

When Marilyn Met Sophia

THE AUSTIN PARKER 42 OPEN IS A NAUTICAL
BOMBSHELL THAT MELTS AMERICAN AND ITALIAN IDEALS OF BEAUTY.
BY CHRIS CASWELL



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Every country has its icons. And every country has a different vision of what makes an icon, well, iconic. For Americans, Marilyn Monroe has been a symbol of feminine beauty for more than half a century. Blonde, built, and fresh-faced.

In Italy however, the equivalent icon would be Sophia Loren. A very different take on beauty: dark and sultry. So it should come as no surprise that when an Italian yacht designer sets out to create an Italian-built tribute to an iconic American craft, it's as though he were wearing glasses with distorted lenses. Or smoking something interesting. Or both. The Austin Parker 42 is Fulvio De Simoni's take on the classic Down East lobster boat—and she's about as close to Marilyn as she is to Sophia.

But there's good news and bad news. The bad news is this ain't a lobster boat. The good news is that if you're looking for an innovative, and beautifully built 42-foot weekender, the Austin Parker 42 should be directly in your crosshairs. She is, quite simply, a delight.

Austin Parker is no newbie boatbuilder, having been around since the early '90s, but new owners stepped in several years ago to freshen up the company and the resulting new line of yachts from 36 to 72 feet clearly comes from the same gene pool. Responsible for this look is De Simoni, whose design credits range from Pershings to Astondoas.

The 42 is available in two configurations: Sport (with a Navy top) and Open (with a fiberglass hardtop). Either version allows an owner enough choices in engines, layout, and equipment to ensure that there will probably never be two identical Austin Parker 42s.

Our test boat, brought to America by Denison Yachts and capably driven by their point man, David Johnson, was the Open version powered by a pair of 480-horsepower Cummins diesels.

Okay, I admit it: I liked her from the moment I stepped aboard the wide teak swim platform and passed through the two huge doors in the transom. I am of that particular age group that remembers yachts—the



EDITOR'S CRUISING PICK:
The Austin Parker 42 looks at home at nearly any dock from Boca to Boothbay, but we wouldn't mind taking this Down East-inspired beauty back home to the Italian waters in which she was born. A few weeks harbor-hopping in the Mediterranean? We'll see you quayside. But enough about us, where would you like to cruise the Austin Parker 42? Like us on Facebook and let us know.

(Above) For her size, the 42 has excellent use of indoor space, including this secondary saloon, where the boat's entertainment system resides. (Below) There's lots of light and a big berth in the master. You won't fail to get a good night's sleep on this baby.



So What Is a Lobster Boat?



ONNE VAN DER WAL

The classic lobster boat has been described as the "pickup truck of the Maine coast," so it's no surprise that boatbuilders have been quick to claim their offerings are "lobster yachts," no matter what their design credentials.

But, with few exceptions, none of the recreational powerboats labeled as "lobster yachts," including those that claim to be "inspired by" or "descendants of" lobster boats, have even the faintest relationship to a real lobster boat. The only thing most have in common is that they float. As one wag noted, calling one a lobster boat is like calling a Honda Gold Wing motorcycle a Harley, just because it's big and has two wheels.

For decades, lobster boats have been the working vessels of the Northeast, used by fishermen to tend their lobster traps and, as such, these boats have been developed and refined to meet those needs.

The classic Maine or Down East-style lobster boat is a semi-displacement vessel notable for a springy sheerline that sweeps aft from a high, flared bow to topsides with low freeboard aft and often considerable tumble-home at the stern.

The high bow is intended to shoulder aside the seas, while the low freeboard makes it easier for the lobsterman to hoist his traps aboard. Often the pilothouse is open on one side, allowing a single crew to work the traps from the helm, while still providing weather protection. The cockpit stretches for more than half the boat's length, and the single engine is usually set well forward to give a flat shaft angle.

But the real difference between real and faux lobster boats is underwater. A real lob-

ster boat has a pronounced keel that protects the propeller and the hull is round-bottomed without hard chines. The forefoot is usually deep, to handle head seas and to help hold the bow from falling away from the wind as the traps are hoisted aboard.

A traditional lobster boat hull flattens quickly aft, which provides some form stability and also gives a good turn of speed when running to or from the traps. Most lobster boats run bow-high on this flat surface, which is both fast and economical, and deadrise at the transom is often a shallow 2 to 3 degrees. Traditional lobster boats are also much narrower than recreational powerboats, and it's not surprising for a 34-footer to have just a 9-foot beam.

There are, of course, as many "breeds" of lobster boats as there are harbors on the Down East coast, and each version has a name: Jonesport, Beals Island, Hampton, Cape Island, and more.

One defining feature of lobster boats is whether they are "built-down" or "skeg-built." This refers to how the skeg is attached, with the hull of skeg-built boats going perpendicularly into the skeg as though it were an afterthought. Built-down lobster boats have hulls that curve into the skeg rather than joining it at a hard angle. Skeg-built boats are generally faster, while built-downs are better heavy-weather boats and can carry a larger load. It's said to be a regional design issue, with built-down hulls to the west of Southwest Harbor and skeg-built to the east. Go figure.

Regardless of how the hull is built or what name she goes by, the traditional lobster boat is a far cry from what are being labeled as lobster yachts for recreational use.

Chris-Crafts and Owens and Trojans—with flat cockpits. You could walk from the back of the cockpit forward to stand next to the skipper at the helm and not have to step up or down. I liked the civilized convenience of that design, and the safety of it as well.

And, *ta-dah*, the Austin Parker 42 is a throwback to that flat cockpit world. The teak-planked sole stretches flawlessly right to the cabin bulkhead, and it seems the size of an aircraft carrier flight deck.

One of the options is a bulkhead with sliding doors to separate the area under the hardtop from the cockpit, but that wouldn't be my choice. I loved the 42's openness and dayboat cred.

Moving forward, there's a pair of aft-facing chairs that are oh-Italian in their cleverness: They fold out to become chaise longues. Just the thing for watching the Riviera (or Palm Beach) slide past.

Under the hardtop is a pleasant living area, with a long L-shaped settee to port that wraps around a movable hi-lo table. Opposite is the galley, and I give the De Simoni/Austin Parker team big points for putting it on deck. Too often, it's stuffed into a corner down below, leaving the cook to sulk alone while everyone else parties in the cockpit.

Of course, this is a fairly simple galley: a three-burner Gaggenau cooktop and sink (both hidden under a lid when not needed), a microwave, and an undercounter Vitrifrigo fridge. Not quite the *Iron Chef* kitchen, but certainly enough for a yacht of this size and style.

The skipper sits in lordly splendor on a helm seat that not only has a folding teak grate for a footrest, but a folding bolster on the seat for standing comfortably. The compact console doesn't reflect, and is designed for a Raymarine E120W monitor up high where the skipper can read it easily. On each side are analog engine gauges and



Note the lack of steps (above). The helm (inset) is tidy and neat.



Back in the cockpit, I was surprised to discover that the center of the teak sole lifts to reveal a cavernous garage large enough for an 8-foot RIB tender. This is launched with a stowable davit and winch that fit into the husky hawse plates on either corner of the stern. This, of course, is the reason for the extra-wide transom doors that are electrically operated with pantograph hinges. Our test boat was also equipped with a passerelle for easy boarding.

Underway, the 42 is a pleasure to run. Getting away from the dock is a cinch with the Xenta system, which can literally spin the boat with a twist of the joystick. Our boat also had the dynamic-positioning option, which links with the GPS to hold the boat in place, regardless of wind or current, while waiting for a bridge or space at a fuel dock.

Once running free, we topped out at about 33 knots, with a comfy cruise of 25-plus knots. But while these numbers were speedy enough, I think we might have gotten a couple of extra knots from the boat if she'd had a bit more pitch in her props, a conclusion I base on the fact that our fuel-burn numbers were generally lower (by a total of 8 gph for both engines at WOT) than Cummins specifies, a solid indicator of an incomplete engine/prop loading situation. In any case, out in a lumpy Gulf Stream, she sliced through the swells with aplomb and threw the spray flat to the sides, one benefit of the high freeboard forward.

A lobster boat? Not exactly. But a truly delightful Italian weekender for a couple of friends? Absolutely! Marilyn, meet Sophia. □

a tidy array of rocker switches below control various components.

Buyers of the Austin Parker 42 get to select from a multitude of engine options, starting with the base pair of 435-horsepower Volvo Penta diesels, while our test boat had been upgraded to a pair of Cummins QSB5.9 diesels with 480 horsepower. These are common-rail, inline sixes that are turbocharged and aftercooled and, at this power rating, they should be darn near bulletproof. This is the same engine that's been in Dodge Ram trucks since the late '80s. Other engine options include 480-horsepower Yanmar diesels and Volvo Penta IPS600 pod drives. Frankly, I liked the Cummins choice for this boat (and not just because I've had Cummins since the early Triple-Nickels), because they give a good balance of speed, economy, and reliability.

Interestingly, there was a joystick on one side of the helm console. But this 42 has a straight-shaft conventional drive system, albeit with an optional bow thruster. I'd expect a joystick for Volvo pods, but with props?

The answer? Our test boat had been fitted with the Xenta Smart-Stick, a joystick control system from Italy that links engines and bow thruster to give the maneuverability of pod drives with the simplicity of conventional shafts. It's not inexpensive (20 grand or thereabouts), but neither are pod drives, and it offers an interesting choice for owners that very well may provide enough bang for the buck.

As you'd expect on an Italian yacht, the cabin is luxuriously appointed in soft linens, top-grain leather, and a lovely pale English oak. Two layouts are available giving one or two cabins. Our test boat was the single-cabin version. With two cabins you lose the lower settee with its stowaway table, which is a nice place to relax, read, or watch the telly. What you gain from the second cabin is just two single berths. Besides, the settee pulls out to become a double berth if needed, and the table is straight from a *Transformer* movie in the way it folds and stows under the stairs.

The forward stateroom is elegant, with large windows on each side, and twin hanging lockers, plus a fold-down vanity. The bulkheads are leather and oak, and even the nightstands are leather trimmed. The head features a large mosaic-tiled shower stall with a teak seat.

Construction of the Austin Parker 42 is unusual, with the first three layers carefully laid up by hand, followed by the remaining layers using the resin infusion process. This creates a structure that is warranted against osmosis for five years by the company. The hull sides are cored with balsa, while the deck and superstructure use a PVC coring. The 42 is built with three watertight compartments for safety: aft, engine room, and collision forward, each with separate bilge pumps. The oversized double stainless steel rails that surround the deck also impressed me. They were easy to grip, and the weld work was jewel quality.

Denison Yachts, 954-763-3971; www.denisonyachtsales.com



LOA: 41'4"
LWL: 36'0"
BEAM: 13'0"
DRAFT: 4'0"
DISPL: 32,767 lb.
FUEL: 400 gal.
WATER: 105 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/480-mhp Cummins QSB5.9 diesels
TRANSMISSION: ZF-80A w/1.96:1 ratio
OPTIONAL POWER: 2/480-mhp Yanmar 6LY3-ETP diesels; 2/435-mhp Volvo Penta IPS600s
GENERATOR: 4.5-kW Onan
BASE PRICE: \$850,000
PRICE AS TESTED: Upon request

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
1000	7.5	1.5	1,800	62
1500	10.0	5.0	720	62
2000	13.5	10.0	486	64
2500	25.0	25.0	360	66
3000	28.0	34.0	297	68
3470	32.6	43.0	273	70

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 78°F; humidity 57%; seas: flat; load: 400 gal. fuel, 0 gal. water, 7 persons, 50 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Raymarine GPS. GPH taken via Cummins display. Range based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS: Xenta joystick (\$20,000), 7.5-kW bow thruster (\$10,468), 24,000-Btu air conditioning (\$22,246).