



At a glance ▶ loa x beam 12.17m x 3.98m ▶ draft 2.03m ▶ displacement 8990kg (light) ▶ test engine Volvo 40CV ▶ cabins three double ▶ price \$368,000

FRENCH HONOUR

The Dufour 405's reputation preceded it downunder. But how did the European cruising boat of 2010 stack up under a critical Kiwi glare?



Words **Paul Stock** Photos **Mike Hunter**

Test conditions ▶ 0-10 knot southerly breeze, slight seas

She's French with sunken, far-away eyes that lure you in. She looks racy too, with her nearly plumb stem and slick exterior styling.

But the new 12.17m Dufour 405 Grand' Large is no lightweight at more than nine tonnes in sailing trim, 26 percent of that in ballast.

With her moderate displacement, high freeboard, considerable beam and volume, and moderate rig, she is definitely more at the comfort end of the scale, and it's certainly not hard to see why she was voted European Boat-of-the-Year in the cruising yacht division.

I joined Norman Gee and Tim Orgias, owners of New Zealand Dufour agents Ensign Marine, to find out how this award winner would cope in mid-winter Hauraki Gulf conditions. In other words, in an environment where anything and everything is possible.

Underway

We headed for Home Bay on Rangitoto Island in a slack water low tide with no wind, which meant we could give the 40hp Volvo a good run. At cruising speed we were getting about eight knots and it was smooth and quiet. The chain-to-wire twin wheel system, leading to a quadrant, gives the helm a direct feel, albeit a little heavy when changing direction initially under motor.

The deck layout is conventional, the cockpit overlaid with iroko (like teak) which will be standard on all New Zealand-bound Dufours, and I liked the chunky timber toerails.

Dufour 405 Grand'Large

key features



There is a easy flow through the iroko-covered cockpit from the twin wheels which are mounted quite low

The mainsheet clutch is mounted along with the port side control lines, making the area quite busy

The genoa winches are positioned well aft, keeping the coamings clear

The rectangular windows on the hull and cabin coamings are modern and provide lots of light to the moabi timber interior

Boating's comprehensive test

Below deck					
<p>Design brief According to Dufour, the Grand'Large range is intended to be: "The harmony of adventure and comfort. This range of yachts excels at coastal as well as blue water cruising with maximum comfort and space. On board the purity of the lines and the refinement of the premium materials rhyme with the dynamism of the sailing experience". Fair enough.</p>	<p>Construction The GRP hull is hand-laminated with an internal structural hull liner. The deck is balsa core and the keel is cast iron with a stainless rudder stock. The semi-elliptical rudder has a closed cell foam core. Overall it is a relatively heavy construction throughout, including extensive use of Corian and heavy, synthetic veneer-covered panels. The interior is lined in sustainable moabi timber and veneer.</p>	<p>Sail plan/rig The fractional (almost masthead) rig features an alloy mast, double raked aft spreaders, two fixed backstays (non-adjustable during sailing), alloy boom with mid-boom sheeting, roller-furler, lazy jacks and 'soft' vang, and continuous rigging (all the rigging comes down onto the deck). Two OEM Dacron Elvstrom sails come standard and the main has leech battens only.</p>	<p>Engine Access to the Volvo 40CV (29.1kW) sail drive engine is excellent through a lifting front cover on gas strut, and is well sound-proofed. There is also good access to machinery, including service batteries and chargers. The plumbing and wiring is tidy, and there is good tankage capacity, including 200 litres of fuel.</p>	<p>Electronics On the test boat the Nexus NX3 displays - with speed, depth, water temp, GPS position, log and wireless wind - were mounted on aft end of cockpit coamings, port and starboard, making them difficult to read. There is a factory-planned position on the aft end of the table - including provision for wiring - for a 'pod' to contain GPS plotter etc which would give a better 'heads up' display.</p>	<p>At the helm The first thing I noticed is how low the twin wheels are mounted. It's no issue, just different to a larger single wheel. Visibility is good, access to the genoa winches is possible from the helm, and the ergonomics of controls around companionway excellent. Iroko (similar to teak) is used on the seats while there is good stowage including gas bottle/liferaft lockers, cockpit shower and fold down stern platform. Deck gear is mainly Lewmar.</p>



The low profile anchor winch, controlled by a corded remote control, was easy to use



Two overhead cabin hatches face in different directions for ventilation options

All control lines lead tidily aft to jammers either side of the companionway, including the mainsheet, but I couldn't help feeling rope tail

bags would be a useful addition. The test boat has electronic displays mounted on the end of the cockpit coamings alongside the twin wheels and that made them difficult to read while helming. Fortunately, there's a permanently-mounted cockpit table with space

for an electronics 'pod' on the aft end where new owners will undoubtedly mount GPS chartplotter/fish-finder and any other big screen electronics.

The headsail sheet winches are mounted a long way aft on the coamings, allowing the helmsperson to trim as well as steer if required. The winches can still be used by crew from a position forward of the twin wheels, a system that works well and frees up the top of the coaming from winch obstruction when at anchor.

Stowage is good, with generous lockers at the aft end of the cockpit seats, and a good-size gas bottle locker aft to starboard. This locker also contains hidden receptacles for fuel and water under the gas bottle access lid, which is a nice touch.

Saloon/galley

The saloon boasts 2m headroom from the companionway to the forward bulkhead, where it slopes away to 1.94m. There is good stowage in the galley with easy access to the spacious fridge unit, but the cook would require a securing strap for use at sea on starboard tack. The sitdown chart-table is ideal for a laptop with shallow chart stowage and plenty of room for the electronics likely to be invested in on a boat like this.

Accommodation

The fore'ard cabin and en-suite is enormous and the hull windows add to the spacious feel. The two aft cabins sleep two comfortably and are serviced by a aft toilet/shower which obviously doubles as the day head. There are blinds on all windows and hatches and all lighting is adjustable at the switch or by circuit on the switch board. Moabi timber veneer is used for panels, with solid timber for fiddles, mouldings and door frames.

Anchoring

The Lewmar anchor winch is controlled from the foredeck using a remote corded handheld unit. Access along the sidedecks is relatively uncluttered. The 15kg Delta anchor is secured with 50m of warp and 20m of chain, and is installed locally by the importers. The anchor locker is massive and a locking pin is provided to secure the anchor when raised and left on bow. There is room for a small inflatable dinghy to be stowed on either the cabin top or foredeck.



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To port, the other aft locker contains a cockpit shower head. The area between the aft lockers folds down on a tackle system to provide open stern access to the dinghy or the sea if you feel like an early morning swim. To cap it off, there is space for a liferaft (or dive gear/beer) under another lid in the aft end of the cockpit sole. There is a bit of a knack to accessing this stowage area as it's primarily designed for liferafts and not intended for everyday use.

The moderate-size rig is deck stepped which makes sense on a boat like this as it has two advantages: no mast intruding into the interior, and no water getting into the bilge through the mast. With the mainsheet attached at the middle of the boom, any adjustment makes a big change to the boom position. It is easy to adjust, can be led to a winch if required, and keeps the cockpit clear of interference from a mainsheet traveller.

Interestingly, the boat has a "soft" vang, in contrast to the telescopic spring/air tube types that are prevalent on many modern cruisers. It's simple, does the job of preventing the boom lifting and is more cost-effective. The topping lift stops the boom from dropping



Dufour have made wiring provision for the installation of an electronics pod on the aft end of the cockpit table



The port and starboard lockers offer good stowage and don't intrude into the aft cabins

when raising/lowering the main or when reefing – the old-fashioned way - instead of the vang.

Down below

The test boat is the three cabin version, with the for'ard cabin serving as the master, with huge en-suite head and shower, and two double guest cabins aft

sharing a day head/shower. It seemed a little strange that only the aft head had a holding tank as standard, and provision of latches to hold the head doors in the open position is a small detail that could be easily addressed.

The three-cabin version has a longitudinal galley which will get most use at anchor, and you get a better chart-table

"The moderate-size rig makes sense on a boat like this..."

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“Despite extensive use of red-brown Moabi timberwork, the feeling is light and airy”

layout than the two cabin version.

There is a great feeling of space where the effect of the high freeboard and wide waterline beam are striking. Despite extensive use of red-brown sustainable Moabi timberwork, the feeling is light and airy. Other features include an electric fridge with two top hatches and a front door, Corian benchtops, sit-down chart (lap top) station with ample space for extra electronics, windows in the hull, abundant use of gas struts in lockers, lots of stowage, good hatches and blinds on all windows and hatches. There’s also a novel under-floor wine rack, a very French idea that won’t find too many detractors on this side of the world.

Behind the scenes, the construction is tidy and the plumbing and wiring all neatly finished. Cabinetry is manufactured and assembled in the modern computer

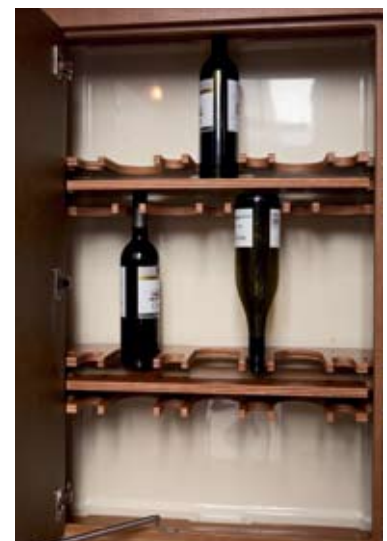
cut pre-fabricated style. A downside is that some of the edges are not very well-rounded, a by-product of the cabinet assembly line system shared by most production boats in this category.

The keel is cast iron and is pre-coated in France ready for assembly in NZ.

There’s good tankage with water forward, and water and fuel aft. Engine access is excellent, and the three-cabin layout features good access to machinery in the void space between the two aft cabins: service batteries, chargers, access to the quadrant and cable steering gear.

Under sail

Back at Home Bay, *Boating* photographer Mike Hunter had captured the interior shots and the southerly was building nicely. With a flood tide under us, we hoisted anchor and sails, trimmed the



Top: Squabs secured with dot velcro may not last for long in seagoing conditions. Similarly the longitudinal galley, featuring Corian benchtops, is best suited to harbour use. Above: There is space for 21 bottles of your finest under the cabin sole



The nav station is the ideal spot for a laptop and there's plenty of space for additional electronics. The refrigeration is between the stove and the chart-table. Fridge access is via two top hatches or the front door on the for'ard end of the unit



The master en-suite is clean and functional, as you'd expect from Dufour Yachts



The engine compartment is well insulated with good access for routine maintenance



The hull windows in the huge for'ard cabin add to the feeling of spaciousness

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Dufour 405

Grand'Large technical



PROS

- Big volume
- Good build quality and aesthetics
- Nice cruising/performance compromise

CONS

- A holding tank for the forward en-suite is an optional extra
- Placement of multi-display instruments on aft end of the coamings on test boat
- Only two basic sails



Two cabin



Three cabin



Dufour 405

- **loa** 12.17m ► **lwl** 10.63m ► **beam** 3.98m ► **draft** 2.03m ► **displacement** 8990kg (light) ► **sail area (main and genoa)** 82m² ► **engine** Volvo 40CV saildrive (29.1kW) ► **propeller** two-blade fixed ► **fuel** 200 litres ► **water** 380 litres
- **holding tank** 50 litres in aft head ► **cruising speed (motor)** 7.5 to 8 knots ► **max speed (motor)** 8.5 knots
- **price as tested** \$368,000 ► **prices** from \$368,000 (NZ specification) ► **designer** Umberto Felci & Patrick Roseo
- **builder** Dufour Yachts ► **enquiries** Ensign Marine 09 366 0028 www.ensignmarine.co.nz

headsail and put the 405 on the wind into the Motuihe channel.

The wheel carried some weather helm but was positive without being heavy.

We were getting about 6.5-7 knots through the water, and initially the breeze jumped between 5-10 knots and then increased to 10-15 knot gusts as we approached North Head. This gave us an opportunity to load the 405 up a bit and see how she responded when pressed, and she remained nicely under control.

Further on, at the container wharves, with the wind steady in the south, we cracked sheets. Speed lifted to almost 10 knots over the ground (8.5-9 knots through the water) and she felt lively and fun.

We were soon back at Westhaven Marina, happy and dry.



OUR VERDICT

The Dufour Grand'Large 405 is attractively-styled and detailed, and boasts a design practical for cruising in New Zealand.

Sailing performance is predictable and solid, and should deliver good average speed for passages, while under power, 7.5-8 knot averages are attainable.

Two 'OEM' sails are supplied, and while light, look well made. The main has leech battens instead of full-length ones so upgrades to the sails would be worthwhile for serious cruisers, including a fully-battened main and a gennaker/spinnaker. The addition of the GPS-plotter in a cockpit table pod would also be a useful investment.

While there are no surprises in this package, performance is still exciting in a good breeze and most parts of the boat are implemented extremely well, making the 405 worth consideration for all new-boat buyers in the 40-foot market.