



# Yes Saare!

Built in Estonia, does this 41ft classically styled, long-legged ocean cruiser cut the proverbial mustard?

**Duncan Kent** thinks she does

**F**or those sailors amongst us that still have the time to indulge in a serious ocean passage or two, there is a certain style of cruising yacht that will most definitely be near the top of the wish list when looking for a new boat. I have to admit, until she appeared at the 2013 Southampton Boat Show I'd never set eyes on a Saare. But the yard was in fact founded in 1991 on a small island in the Estonian side of the Baltic Sea and apparently now employs the rump of the workforce that used to produce the esteemed Finngulf yachts – including Finnish designer Karl-Johan Stråhlmann.

The yachts are intended for those demanding quality, safety and comfort as well as vice-free handling and a good turn of speed. With only

a small number of yachts in build at any one time, each is constructed by a team of highly-skilled craftsmen with a full range of traditional boatbuilding skills.

All composite materials used on the boats are tested by scientists from the Department of Materials Engineering at the Tallinn University of Technology, to ensure they meet quality requirements.

As is common with most small yards, customisation is the name of the game. The furniture is all hand-built, so the client can state his or her wishes right from the start, plus there is a wide range of flexible options available. For instance, our test boat *Saareena* has just one aft double cabin to port with a workshop-come-machinery room and wet locker where the second cabin would be. This option is popular amongst bluewater cruisers, who want to simplify maintenance and have the ability to dismantle and maintain equipment on a workbench.

There is also a centre-cockpit model that shares the same hull, but offers a more owner-orientated layout featuring a large ensuite cabin aft with a generous island double berth on the centreline.

## *Top gear*

Everything on deck is solidly engineered and high spec, including Harken, so she should be a reliable performer

ALL PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY



## What, no chines?

A cruising yacht of this ilk has little need for chines to improve her stability

### Solidly built

You just know what she's going to sail like when you first set eyes on her from afar. We managed to find a one-day window between the seemingly endless February storms, so the sea state was debatable, but my confidence was boosted as soon as I stepped on board her wide side decks and spotted the quality of her deck gear and fittings.

Some might think her design a little dated, but actually there are signs of a gradual return to the more classic lines on many new ocean-going yachts. Not everyone wants the huge, wide stern and twin wheels found on most production boats today, and for good reason. While they might be ideal for chartering in the Med during the summer months, in open-ocean sailing, comfort and security are a higher priority than being able to run down the centre of the cockpit and jump off the full-beam, drop-down transom platform into the sea. Great fun when relaxing at anchor maybe, but not so good with a following sea in the top end of a Force 9 halfway across Biscay!

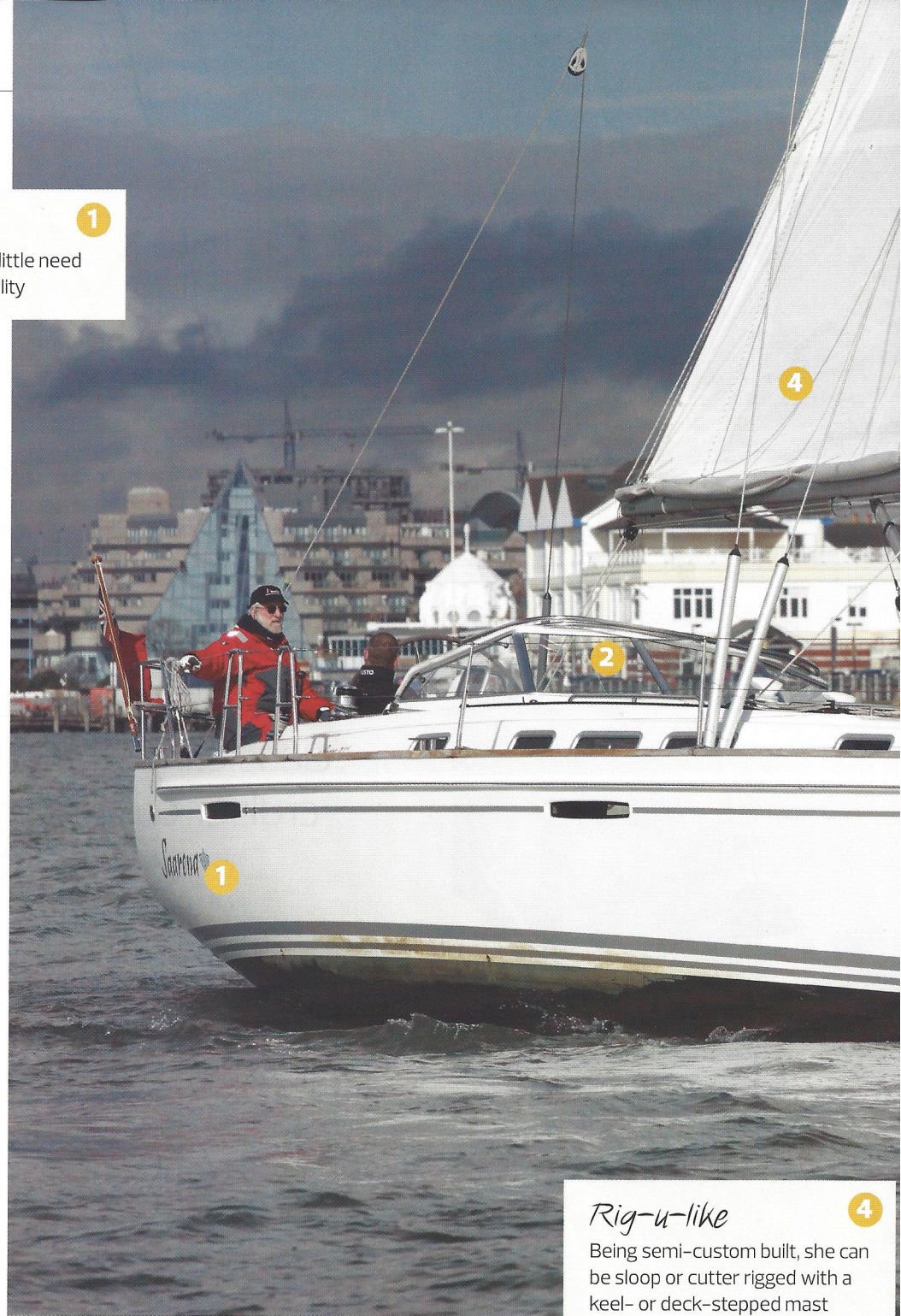
So, not unlike the Najad/Malo/Hallberg-Rassy marques, the Saare has a deeper entry, fuller bilge and higher displacement than the average – giving her a healthy angle of vanishing stability of 134° and an enviable 40 per cent ballast ratio. She's no slouch, by any means, but though she's unlikely to be particularly fleet around the cans, she'll make excellent passage times due to her ability to keep powering on through heavy sea conditions – and even let the off-watch crew get a decent night's sleep into the bargain.

### Well mannered

Our test boat was equipped with Saare's standard fully-battened mainsail and smallish jib, as she had already been out a few times during the stormy winter weather, when the

genoa was quietly left at home. She was a bit under-powered for our test.

We set off north up Southampton Water, for a change, as we chased a sunbeam through a tiny crack in the heavily leaden sky. As it narrows opposite Mayflower Park, where the boat show marina is rebuilt each year, it was good to see how she briskly flipped through short tacks and picked up speed again without losing too much momentum. Despite being relatively heavy (though lighter than her Swedish counterparts), she has a good turn of speed in lighter airs thanks to her moderately shallow underwater sections.



### Rig-u-like

Being semi-custom built, she can be sloop or cutter rigged with a keel- or deck-stepped mast

*'The layout below can even include a good-sized workshop/machinery room for bluewater maintenance'*

Soon we were chased out of the upper reaches by several brutish-looking tugs trying to berth a large container ship, so it was full sail off a Force 4 westerly down to the Solent. Like most modern offshore cruisers today, she is set up to be handled



## Fixed screen

2

Her fixed windscreen is just another sign that this boat is intended for open ocean cruising conditions



3

## Ground tackle

3

Twin bow rollers are very desirable when spending long periods at anchor

easily by a couple, with maybe only one crewmember on watch at any time. For this reason, her headsail winches are within easy reach of the helmsman, as is her mainsheet, which is on a raised track just forward of the wheel.

Those who prefer a less cluttered cockpit can opt for the mainsheet track to be mounted across the coachroof, but I like it where it is – giving you full control of the main under way and keeping the working end of the cockpit free from non-sailing guests and the grandkids' wandering fingers! The mainsheet is on an adjustable traveller and is double-ended, with each end led to a coaming winch for easy adjustment on either tack.

Halyards are kept up on the coachroof, as are the gas-sprung vang and spinnaker pole controls.

She's a great boat to sail in open waters, giving plenty of positive feedback through her helm thanks to her deep spade rudder, and the sailplan is nicely balanced, although it would have been good to have had

the genoa on board to really stretch her legs in the moderate airs.

She pointed to within 42° of the true wind, which at 12 knots gave us 6.8 knots through the water. Bearing off a little to a close reach nudged the speed log up to 7.6 knots, which increased again with the wind square. Downwind, we were slowed by the lack of sail area, but she still managed a respectable 5.8 knots broad-reaching in relatively flat water. She's light on the helm, but you can just feel she would remain steady and under control whatever the weather, as Saare UK's Steve Bruce confirmed when he described sailing her back across the Baltic in a Force 8 with very unpleasant seas.

## Baltic build

There an indubitable element of Baltic-built cosiness as soon as you descend below, although, despite all the lavish satin woodwork, she's still bright and cheery thanks to the numerous portlights, hatches and hull lights. What's more, unlike many penny-pinching production boats these days, every portlight opens, so that you get a proper free-flow of air during hot and humid tropical nights.

The seating is like sitting on your sofa at home and the lockers better than any cabinets in my house. Owning a Saare would make me want to stay on board – permanently!

The so-called 'standard' layout has two double cabins aft, a single cabin

## Single wheel

Not having a massively wide stern means she can still have a single wheel of a reasonable size. Having the mainsheet by the helm is a real boon for single-handing







## Galley

An L-shaped galley works well under way and this one has plenty of useful stowage and work surfacing

## Drinkies

In addition to her galley fridge, *Saareena* has a drinks cooler built into the centre of the saloon table

forward with a V-berth and two heads. But few Saare owners have ever ordered a standard boat. A popular option is to open up the forecabin, bringing the berth further aft and giving access either side. This offers the additional bonus of a good-size sail locker behind the chain locker.

Some have even been built with pilot berths only up front, but Saare is pretty easygoing with interior construction, provided you don't ask for the impossible! It'll even make you a deck-stepped mast version if you particularly object to the mast running through the saloon, although personally I've always liked to know my mast is attached at the keel – especially if the hull has an integral steel frame, like the Saare.

In the two-cabin model there's enough space to add a good-size wet locker in the aft heads, which is a real bonus for long-term cruisers, and if you're happy with a smaller, outboard, or aft-facing chart table, you could even fit in a twin-bunk crew cabin as well.

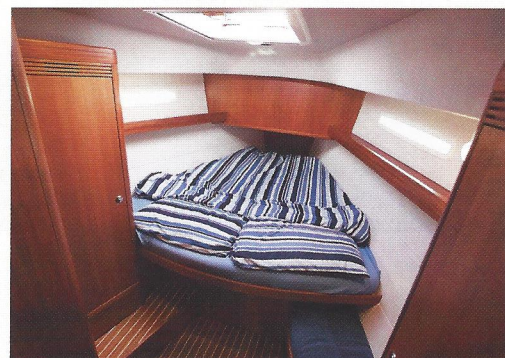
In the standard option she has a proper navigation station with its

own seat and a full Admiralty-size chart table, with bags of room for essential bits and bobs, pilot books, almanacs and instruments all within easy reach.

Her L-shaped galley is especially well equipped, with our boat having an additional drinks fridge in the centre of the saloon table so as not to disturb the cook when a top-up is required. Another nice touch is putting the sink at the end of the

## Owner's suite

The forecabin is designed as the owner's suite and the space forward of the main bulkhead can be configured to the owner's preferences. *Saareena* has a V-berth with extra lockage, but an island berth is optional. Both are ensuite



For video of the test, scan the QR code with a smartphone or see [www.sailingtoday.co.uk](http://www.sailingtoday.co.uk)

return so someone can be washing up or cleaning food while another prepares and cooks it.

The gimballed cooker is full size with a grill and oven and there's loads of stowage for food and cooking utensils in lockers below and above the worktop.

In the centre cockpit model, the galley is in the corridor running aft, with the sink inboard, above the engine compartment.



DUNCAN'S VERDICT

I felt at home as soon as I stepped on board *Saareena*. She's just my sort of cruising yacht and I know I would be happy to sail her anywhere in all weathers. Her high coamings, long sturdy handrails, chunky teak-capped bulwarks and beefy standing rigging are all great confidence boosters. Then there's her sumptuous interior with all that warm wood and cosy cabins, plus the sheer practicality of the layout with options for a proper workbench, generator space, machinery area – the lot.

In all, she has everything the Swedish equivalents offer – more in fact when you bear in mind how much the yard is happy to customise her for you – but at a considerably lower price.

- SAILING ABILITY: ★★★★★
- COMFORT: ★★★★★
- BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

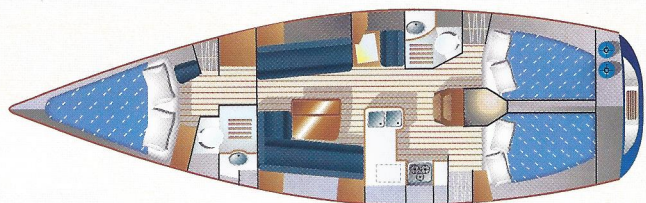
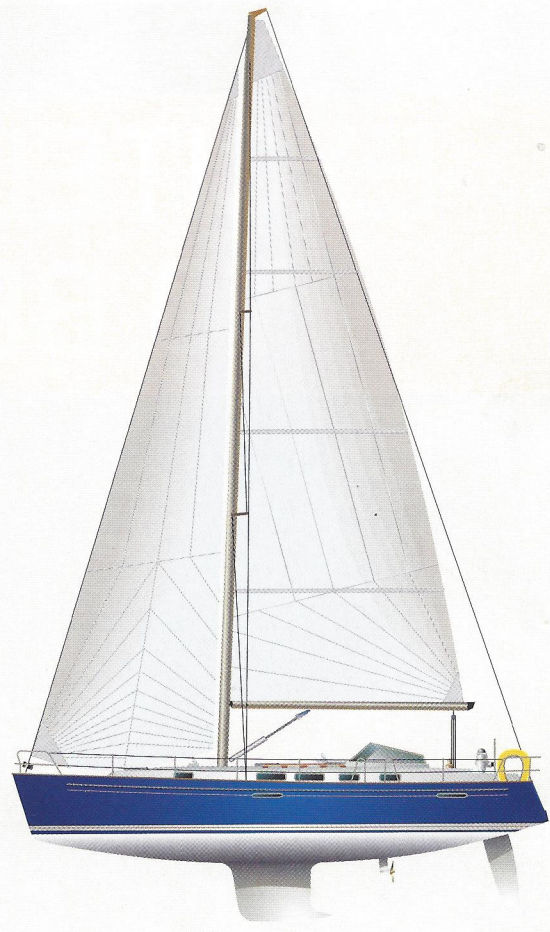
PRICE FROM £341,000
SAILAWAY PRICE FROM £372,000
(see <a href="http://www.sailingtoday.co.uk">www.sailingtoday.co.uk</a> for details)
LOA: 41ft (12.5m)
LWL: 36ft 9in (11.2m)
Beam: 12ft 9in (3.9m)
Draught: 6ft 6in (2m)
Displacement: 21,560lb (9,800kg)
Sail area (main/jib): 924.5sqft (86m²)
Fuel: 68gal (310lt)
Water: 68gal (310lt) +100lt option
Berths: 4/6
Engine: 55hp Volvo D2-55
Transmission: Saildrive with 3-blade folding prop
Designer: Karl-Johan Stråhlmann
Builder: Saare Paat, Estonia
UK supplier: Saare Yachts UK, 023 8045 8272, <a href="http://www.saareyachts.co.uk">www.saareyachts.co.uk</a>

PERFORMANCE

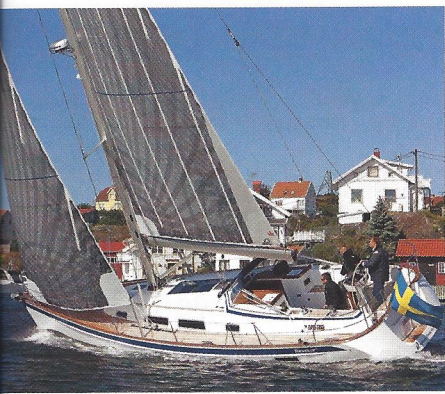
Displ/LWL ratio: 194
Sail area/Displ ratio: 19.2
AVS: 134°



For a fuller explanation of stability and performance figures see [www.sailingtoday.co.uk](http://www.sailingtoday.co.uk)



IF THE SAARE 41AC ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU...



HALLBERG RASSY 412  
From £395,000

Probably the nearest equivalent to the Saare, HR's 412AC is one of the yard's quicker models, but still retains the excellent build quality and craftsmanship of this well-respected marque of bluewater cruisers.

[www.transworldyachts.co.uk](http://www.transworldyachts.co.uk)



MALO 40  
From £377,000

Another traditional Swedish long-legged ocean cruiser, the centre-cockpit Malo 40 replaced the earlier 39 and has been brought completely up to date with a good number of upgrades.

[www.maloyachts.co.uk](http://www.maloyachts.co.uk)



NAJAD 410  
From £423,000

Despite a bumpy ride during the recession, Najad yachts are now being made again by the builders of Swedestar Yachts. The Najad 410 is another classic centre-cockpit ocean cruiser with luxurious accommodation.

[www.sdmarine.co.uk](http://www.sdmarine.co.uk)