota system based on age, gender or whether you're the skipper.

Standard power comes from a single 148hp Perkins. The installation – accessed via lift out panels in the saloon – looks good and there is plenty of room to get at everything, even with the optional generator.

Flatout at 2500rpm we clocked the hull at 9.5 knots, while passage making will be carried out at nearer 7.5 knots at an easy 1800rpm, with noise levels commendably low.

The hull gives an easy motion, helped by its bilge keels, no doubt, and it responds smartly to the helm. A bow thruster is included in the standard inventory although the test boat was installed with the optional hydraulic package of bow and stern thrusters.

The Voyager's otherwise fairly reasonable base price pushes up a notch once liveboard options like the 6kW gen set (£12K), hydraulic thrusters (£10K) and double glazing in the wheelhouse and saloon (£5K) are added in.

#### SPECIFICATION

LENGTH OVERALL	43ft 2in (13.15m)
BEAM	14ft 3in (4.35m)
ENGINE	Single Perkins 148hp diesel
PRICE	From £269,740
ENQUIRIES	Bray Marine Sales Ltd, Tel: 01628 773177 <a href="http://www.aquanaut.nl">www.aquanaut.nl</a>

#### CONCLUSION

**FOR** Liveboard open-plan saloon and cockpit with sociable interior helm

**AGAINST** Cramped three cabin layout

**VERDICT** An alternative to the usual raised aft deck models and a great looking boat. We liked the convivial interior helm area and single level saloon and cockpit. But while it is always good to find a yard happy to customise, perhaps this boat's interior is a compromise too far.

