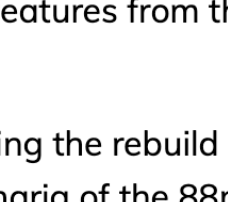


Bestevaer 36 review: Start exploring closer to home

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After two decades of high latitude adventure on a 53ft sloop of his own design, renowned naval architect Gerard Dykstra created Bestevaer 36 their smallest ever boat for exploring closer to home

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With renowned designer Gerard Dykstra approaching 80 years old, he was looking for a boat for himself that would fit a somewhat different use to his previous yachts. Yet at the same time he still wanted to include many of the features from those vessels over the years.

Given Dykstra's background, with successful projects including the rebuild of the [J Class Endeavour](#) for Elizabeth Meyer and the innovative Dynarig of the 88m [superyacht Maltese Falcon](#), it was clear at the outset that the Bestevaer 36 was destined to be a different class to other yachts of this length.

The designer's own brief was different to that of any of the previous models in the well known Bestevaer line. Firstly the boat had to be small enough for easy coastal cruising, especially given the Netherlands' myriad of small harbours and marinas that are out of reach for larger vessels. Secondly, it had to be able to dry out at low water when exploring areas such as the Frisian Islands.

Dykstra also wanted to retain core features that have become key Bestevaer trademarks. These most obviously include the rugged aluminium construction and enclosed pilothouse, but also encompass many smaller, yet important, details learned from hundreds of thousands of miles sailed in challenging conditions.

Our test boat is jointly owned by Dykstra and KM Yachtbuilders, the long-standing builder of the Bestevaer range. In addition to use by the designer and his family, it also serves as a test bed for new technologies, particularly in the sphere of sustainability, that can subsequently be rolled out across other models in the range.



Photo: Bertel Kalthof/K&M Yachtbuilders

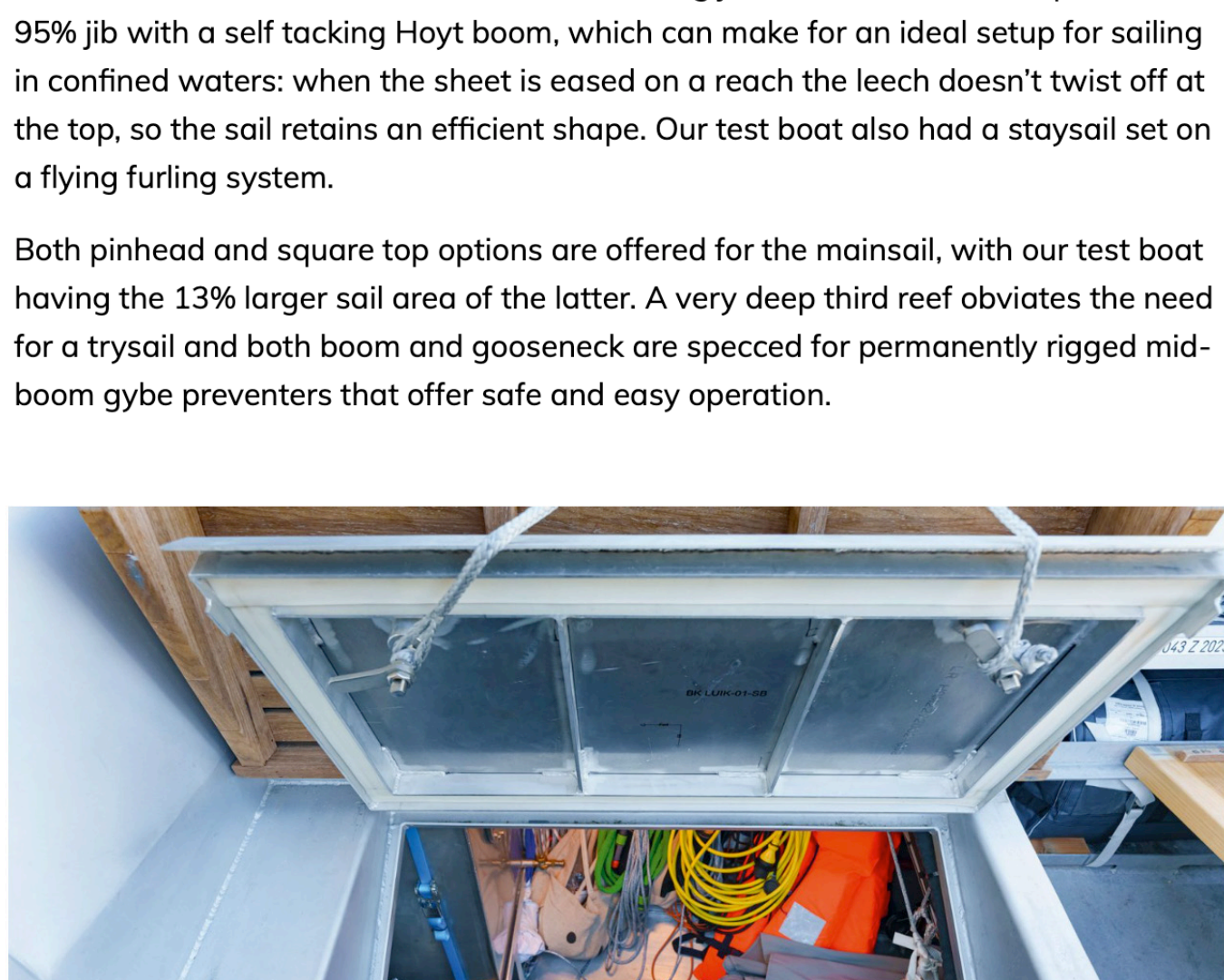
Don't judge a book...

Displacement is 8.8 tonnes, making this a heavy 36-footer, yet it's a relatively narrow boat by today's standards, especially on the waterline, which means it goes upwind surprisingly well. As a result it has a more all round performance profile than might be expected, while also promising a level of comfort in heavy weather that's rarely associated with boats of this size.

My first sail on the Bestevaer 36 was in light airs that never exceeded 7.5 knots of true wind speed. Yet close-hauled we made 3.5 knots at a true wind angle just wide of 60°, although that figure dropped to 2.5 knots when the breeze eased to 6 knots. In such light airs the electric propulsion system fitted to the test boat can be used to provide a gentle silent push that significantly increases speed while consuming remarkably little power.

We also had a Code 55 gennaker set on roller furling gear. Unlike Code 0s dimensioned for racing yachts, this can be left hoisted without fear of it unfurling of its own accord in normal conditions, making for very easy sail handling, though at only 50m² its area is rather modest. Nevertheless in light airs we made 4 to 4.5 knots of boat speed with this, with the true wind just aft of the beam.

The following day served up 8-11 knots with occasional stronger puffs, in which the boat made 5 knots to windward, tacking through marginally less than 100°. Unlike many heavy displacement shallow draught vessels the helm feels direct, with positive feedback, making it a joy to sail.

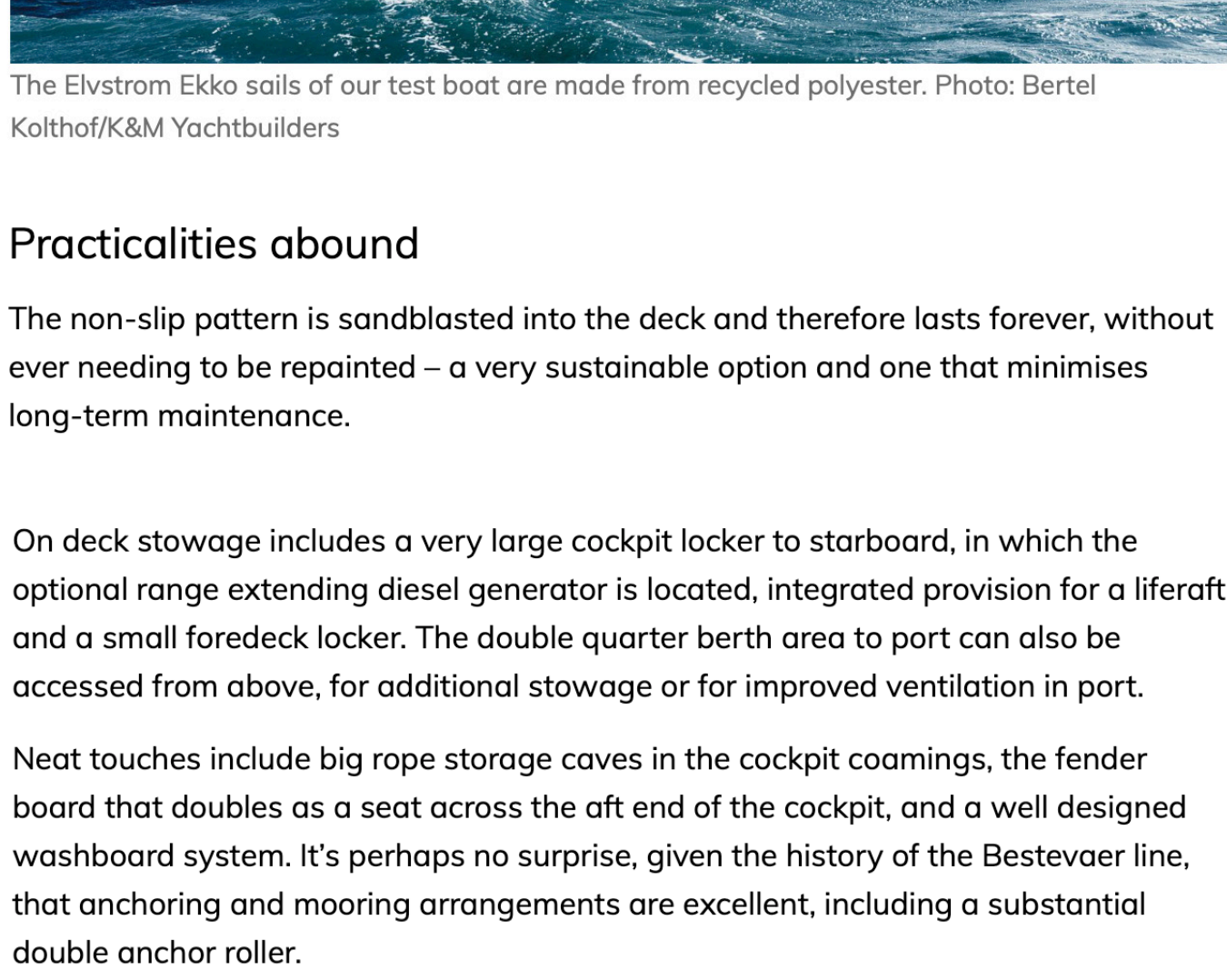


'The helm feels direct, with positive feedback'. Photo: Bertel Kalthof/K&M Yachtbuilders

With the Code 55 set, fully powered up in 11 knots of breeze just forward of the beam, and the apparent therefore well forward, we made an easy and consistent 6-7 knots, with the boat feeling rock solid, even in gusts.

Performance is undoubtedly enhanced by the deep 2,000kg hydraulically lifting centreboard that gives a 2.4m draught when lowered. It has an efficient aerofoil section and is filled with lead to maximise righting moment.

There's an easily replaced fuse to protect the systems in the event of grounding, as well as a manual backup system. It can also be locked down when offshore to retain maximum righting moment even in the extreme situation of the boat being inverted by a rogue wave. It's undoubtedly an expensive setup, but as with many other aspects of this boat it represents money well spent.

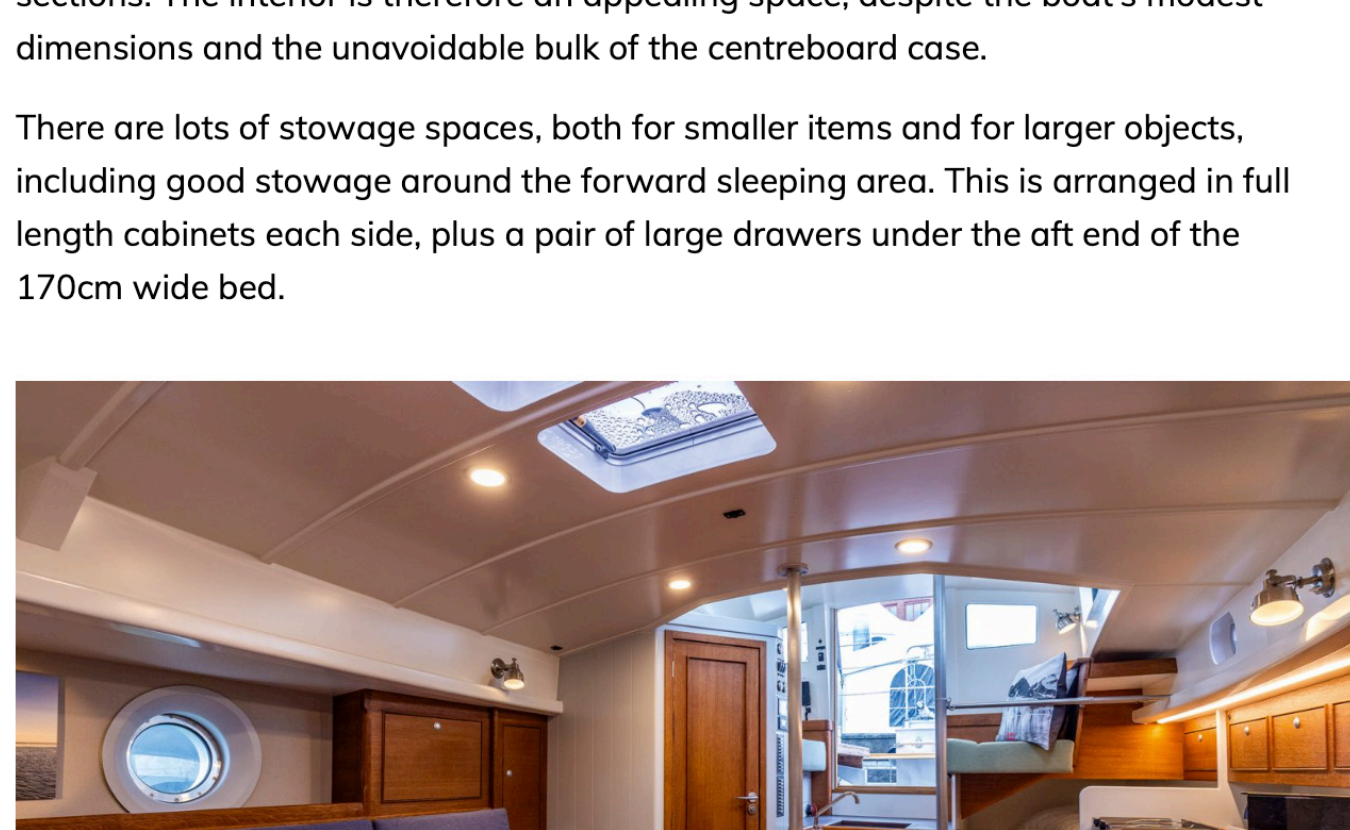


Capacious lazarette. Photo: Ludovic Fruchaud/imacis.fr/EYOTY

Shoal attraction

With the centreboard raised the boat floats in only 0.7m of water and the lifting rudder has enough immersed area when raised to allow some manoeuvrability in very shallow water. The hull dries out with the skeg and rudder clear of the bottom when on solid ground, though the aluminium part of the rudder is engineered to be weight bearing when dried out on an uneven bottom.

It's an ideal arrangement for many parts of coastal European waters, including the north of Holland, and the myriad of little used small creeks and estuaries on the UK's south and east coasts where you can get away from the crowds even at the height of

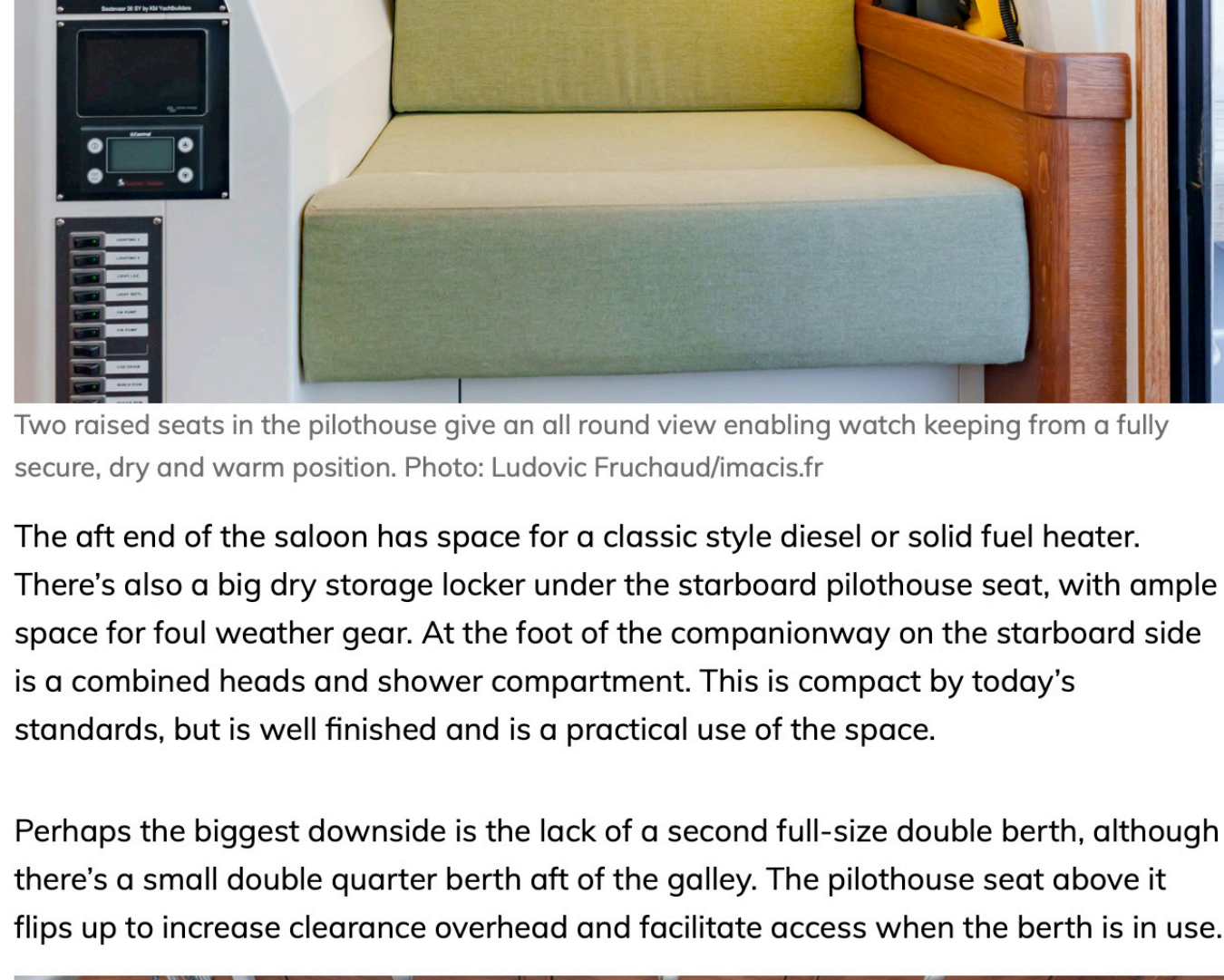


transom gate lowers to provide boarding steps. Rudder provides manoeuvrability even when raised. Photo: Ludovic Fruchaud/imacis.fr/EYOTY

Equally it's ideal for potentially more exposed locations such as the Isles of Scilly and the North Brittany coast, where the ability to dry out safely over low water adds a completely different dimension to a cruising itinerary. Nevertheless, this is a boat capable of crossing oceans and is engineered for strength and reliability in every respect.

We sailed with a conventional 105% roller furling jib, but there's also an option for a 95% jib with a self tacking Hoyt boom, which can make for an ideal setup for sailing in confined waters: when the sheet is eased on a reach the leech doesn't twist off at the top, so the sail retains an efficient shape. Our test boat also had a staysail set on a flying furling system.

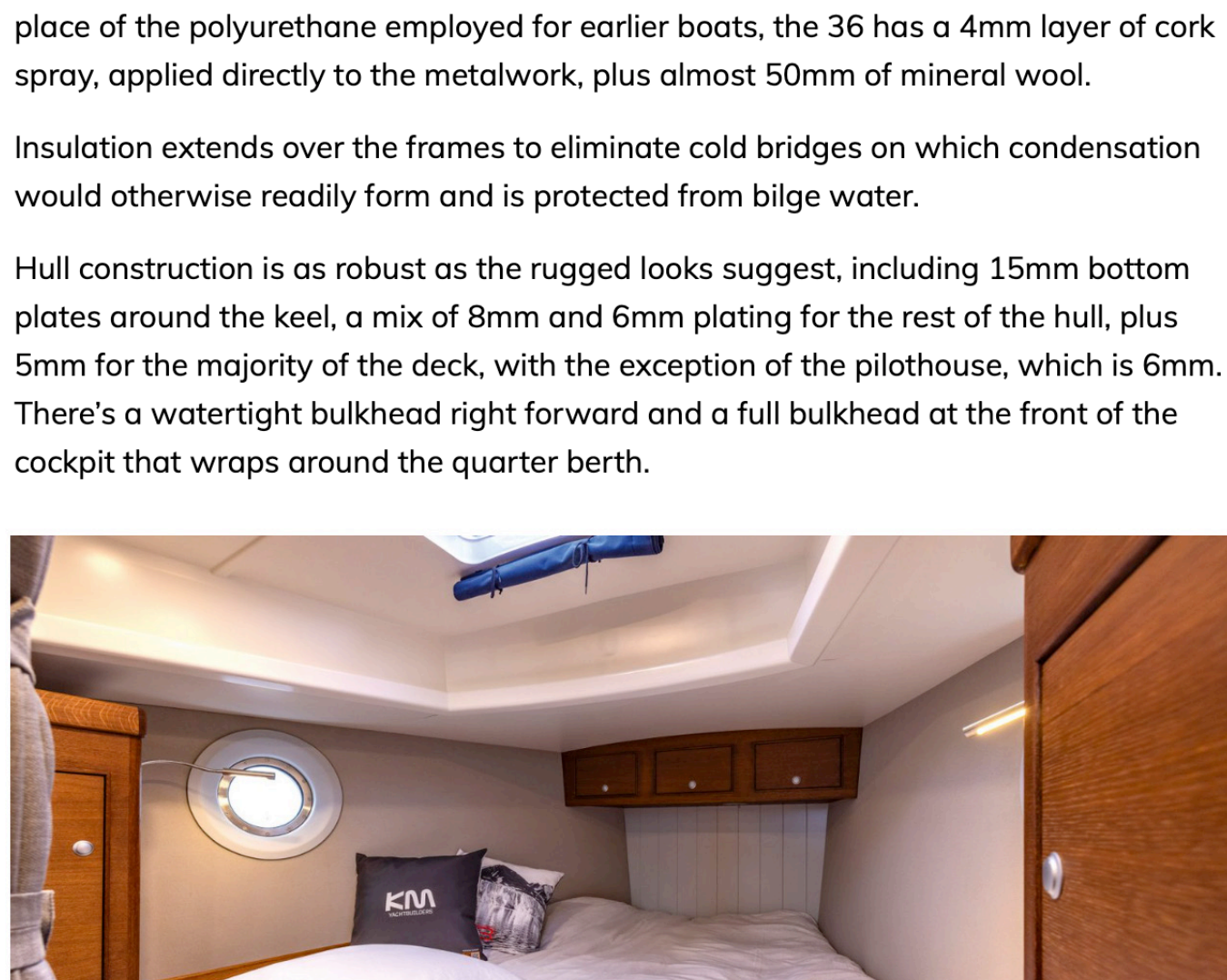
Both pinhead and square top options are offered for the mainsail, with our test boat having the 13% larger sail area of the latter. A very deep third reef obviates the need for a trysail and both boom and gooseneck are specced for permanently rigged mid-boom gybe preventers that offer safe and easy operation.



Starboard locker also houses the range extending generator. Photo: Ludovic Fruchaud/imacis.fr/EYOTY

Unusually for a yacht of this size, big-boat style Antal jammers are used instead of clutches. This allows them to be neatly recessed each side of the cockpit. A side benefit is that they're also kinder to the rope cover, yet in a practical sense there's very little extra complication in use.

Running backstays are needed when flying the staysail and for boats with square top mainsails once the breeze reaches Force 4. However, the leech of the square top main clears the runners with the first reef tucked in, so in stronger conditions they can be left permanently taut.



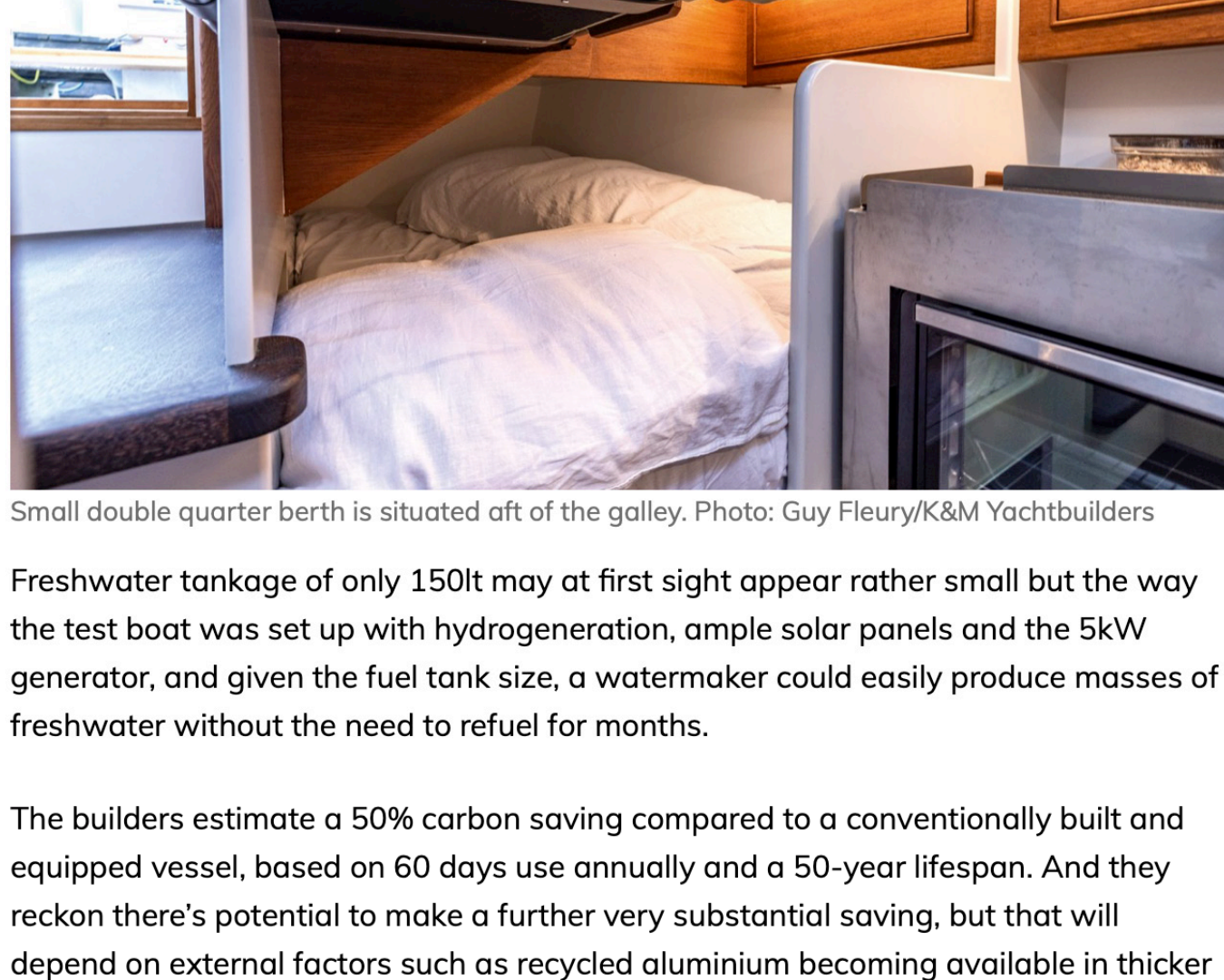
The Elvstrom Ekko sails of our test boat are made from recycled polyester. Photo: Bertel Kalthof/K&M Yachtbuilders

Practicalities abound

The non-slip pattern is sandblasted into the deck and therefore lasts forever, without ever needing to be repainted – a very sustainable option and one that minimises long-term maintenance.

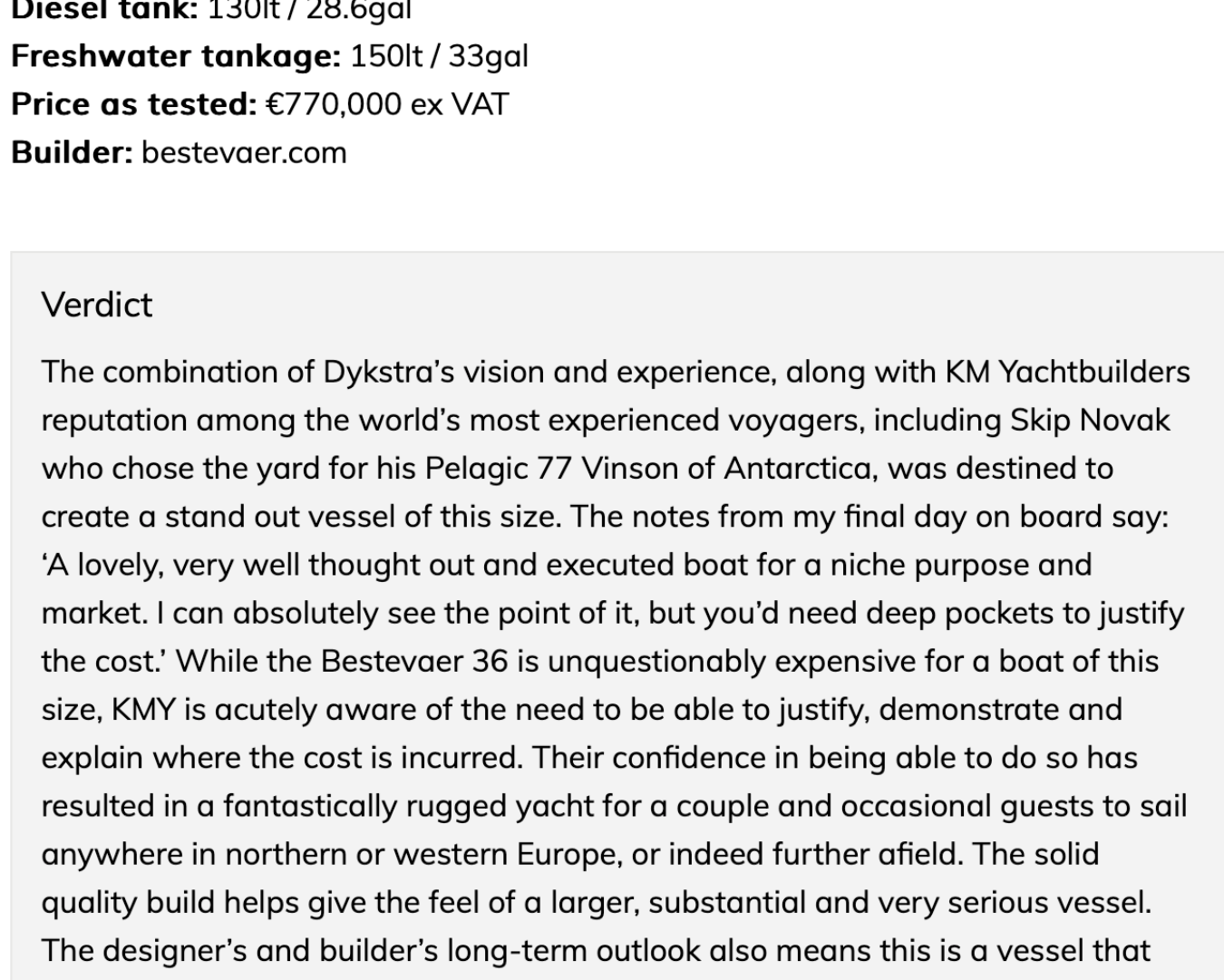
On deck stowage includes a very large cockpit locker to starboard, in which the optional range extending diesel generator is located, integrated provision for a liferaft and a small foredeck locker. The double quarter berth area to port can also be accessed from above, for additional stowage or for improved ventilation in port.

Neat touches include big rope storage caves in the cockpit coamings, the fender board that doubles as a seat across the aft end of the cockpit, and a well designed washboard system. It's perhaps no surprise, given the history of the Bestevaer line, that anchoring and mooring arrangements are excellent, including a substantial double anchor roller.



Ahead of the pilothouse, down a few easy steps, is a surprisingly spacious open plan interior, with a big almost rectangular double berth forward of the main bulkhead, and a wide standing area behind it, curtained off from the rest of the saloon. This loft style interior layout without separate cabins certainly gives a greater feeling of space and light than dividing a boat with this internal volume up into separate and distinct sections. The interior is therefore an appealing space, despite the boat's modest dimensions and the unavoidable bulk of the centreboard case.

There are lots of stowage spaces, both for smaller items and for larger objects, including good stowage around the forward sleeping area. This is arranged in full length cabinets each side, plus a pair of large drawers under the aft end of the 170cm wide bed.



Open plan accommodation is arranged around an almost 6ft long central table that houses the centreboard case and hydraulics. Photo: Guy Fleury/K&M Yachtbuilders

Unlike the larger Bestevaers, which can be fitted out with semi-custom layouts, the arrangement of the 36 is more rigid, but three interior styles give owners a degree of flexibility without the extra cost of a semi-custom yacht.

Our test boat's classic interior style has substantial joinery with an oiled oak finish offset by plenty of white surfaces. A pair of circular hull ports each side help contribute to natural light, while three overhead opening hatches also help provide good ventilation. There are also substantial deep fiddles and well placed vertical grab posts throughout.

Unlike many yachts, there's an opening port above the two burner gimbalbed induction hob and electric oven. The galley also has a fridge drawer under the head of the quarter berth, a good sized work surface, plus a surprising amount of usable stowage volume, with even space in the bilge put to good use in this respect.

Two raised seats in the pilothouse give an all round view enabling watch keeping from a fully secure, dry and warm position. Photo: Ludovic Fruchaud/imacis.fr

The aft end of the saloon has space for a classic style diesel or solid fuel heater. There's also a big dry storage locker under the starboard pilothouse seat, with ample space for foul weather gear. At the foot of the companionway on the starboard side is a combined heads and shower compartment. This is compact by today's standards, but is well finished and is a practical use of the space.

Perhaps the biggest downside is the lack of a second full-size double berth, although there's a small double quarter berth aft of the galley. The pilothouse seat above it flips up to increase clearance overhead and facilitate access when the berth is in use.

No need for gas – there's a gimbalbed induction hob and electric oven in the compact galley. Photo: Ludovic Fruchaud/imacis.fr

Best ever for sustainability

Historically Bestevaers have predominately been sold to owners in Nordic countries who plan to cruise in high latitudes, so insulation of the hull and deck is important. In place of the polyurethane employed for earlier boats, the 36 has a 4mm layer of cork spray, applied directly to the metalwork, plus almost 50mm of mineral wool.

Insulation extends over the frames to eliminate cold bridges on which condensation would otherwise readily form and is protected from bilge water.

Hull construction is as robust as the rugged looks suggest, including 15mm bottom plates around the keel, a mix of 8mm and 6mm plating for the rest of the hull, plus 5mm for the majority of the deck, with the exception of the pilothouse, which is 6mm. There's a watertight bulkhead right forward and a full bulkhead at the front of the cockpit that wraps around the quarter berth.

Main double berth features plenty of stowage and is separated from the saloon by curtains. Photo: Guy Fleury/K&M Yachtbuilders

The boat is currently built of 63% recycled aluminium, a figure that would be higher if the thicker plating at the bottom of the hull was also available as recycled material. The choice of aluminium spars was deliberate given the lower level of energy needed to fabricate them compared to carbon spars. It's also a fully circular material and can eventually be recycled.

Attention to detail extends even to pockets recessed into the hull for the anodes, giving an almost flush profile. As well as improving hydrodynamic efficiency this also gives the anodes some protection from damage when the boat is dried out over low water.

The test boat is fitted with an Oceanvolt ServoProp 15 electric propulsion system, with a 29kW battery bank that gives seven hours of autonomy at a boat speed of around 4.5 knots in calm conditions. There's a lower priced option with a 14kW battery bank, and the genset can be replaced by a larger 43kW battery bank.

The combined efficiency of the propulsion system and the optional 5kVA Fischer Panda diesel generator is such that the 430lt fuel tank is sufficient for around 72 hours of motoring at 4.5-5 knots, giving a range of 270-300 miles in flat water, allowing for 20% reserve. And that's without factoring in regeneration while sailing, or solar input.

Small double quarter berth is situated aft of the galley. Photo: Guy Fleury/K&M Yachtbuilders

Freshwater tankage of only 150lt may at first sight appear rather small but the way the test boat was set up with hydrogenation, ample solar panels and the 5kW generator, and given the fuel tank size, a watermaker could easily produce masses of freshwater without the need to refill for months.

The builders estimate a 60% carbon saving compared to a conventionally built and equipped vessel, based on 50 days use annually and a 50-year lifespan. And they reckon there's potential to make a further very substantial saving, but that will depend on external factors such as recycled aluminium becoming available in thicker sheets.

Bestevaer 36 specifications

LOA: 11.9m / 39ft 0in
Hull length: 10.95m / 36ft 0in
LWL: 10.66m / 35ft 0in
Beam: 3.80m / 12ft 6in
Draught: 0.7-2.4m / 2ft 4-7ft 11in
Displacement (light): 7,800kg / 17,200lb
Ballast: 2,000kg / 4,410lb
Pinhead mainsail: 37m² / 398ft²
Square top mainsail: 42m² / 452ft²
95% jib for Hoyt boom: 23m² / 247ft²
105% genoa: 28m² / 301ft²
Staysail: 13m² / 140ft²
Code 55: 50m² / 538ft²
Diesel tank: 130lt / 28.6gal
Freshwater tankage: 150lt / 33gal
Price as tested: €770,000 ex VAT
Builder: bestevaer.com

Verdict

The combination of Dykstra's vision and experience, along with KM Yachtbuilders reputation among the world's most experienced voyagers, including Skip Novak who chose the yard for his Pelagic 77 Vinson of Antarctica, was destined to create a stand out vessel of this size. The notes from my final day on board say: 'A lovely, very well thought out and executed boat for a niche purpose and market. I can absolutely see the point of it, but you'd need deep pockets to justify the cost.' While the Bestevaer 36 is unquestionably expensive for a boat of this size, KMY is acutely aware of the need to be able to justify, demonstrate and explain where the cost is incurred. Their confidence in being able to do so has resulted in a fantastically rugged yacht for a couple and occasional guests to sail anywhere in northern or western Europe, or indeed further afield. The solid quality build helps give the feel of a larger, substantial and very serious vessel.

The designer's and builder's long-term outlook also means this is a vessel that will look as good in 20-25 years as it does when it leaves the builder's yard.

<https://www.yachtingworld.com/reviews/videos/bestevaer-36-review-start-exploring-closer-to-home>