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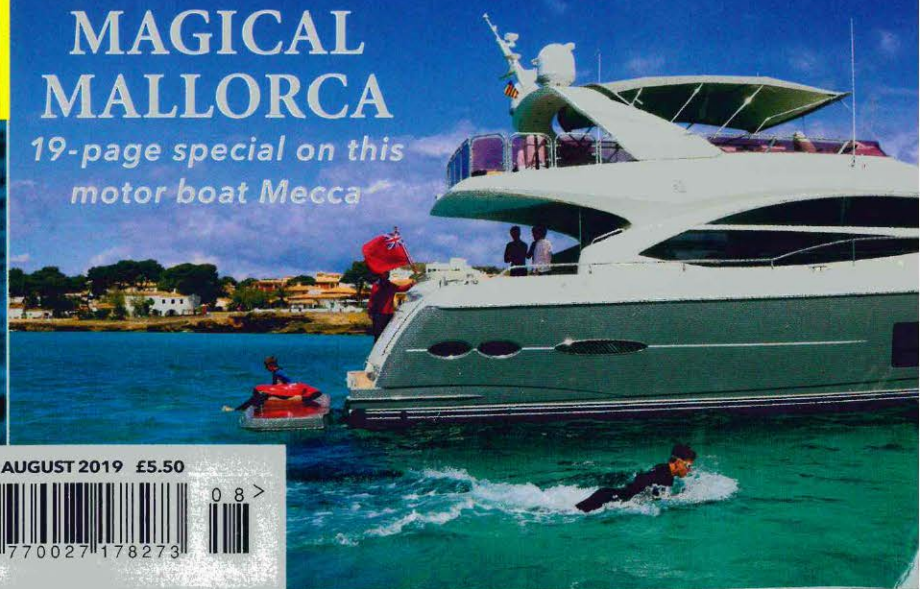
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Words Jack Haines

FJORD 44 COUPE

Fjord is going back to its roots and building coupés again but, having carved out a niche for open sports cruisers, is this a step in the right direction?

Before Fjord was snapped up by German giant Hanse Group in 2007 it was known for its avant-garde coupes, born and bred for the changeable weather of Scandinavia. The popularity of these craft soon spread to northern Europe where the protection and practicality of the wheelhouse design played well for those who wanted to use their boat all year round.

Hanse Group guided Fjord in a new direction though, transforming the boats into Med-focused deck boats, festooned with sunpads and sporting sharp, Wally Tender-like lines, all T-top and topsides. Their distinctive style and focus on deck

space make them equally as popular for day boaters and weekenders as they are for superyacht tenders and chase boats. But now we have come full circle and Fjord has fixed a glass-laden wheelhouse to the hull and deck of a 42 to create the 44 Coupe. Its objective is at odds to that of its forefathers. The original coupés were designed to keep their occupants warm in cold weather. This one is designed to offer the outdoor living spaces, that Fjord has become known for, in an air-conditioned wheelhouse where guests can escape from the searing heat of the sun. There's more to it than that though, because the enclosed deck saloon fundamentally changes the way the boat works. Yes it shares engines, a hull and deck with the open 42, but ►



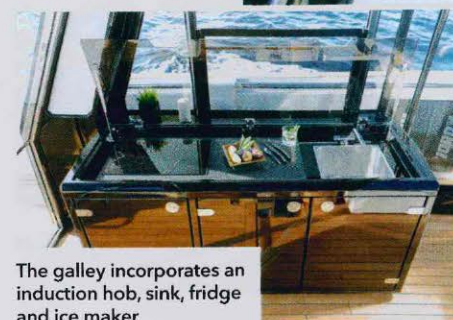
you can use this boat in an entirely different way because unlike the open version the internal living spaces aren't all squeezed below deck.

The designers were determined to keep the walkaround nature of the boat, something that works so well on the open variants. But that comes with clear compromises in that the wheelhouse has to be narrower and taller than it would be if it were extended right to the edges of the hull. It is, in my opinion, not a particularly stylish solution and makes the boat look overly tall and top-heavy, the angular fussiness of the windows clashing with the beautifully clean lines of the hull. However, what it lacks in aesthetic charm it more than makes up for in versatility.

UPPING THE ANTE

The wheelhouse can be opened up to the elements in a multitude of ways, including sliding aft doors, a sunroof, opening windows and two more sliding doors on both sides. With everything open on a breezy day you could comfortably keep this area cool without resorting to air-conditioning and having three doors makes moving around the boat particularly safe and easy. Air-con is a must because with all that glazing there is a propensity for it to get very hot inside the wheelhouse and, rather cheekily, the side doors, sliding windows and sunroof are cost options.

There's quite a lot of that on the 44, the base price of €617,000, inc VAT seems reasonable enough but the boat we tested had €346,870 worth of optional extras fitted to it (including nearly €3,000 for windscreen wipers!). The cockpit seating has all sorts of folding and sliding party tricks but nearly all of them are optional extras so the price rockets. With all these options fitted the deck spaces work very well, especially when you add in the hydraulic bathing platform with its built in steps that lead down to the water. The cockpit, easily accessed from either side of the transom, can be shaded by an extending canopy and the table drops down to create a large sunpad, the dinette backrest lowering electronically to provide more room for sunbathers to spread out. And because you have the internal



The galley incorporates an induction hob, sink, fridge and ice maker



TOP Three forward-facing seats are supportive and have a bolster function
BOTTOM Classy backlit switchgear controls the cockpit seating and external lighting

dinette as well, the cockpit can be left in sunpad mode so those in the sun needn't be disturbed when other guests want to eat.

Plenty of the 42's best features have carried over to the 44 and it's here that you are most grateful for the walkaround decks still being in place. It's such an easy boat to move around on and though the decks look very exposed, they are flanked by very tall topsides with thick handrails set inside them from stem to stern. The pop-up cleats have a smooth, well engineered action and they're big enough to cope with the thicker lines you might get when picking up ground lines. Deck storage is impressive and the retracting anchor arm is a welcome touch, which keeps the lines clean and the anchor protected (but it's optional, of course).

Another carry over is the helm, and that's a good thing because the open boat's driving position and dash design are excellent. The driver occupies the middle of three seats, all lushly upholstered and with a comfortable bolster. The central driving position puts the helmsman in the thick of the action but those

either side needn't disturb them if they want to move away from the helm. The dash layout is clear and sensibly organised but I wouldn't opt for the shiny black finish we had on the test boat. You get lots of reflections when the sun is shining directly on it and every little scratch and greasy finger mark shows up under light. A white finish, though brighter in the sun, will most likely look and wear better. There are a huge variety of colour schemes, materials, woods and finishes to choose from and plenty of scope to make your mark on the boat's look, even down to the colour of the caulking within the synthetic teak. There are cool, dark tones on offer but also vibrant reds and oranges, so something to suit every palette. The blue hull of the test boat, dark in the shadows but with a brilliant sparkle in sunlight, looked superb.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

IPS500 and 600 are the only engine options available on the 44 and though IPS600s (440hp) command a €43,911 premium over the (380hp) 500s, it is an investment worth making. Our own performance figures suggest the 44 with IPS600s is most efficient at 28 knots, when it is consuming 122lph for a range of 166nm with a 20% reserve. It's not unusual for an IPS boat to be more efficient at slightly higher speeds, but the smaller IPS500s max out at around 30 knots, so these engines will be working much harder to maintain a cruising speed anything like as fast as that. The IPS600s, on the other hand, are turning over at a relaxed 2,800rpm at 28 knots, a long way short of their maximum revs,

lessening the load on the engines and making for a quieter, more refined ride. Though we topped out at 35 knots on test, the engines were running 400rpm shy of Volvo's quoted maximum rpm for the D6 435s, so there is still some experimenting to be done with the propellers and interestingly there are three different prop choices on the options list.

Progress is extremely smooth aboard the 44. The motors are mounted well aft in the hull and you have all that glazing plus a deck hatch between the helm and them. Sitting at 25 knots the boat barely feels like its moving and is sipping a comparatively ▶

The metallic blue hull looks fantastic in the sun but we're not fans of the wheelhouse styling



The open plan cabin is bright and spacious; the double berth set low and comfortable



Headroom and access is extremely tight inside the optional second cabin



With so much glass around you the view out is excellent

modest 105lph. As an IPS boat the handling is typically light and predictable, but I wouldn't describe it as exciting. In a straight line the 44 eats up the miles with ease and with so much glass around you the view out is excellent, despite the bow running quite high and requiring a little tab to keep things level.

Below decks the layout is identical to the open but you may find yourself using the boat for longer cruises given the protection on deck. The accommodation would be very comfortable for a couple, and though it's open plan there is a big island berth, set low so it's easy to get in and out of, hanging storage and a bathroom with separate shower cubicle. There's just as much choice down here as there is on deck when it comes to décor but the wood options would be my preference over the sparse and clinical painted alternative. For €7,000 you can add a couple of berths to the standard storage area amidships but it's probably not worth it because with awkward access, very limited headroom and no storage it's not even much use as a kids' cabin so you will probably just end up using it for stowing bags anyway.



Large sink and separate shower in the bathroom

VERDICT

There is a clear business case for the 44 Coupe given that most of the underpinnings are shared with the 42. It's a clever way of offering customers two very different boats on the same proven platform. And if you yearn for a Fjord but need the

protection of a wheelhouse, the Coupe gives you that option. However, if you are simply looking for a versatile deck saloon sports cruiser, there are other boats designed from the outset as a coupé, which in my opinion look and work better. For me, the real beauty of Fjords is their openness; that connection to the water that makes them such attractive boats for warmer climes, capable of whisking you to bays and beaches in consummate style and comfort then acting as a fabulous floating sun terrace once the engines are off. My advice? If you want a Fjord, stick with the open. **CONTACT** Inspiration Marine.

+44 (0)2380 457008 www.fjordboats.com

DASH MATERIAL
The shiny GRP finish on the dash scratches easily and catches reflections

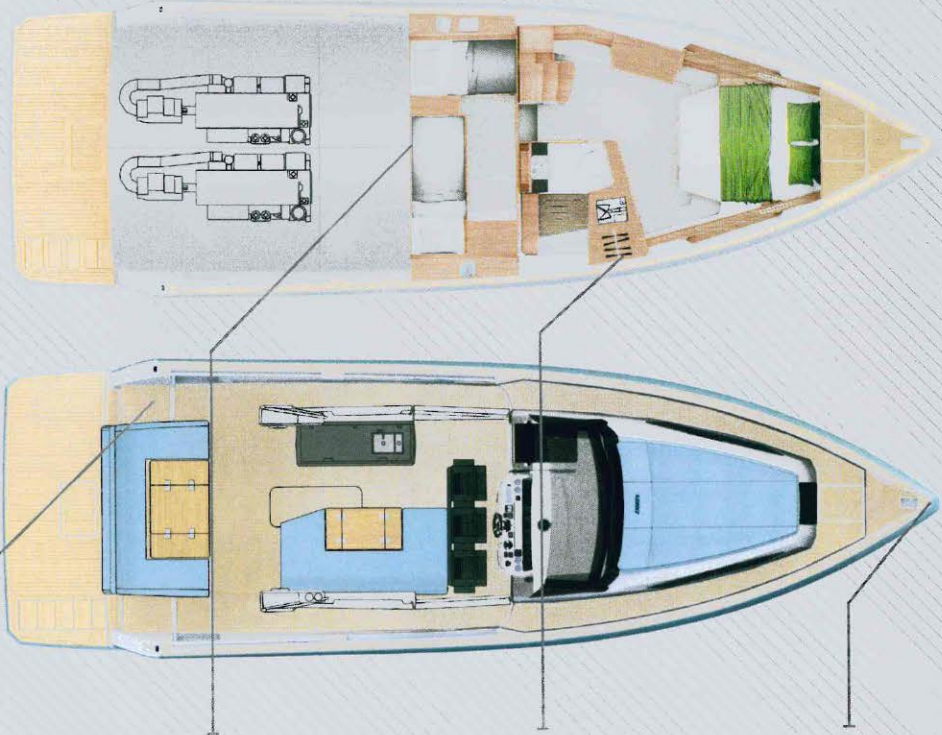


DIGITAL DIALS
No analogue dials, so everything runs through the two Simrad screens

LIGHTING
LEDs are dotted all around the wheelhouse and look great at night

SPECIFICATION

LOA 44ft 1in (13.45m)
Beam 13ft 11in (4.25m)
Draught 3ft 9in (1.14m)
Displacement 11 tonnes (light)
Fuel capacity 900 litres
Water capacity 295 litres
RCD B for 12 people
Designer Fjord



SIDE DECKS
The wide, deep walkaround decks make moving around the boat very safe and easy

SECOND CABIN
The second cabin is optional and, if not chosen, left as a storage void

HANGING STORAGE
It's open plan but there is still a hanging wardrobe in the saloon

ANCHOR
Folding anchor system is a nice touch but it's a shame it doesn't come as standard

TOP SPEED



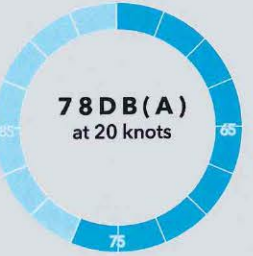
CONSUMPTION



RANGE



NOISE



PRICE



COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from €617,610 inc VAT
Painted hull €30,821
Synthetic teak €6,069
Folding anchor system €20,111
Generator (6.4kW) €17,731
Air conditioning €18,921
Volvo Dynamic Positioning System €28,441
Electric cockpit sun shade €14,875
Windscreen wipers €2,737
Hydraulic passerelle €23,880
Hydraulic bathing platform €26,061

PERFORMANCE

Test engines Volvo Penta IPS600. Twin 370hp @ 3,300rpm. 5.5-litre, 6-cylinder diesels

	ECO					FAST		MAX
RPM	1,000	1,400	1,800	2,200	2,400	2,800	3,000	3,300
Speed	7.2	8.8	12.0	18.3	21.6	28.2	31.0	35.4
LPH	8.8	22	60	83	95	122	146	160
LPM	1.2	2.5	5.0	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.7	9.2
Range	586	287	143	158	162	166	152	159
Noise	65	68	76	80	78	77	78	80

Speed in knots. Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices include VAT @ 19%. 35% fuel, 22% water, 4 crew + safety stores. 18° air temperature, F1 and calm for sea trial.