



Dufour 61

Kinetic 54

BEST BOATS 2022

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In case you hadn't heard, the fall 2021 boat show season was one for the record books. If there was ever any doubt the sailing public still enjoys making its way to Newport, Rhode Island, or Annapolis, Maryland, to see the latest in boat design, those doubts were put to rest this past fall. Boat sales were through the roof, and the lines to get in to see the various boats on display at the Annapolis show, in particular, were unprecedented. Even the weather was outstanding!

Even in the very darkest days of the pandemic, the naval architects and boatbuilders of the world never lost hope as they continued to do what they both love and do best. The result was another outstanding crop of new boats and as strong a class of Best Boat winners as we've seen in years. As in the past, there were plenty of big new boats to be seen, including, of course, this year's Best Boats contest flagship winners, the Dufour 61 and Kinetic 54. Equally fun, though, were some of the smaller boats on offer, including two great daysailers that received a nod as Best Boats winners: the J/9 from Rhode Island-based J/Boats, and a brand-new performance catboat of all things. How cool is that!

On a personal note, it sure was nice being able to enjoy the energy out on the docks and reconnect with old friends. The kind of "maritime road show" that the industry put together last year to connect buyers with boats was interesting, but it sure was nice getting back to running SAIL's Best Boats contest the old-fashioned way—fanning out at the boat shows and having a chance to see all the industry has to offer in one place. As always, congratulation to the winners of this year's Best Boat contest, and thanks to boatbuilders, naval architects and sailors everywhere for keeping the faith.



BEST LARGE MONOHULL 50FT AND ABOVE

Dufour 61

It has become increasingly common for mass-production fiberglass boatbuilders to offer up super-sized sailing vessels designed to appeal to owners with a fair bit more disposable income than your typical sailor. The new Dufour 61, the largest Dufour on offer since the storied French

monohull builder recently merged with the iconic multihull builder Fountaine Pajot, certainly falls into this category. What set it apart for our judges, though, was not just the impressive amenities and LOA, but how much fun it was to sail! Though hobbled with a less-than-optimal in-mast main (conventional slab-reefed or in-boom mains are, of course, also available), our test boat handled wonderfully. I was fast, responsive and nicely balanced, with a visceral seat-of-the-pants feel to it that evoked dinghy sailing at its best.

Of course, a boat this large also offers posh accommodations. Even with a super-handly dinghy garage wedged in under the cockpit, there's plenty of room inside for a large family and/or crew. The positively palatial companionway leads down into an interior that can be configured three different ways. Two of these feature an athwartships galley forward of the saloon, one of which will surely put a smile on the face of any world-class chef. The guest staterooms are among the best we've seen, with full standing headroom, generous berths and good ventilation. The forward master stateroom features a unique offset Pullman berth to maximize both comfort and space.

On deck, too, the new Dufour 61 is distinctive and attractive. A lightweight carbon-fiber cockpit arch keeps the mainsheet clear of a social area just behind the companionway. Sailing controls led aft to the twin helm stations fall easily to hand. The foredeck is clean and unblemished. All in all this platform makes for a very dandy mass-produced "superyacht." dufour-yachts.com