



**AT A GLANCE**  
Length 56ft 3in (17.15m)  
Flat out 10 knots  
Test engines Twin  
225hp Perkins  
Price from €1.2 million  
ex tax (approx £1.16 inc  
UK VAT) (twin 150hp)



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## RICH PICKINGS

For longer-term cruising it's key to get your boat just right, and with the level of customisation available on the Aquanaut Global Voyager 1700 you can pick'n'mix to your heart's content Text: Rob Peake Photos: Lester McCarthy

**T**he idea of a normal boat test is to assess what the builder is offering on a standard production model within the current market. But with Aquanaut the process is different, because they do not have such a thing as a 'standard production model'. Yes, they offer a range of different hull sizes. But what goes on top and inside of it is, more or less, up to you. While other builders talk about custom build, Aquanaut really mean it. The purchaser can choose virtually everything in the entire boat, from the interior layout, the woods, the position of the galley, the number of heads, the number of cabins and

*They say custom built and they mean it. You can choose the number of cabins, the woods, and the RCD category*

the flybridge layout, to the RCD category of the boat. So boat testing any given Aquanaut becomes a very personal business. Much of it is one man's opinion against another's. For instance, the owner may have packed four cabins into this 17m model, but I think it makes the accommodation area a bit crowded, and there's one head between a possible six guests. As we all know, though, no two boaters will ever agree on what makes the ideal boat – it's an entirely subjective thing. But this owner has got his dream machine and the same, more or less, probably goes for every Aquanaut owner since the yard started building 45 years ago. And that's the main thing to remember while reading this report: there are things on a 17m Global Voyager you will and won't like. If you don't like 'em, change 'em! Aquanaut, of course, will advise, and

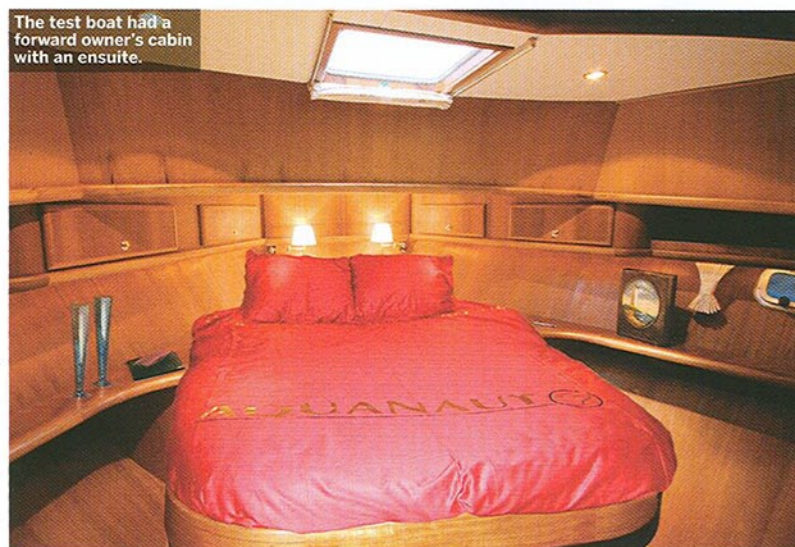
their advice is well worth listening to, but after that it's pretty much your boat to design as you wish.

### Going Dutch

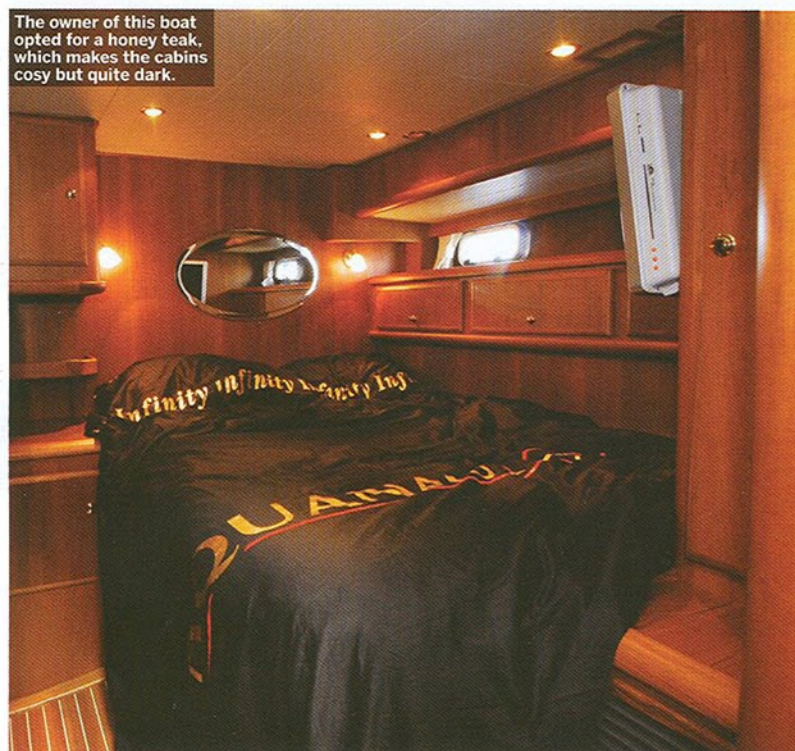
The Dutch yard is based in Sneek, about 90 minutes' drive north of Amsterdam. They launched their Global Voyager series three years ago with a 19m. The owner wanted a real ocean-going ship and he got one. The 17m is a slightly scaled-down version of that one, and the model we tested has only been built to RCD Category B. It can be Cat A rated, however, if you want. The difference will be noticeable in features like watertight doors with higher ledges instead of sliding doors and window fittings capable of resisting an 8m wave or two. The 17m is an imposing presence on the pontoons and

dwarves everything else in the sleepy marina where we embark on the inland sea, the IJsselmeer. That's not to say she's bulky. Aquanaut's in-house design team have created a surprisingly swept-back and sleek profile, which gives little hint of the space available on board. Modest portholes, as opposed to the gaping panes that are found on most planing craft nowadays, add to the looks, while the clever cream gunwale line gives it all a lovely flow from bow to stern. It is a handsome boat.

The Global Voyager, as befits its name, is aimed at the liveaboard or long-distance cruiser – something that becomes obvious as soon as you step aboard. Handrails aplenty, wide side decks and tall guardrails suggest offshore cruising is on the agenda rather than short coastal hops, while the sheer space on the aft deck, along the side decks and at the bow



The test boat had a forward owner's cabin with an ensuite.



The owner of this boat opted for a honey teak, which makes the cabins cosy but quite dark.



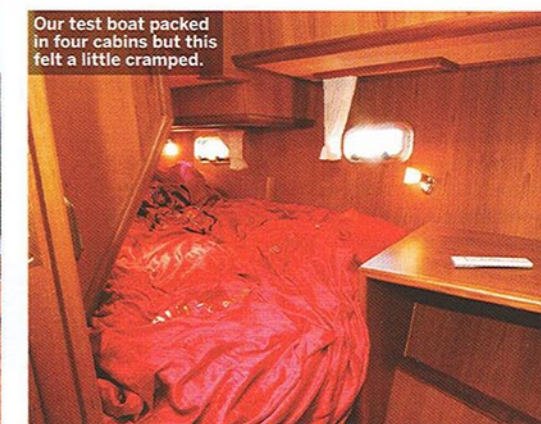
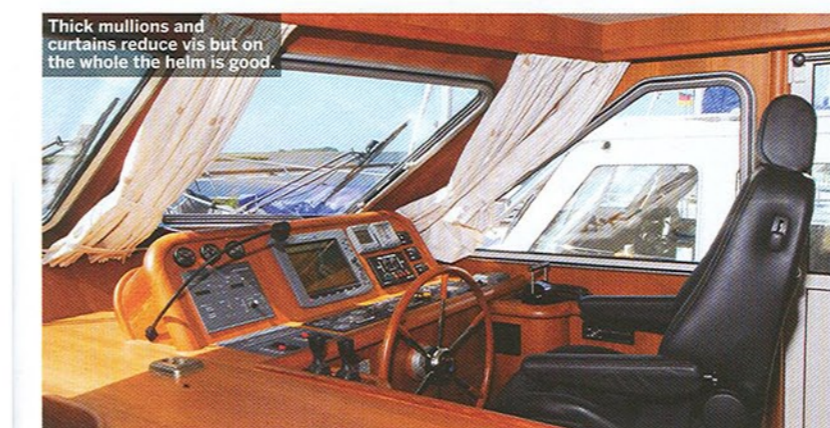
A handsome, gentlemanly saloon with big windows and a sociable additional bucket seat to the left of the helm.



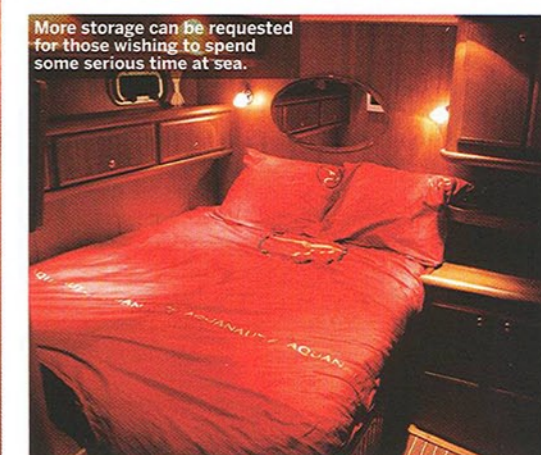
Excellent craftsmanship throughout.



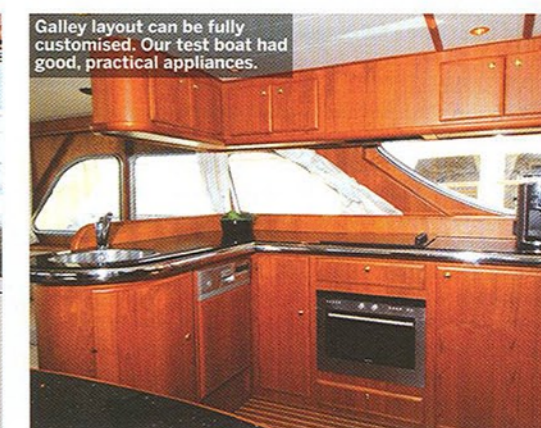
Thick mullions and curtains reduce vis but on the whole the helm is good.



Our test boat packed in four cabins but this felt a little cramped.



More storage can be requested for those wishing to spend some serious time at sea.



Galley layout can be fully customised. Our test boat had good, practical appliances.

should make working on the boat as well as living on it practical and pleasurable. There is a lovely forward-looking seat up at the foredeck, built into the coachroof: what a place to sit as you motor into the sunset. For those sunny anchorages, the entire bathing platform can be lowered a foot into the water at the touch of a button, allowing easy launching of a PWC.

One negative is the access from the pontoon to the side deck. A section of the bulwark drops down revealing a ladder. That, however, will be a little too high for granny, so perhaps you'd better ask Aquanaut to install a real side-deck door.

From afar the flybridge does not look particularly roomy, but climb up the deep steps and you'll do a double take. This is a superb area, with room to create your own flybridge layout

*Each double berth is extremely roomy. You'll nod off under way no problem: the engine noise is insignificant*

par excellence. The owner of this model has plumped for a single helm seat opposite a long U-shaped sofa, which could perhaps be extended to make better use of the space. There is also a curious drinking water basin rather reminiscent of something you'd find in a public loo and not very in keeping with the gentlemanly air of the Aquanaut.

At the rear there is room for a 3.5m tender on davits, but as these block the view aft, there are cameras overlooking the transom to aid Med-style mooring. Our test model also had cameras fixed onto each side of the superstructure, but when we came into moor stern-to, the narrow piles almost knocked them off.

When you're sitting on the flybridge, the twin 225hp Perkins diesels are incredibly quiet – the noise of the wind and

waves is louder. It was a very pleasant afternoon on test and flat conditions on the IJsselmeer, so I was able to store my drink in the sturdy stainless steel cup holders. However, I wondered how it would be in livelier weather. There are handholds and guardrails up here and a high spray rail, but in rolling seas at displacement speeds my guess is that you'd be glad of the Aquanaut's stabilisers.

#### Mix'n'match

For the uneasy, admittedly, there is always room down below. The saloon is a welcoming and cosy space at the same time as offering plenty of living room. Personally, I don't like the tables, which seem to be too far away from the seats to eat at comfortably. I think you can do better on a boat meant for

*Big windows in the saloon mean that the lone seat beside the helm is a lovely spot from which to watch the ocean glide by*

long-term living. Aquanaut have put fat fiddles on much of the other furniture, but not around the galley. Again, it's down to preference, but this is a liveaboard craft and the boat's stabilisers don't work at anchor.

The galley-slave is afforded enough space in which to cook a proper meal, although if it were me doing the dinner for eight I'd prefer more hobs and a bigger oven. Putting the stoppers on any potential rebellion from his crew, the owner has wisely included a dishwasher. A large sink, food grinder and rubbish compressor all make for a very practical space.

The most obvious feature in the saloon is a seat positioned just behind and to the left of the inside helm. It's a curious and slightly lonely looking thing at first glance, but sit back between its deep bucket sides and you realise what it's about

– a great place to chat to the helmsman without distracting him, while being able to swivel the chair towards the passengers too. With big windows all around the saloon, it's a lovely spot to sit and watch the ocean glide by.

The inside helm itself has visibility somewhat spoiled by thick mullions, but at low speeds that shouldn't be a huge problem. The entire helm area is raised and every time I stepped up there I walloped my head on the ceiling. This platform effect is in order to increase headroom in the cabin down below. It's another choice for each owner to weigh up.

The wheel and throttles are more or less to hand, but some of the instruments are laid flat so are not immediately visible. A seamanlike touch is the wind speed and direction dial – useful when docking from within this cocooned space. Another good feature is the big chart area to the helmsman's left, accompanied by a specific chart storage area, which is an increasingly rare find on modern motor boats. Take a look at our online video of the saloon on our website – go to [www.mby.com](http://www.mby.com) and click Videos.

Light floods down the fairly steep staircase to the accommodation, helped by a large skylight above. As mentioned before, there is one sizeable WC and shower for the three guest double cabins down here, while the owner's cabin forward is ensuite. The owner of this boat has gone for a very warm honey teak throughout but remember that the choice is your own. As it is, the result is a set of quite dark cabins, not really living spaces but certainly sleeping spaces. Each double berth is extremely roomy and after a long day on the water I quite fancied a quick snooze in one of these somniferous caves. I would have nodded off in no time. The engine noise down here is insignificant.

One of the drawbacks of having so many cabins is that there is less room for storage. For a long-distance cruise, you'd want more cupboards than you find in this layout. However, each cabin has its own television screen and bedside lights, and three of them have a full-length mirror.

## Drive time

So what's this plush pad like to drive? With bow and stern thrusters, getting out of our tight berth was no trouble at all, and in tickover it felt manoeuvrable on a breezy day despite the boat's height and weight. The Perkins were steady through the revs up to a maximum of 2,250rpm and about ten knots. At around seven knots you have a pretty useful range of 1,000 miles but this can be increased to 2,500 depending on engines.

Six cylinder in-line engines are renowned for being smooth running, nevertheless Aquanaut have bolstered this further using plywood/rubber sandwich supports, which soak up vibration and noise. One very happy Aquanaut owner we met on our test has cruised 25,000km over the past five seasons, and with 400-hour service intervals is experiencing no problems at all with his twin Perkins installation. That's the kind of recommendation you want to hear.

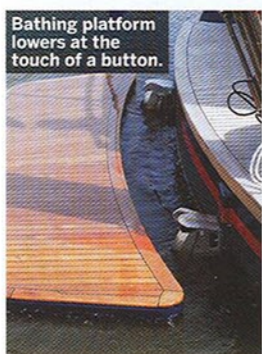
The hydraulic steering we found was not lightning quick but the wheel was certainly very light (probably because it's not power assisted). The boat tracked true at all speeds but sadly we didn't have really enough conditions on the IJsselmeer to really test the stabilisers, which kick in above five knots.

On a heavy, full-displacement boat, good low-speed manoeuvrability requires big rudders and that means a trade-off at the other end of the rev range. Put the 44-tonne Aquanaut's big rudders into full lock at a high speed and you actually risk ripping them right off, such are the loads involved. So Aquanaut have put in an overload valve on the hydraulic steering, which kicks in if you turn the wheel to full lock at too high an rpm. The rudder remains in the turn

At seven knots there's a 1,000-mile range from the twin 225s.



Bathing platform lowers at the touch of a button.



A serious engineroom for a serious sea-goer.



Spacious flybridge is a real coup.

position, but the steering wheel becomes useless if you continue to turn in that direction until either the speed drops or you straighten out. I found it quite an annoying feature, though it is typical for this set-up and it's a compromise worth putting up with.

One final thing: the engineroom on every Aquanaut is worth visiting because it is the only room on the boat that can't be changed around by the owner. Unsurprisingly, it is a very seamanlike space, boasting switchable fuel filters on each engine, working access from all sides, handed maintenance points and a Perspex screen over the electrics – small but significant touches which the long-distance cruising owner will be glad to hear of. Indeed such touches abound throughout, making it a very attractive sea companion.

*The flybridge may not look roomy but climb the deep steps and you'll do a double take*

## Datafile Aquanaut Global Voyager 1700

### Verdict

The 1700 is a vessel built to a high quality – that is evident throughout. Family-run Aquanaut take obvious pride in their product and in their after-sales service, which by all accounts is excellent. Note, too, that the marque's UK dealer Bray Marine Sales have recently won a customer-nominated service award in our annual Motor Boat Awards. Despite all that, the exchange rate might still persuade you to wait before purchasing a Dutch-built boat now. The good news for those in the UK is that the Euro is weakening against Sterling (as MBY went to press, anyway!) For those who seek a real floating home, and one they can largely design themselves, the matter of a few Euros here or there could perhaps be overlooked.

There are aspects of the Global Voyager I'd like to change, but for the most part they are relatively minor features and ones specified for this particular boat. One larger design point I'd raise is the single-room design of the saloon and helm. A Nordhavn, for instance, offers a helm area separated from the galley and living space, something that on a long cruise – particularly one undertaken with guests – can be a blessing. Aquanaut's inside helmsman would have a job helming the boat at night with the rest of the family watching a DVD just metres away in the saloon. This is, after all, a long-distance cruiser with a range of up to 2,500 miles if you want. On the other hand, Aquanaut's layout is a far more sociable prospect on those more common day passages. All that, along with the potential cabin space down below, the economy and reliability promised by a twin Perkins installation, and the excellent engineroom, should make any serious boaters looking for luxury and seamanlike build think hard about the 1700. **MBY**

### Thumbs up or thumbs down?

#### THUMBS UP

- Totally bespoke interior
- Quality workmanship throughout
- Massive flybridge
- Huge lazarette
- Air con in saloon and cabins
- Well-respected UK dealer

#### THUMBS DOWN

- Sterling/Euro exchange rate improving but still unfavourable
- Marred visibility forward from inside helm

### Rivals



**Van der Valk 1750**  
 From €1.395 million ex tax  
 (approx £1.371 million inc UK VAT)  
 (twin 370hp Volvo D6s)

An impeccably built yacht from a Dutch steel yard of similar repute to Aquanaut offering heavy customisation inside. Clever use of accommodation space and 15 knots flat out. **MBY tested November 2006**



**Privateer Trawler 52**  
 From £680,300 inc UK VAT  
 (single 210hp Vetus Deutz)

Another Dutch steel machine, with big ship touches and real trans-ocean capability. A fuel consumption of a gallon per hour at eight knots gives a range of 4,500 miles. **MBY tested November 2006**



**Nordhavn 55**  
 From \$1.425 million (approx  
 £998,800 inc UK VAT) (single 330hp)

Proven ocean-crossing ability and liveaboard pedigree from this respected US builder. Three decks, so no good for French canals, but comfortable accommodation and great views from the upper helm. **MBY tested August 2008**

### Data

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Overall length | 56ft 3in (17.15m)   |
| Beam           | 16ft 9in (5.10m)  |
| Displacement   | 35 tonnes light; 42 tonnes loaded<br>(loaded = light + 100% fuel & water) |
| Draught        | 4ft 9in (1.45m)   |
| Air draught    | 12ft 4in (3.75m)  |
| Fuel capacity  | 275 imp gal (1,250 litres)  |
| Water capacity | 275 imp gal (1,250 litres)  |

### Test Engines

Twin Perkins M225Ti, 225hp @ 2,200rpm, 6 cylinders

| RPM   | 800 | 1,000 | 1,300  | 1,400 | 1,600 | 1,800 | 2,000 | 2,200 |
|-------|-----|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SPEED | 4.0 | 5.5   | 7.0    | 7.5   | 8.1   | 8.8   | 9.5   | 9.8   |
| TRIM  | 0°  | 0°    | 0°     | 0°    | 0°    | 0°    | 0°    | 0°    |
| GPH   | –   | –     | –      | 1.8   | 2.7   | 3.8   | 5.2   | 6.6   |
| MPG   | –   | –     | –      | 4.1   | 3.0   | 2.3   | 1.8   | 1.4   |
| RANGE | –   | –     | 1,000* | 972   | 701   | 537   | 420   | 327   |

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Fuel consumption figures based on propeller curve provided by engine manufacturer. Range in nautical miles and allows for 15% reserve. Your figures may vary considerably.

\* Aquanaut estimate

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Cruising | 7 knots, 1,000 miles @ 1,300rpm<br>(with twin Perkins 150hp) |
| Flat out | 9.8 knots, 327 miles @ 2,200rpm                              |

| SOUND LEVELS dB(A)   | Saloon | Helm | Aft deck |
|----------------------|--------|------|----------|
| Cruising @ 7 knots   | 58     | 56   | 63       |
| Flat out @ 9.8 knots | 70     | 70   | 75       |

Readings taken with cockpit doors closed.

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Price from      | Price from €1.2 million ex tax<br>(approx £1.16 inc UK VAT) (twin 150hp Perkins) |
| Price as tested | €1.4 million ex tax<br>(approx £1.36 million inc UK VAT)                         |
| Designer        | Aquanaut (2008) ?  |
| RCD category    | Category B (for 10 people)   |

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### Aquanaut Global Voyager 1700 (three-cabin layout)

