



The Navetta shows off her shippy profile en route to Monaco. Opposite page, left: The author tests the yacht's stability using the old "can of beer" technique. Middle: Choppy seas off Cap Ferrat, France. Right: Arriving in Monaco harbor.



EXCLUSIVE

By Alan Harper ///

# ROUGH ROAD, SMOOTH RIDE



*THIS SEMIDISPLACEMENT 86-FOOTER MADE MINCEMEAT OF WAVES WHILE TRANSITING FROM CANNES TO MONACO.*

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y notebook was almost full. Cannes does that. Not being in films, I hardly ever visit the town except at boat-show time, in September. In the last few years, the show has gotten bigger, more international, and more important than ever. Boatyards from all over Europe are increasingly seeing it as *the* crucial launch platform for new models. For a photo-journalist like me, that means bouts of writer's cramp, alleviated only by episodes of shutter fatigue.

So I was looking forward to my appointment with the new Custom Line Navetta 26. I mean *really* looking forward to it—not just because I've always rather liked the Navettas and regarded the announcement of each new one with pleasurable anticipation. No, I really wanted to get on this boat because it was my ride to Monaco—the next boat show, 25 nautical miles up the coast.





And what a ride. The Navettas are semidisplacement yachts. Standard engines for this 86-footer are MAN 900 V8s—not a lot of horsepower for 90-odd tons—but even with the optional 1,100-hp V-10 MANs the yacht has a maximum quoted speed of just 16 knots. Speed is not what they are about. What they are designed for is cruising in comfort. After a hard few days of scribbling and snapping at Cannes, I liked the sound of that.

The Navetta 26 is an eight- or ten-berth yacht, depending on which lower layout you choose. The owner's suite is always forward on the main deck, but there is an option of a grand and noticeably larger full-beam VIP below. With the "A" layout—as seen in this first boat, whose owner is none other than Ferretti Group boss Norberto Ferretti him-

self—there is also a double and a twin cabin just aft of the central lobby. Layout "B" has two doubles aft, two twins, and no big VIP.

The main deck, with much of its area taken up by the owner's bedroom, head, and dressing room, has a good-size galley secreted away on the starboard side, not visible to guests, and a comfortable saloon leading out into the cockpit.

The *piece de resistance* on all Navettas, though, is upstairs. Behind the helm, the upper saloon is the place to be when underway—in touch with the captain, a clear view all around, with aft-deck access and the galley just a curved staircase away. It's where everyone naturally gravitates.

On this trip between Cannes and Monaco, I was looking

Big windows make the Navetta's saloon (below) and dining area (bottom left) bright and welcoming. Even the excellent galley (bottom right) gets one.







The huge VIP stateroom (above) rivals that of the owner, but the other guest cabins (left) are also a generous size. Note also the size of the ports.

relaxing cruise was shaping up to be a rolling, corkscrewing test of endurance.

Are you ever wrong about anything? Not me. Ask my wife. But on this occasion, I have to admit that I might have been mistaken. The Navetta is fitted standard with a pair of Mitsubishi antirolling gyros, buried down between the engines, and the wind and chop were such that these units had been working to steady the boat at her boat-show berth. As we pulled away, however, the captain switched them off. If any steadying was needed underway, it would be up to the Navetta's TRAC digital fin stabilizers.

As we ventured out into the bay and past the old castle and monastery on the Iles de Lerins, we felt the full force of the breeze for the first time—a steady, Mediterranean yachtsman's blow, constant, warm, and strong. The waves were already a steep five or six feet and would certainly get bigger as we proceeded downwind. I waited for the start of the roll. And waited.

I checked that the ARGs were indeed switched off. I waited some more, glancing aft to gauge the size of the waves again. And as I waited, and nothing happened, I began to relax. It wasn't that the fins were merely coping, keeping the roll to a minimum—they were ironing it out completely. We were cruising down the coast as steadily as a battle-cruiser: 13 knots at 2070 rpm, with decks dead level. I could

forward to relaxing for a couple of hours, and the upper saloon was where I planned to spend most of my time.

There was just one flaw with this plan—the weather. Although the sky remained as rich and blue and free of clouds as it had been all through the Cannes show, the wind had other ideas. Building overnight, by midmorning it was a solid Force 5 or 6 and still strengthening. And it was from the southwest, placing it on our starboard quarter as we cruised up the coast towards Monaco. For all my enthusiasm for the Navetta's interior comforts, I was under no illusions about how a shallow-draft, somewhat tall semidisplacement motoryacht would cope with quartering seas. My





**Grown-up, open-air living: the upper deck (above) just aft of that great raised saloon, and (right) the Navetta's cockpit.**

walk without reaching out to steady myself. Drinks stayed where they were put. The only interruptions to our steady, calm progress were my repeated expressions of disbelief.

But what if it wasn't really all that rough? We turned through 180 degrees to see what would happen. The Navetta's fine bow sections and generous flare punched through the seas like a trawler, while the wind picked up the sheeting spray and hurled it clean over the wheelhouse. Okay, it was rough. No wonder there was hardly anyone else out. Beam-on, I expected the fins to struggle against the momentum of the yacht's superstructure. We were going to roll. I braced myself. Nothing happened. At 90 degrees to the waves, we simply rose up and down on a dead-even keel. It was more than impressive, it was extraordinary. Who would have tagged the Navetta 26 as a sea boat? Not me.

Reassured, I took some performance readings. At our 13-knot cruising speed, the 26 was burning 59 gph, which meant a range (allowing for the usual ten-percent reserve) of around 650 nautical miles. The maximum speed I recorded was 14.5 knots at 2350 rpm, burning 93.5 gph, for a range of approximately 460 miles. With a waterline length of just under 71 feet, the Navetta has a theoretical hull



speed in displacement mode—and thus its most efficient cruising speed—of a shade over 11 knots.

Monaco was soon visible ahead, nestling beneath the towering, 1,800-foot bluffs of Plateau Tercier. Even without such geological assistance, we would soon have spotted the diminutive principality by the fleet of yachts gathered outside, either ejected from their home berths to make way for the show or waiting to be allowed in to take their places.

We saw *T6*, a striking New Zealand-built, 159-foot expedition yacht, leaving, along with the 156-foot Christensen *One More Toy*, well known on the charter circuit. Pitching into the seas as they left the shelter of the enormous new floating breakwater, both seemed to be off to ride out the show, and the blow, at anchor, in the lee of Cap Ferrat.





Below: This yacht was equipped with the standard engines, 900-hp MANs; 1,100-hp ones are available as an option. Right: The Navetta's wheelhouse was eerily quiet while we were underway.



Although the water was calm in the harbor, shielded from the southwest, the wind was still howling across the berths at what I'd guess was 25 knots, with stronger gusts. We learned later of various expensive wind-borne mishaps, as unwieldy superyachts arriving for the show got away from their hapless captains.

In the meantime, our tall, shallow-draft 86-footer was not exactly the sort of boat to make docking in such conditions fun, unless you're made of much sterner stuff than me. Fortunately our captain, Costanzo Domenico, was. After getting the yacht into roughly the right area from the wheelhouse, he walked out onto the starboard bridge wing to line us up in front of our berth, which appeared to be

an impossibly narrow gap between a Pershing 72 and a Custom Line 97. Then, after a quick glance around, he darted down to the cockpit and took charge from the lower controls on the port side, reversing the yacht into the slot in one steady, precise, and decisive movement. *Bravo.*

For Domenico and his crew, the day's work was nearly done. After cleaning and tidying the boat, they could relax and enjoy the show. For me, though, the relaxation of the trip was about to become a distant memory. An ocean of shiny fiberglass stretched out in every direction across Port Hercule. I was going to need a new notebook. ☼

**Custom Line** ☎ (011) 39 0543 474 411. [www.powerandmotoryacht.com/custom-line/](http://www.powerandmotoryacht.com/custom-line/).

## CUSTOM LINE NAVETTA 26

**Length overall:** 86'0"  
**Beam:** 22'9"  
**Draft:** 7'1"  
**Displacement (light):** 182,984 lbs.  
**Displacement (full load):** 219,448 lbs.  
**Construction:** fiberglass hull and superstructure  
**Classification:** RINA 100-A-1.1 "Y"  
**Fuel capacity:** 3,276 gal.  
**Water capacity:** 528 gal.  
**Engines:** 2/900-hp MAN V8 diesel inboards  
**Gensets:** 2/42-kW Fischer Panda  
**Watermakers:** 95-gph Idromar  
**Gyro stabilizers:** 2/Mitsubishi ARG  
**Fin stabilizers:** TRAC  
**Windlass:** 3.5-kW Lofrans  
**Air conditioning:** 144,000-Btu Condania  
**Electronics:** Geonav MultiV Navionics chartplotter; Furuno radar; ZF electronic engine controls; Simrad autopilot; Simrad speed/depth  
**Interior design:** Zucco International Project  
**Exterior design:** Zucco International Project  
**Naval architecture:** Custom Line/Ferretti Advanced Yacht Technology  
**Builder:** Custom Line