



GREEN, GREEN GLASS

You can't miss the amazing Arcadia 85. We take this solar-paneled contender on test Text: Alan Harper

For once, perhaps, 'unique' is the right word. Having just touched down in Genoa, with the BA 737 still taxying to the terminal, I could clearly make out, among the crowd of masts at the nearby marina, the distinctive shape of the Arcadia 85. It's not just the look of it – straight edges and rounded corners, no-nonsense echoes of the Bauhaus – but the fact that form follows function in a way that most modern motor yachts seem to have forgotten.

What you see is what you get. There is a full-length superstructure, so it promises to be big inside. And it's beamy, too – compare the Arcadia's 23ft 6in (7.15m) with, for example, the Aicon 82's more typical 19ft 2in (5.84m) – which makes it seem even bigger. There is no flybridge, so the wheelhouse is right forward, well out of the way. But since the wheelhouse also offers excellent views, it's not just a working area but a great living space too. Along with the carbon steering wheel and upright helm seats, there is also a dining table in there, should you feel so inclined.

Then there is the glass. Boating, lest we forget, is about being outdoors. You know – the sea and the sky. Most of the Arcadia's superstructure is see-through, but these are not just any old windows. A complex sandwich of different types of glass and anti-ultraviolet film encasing a filling of argon gas, each Schüco-manufactured panel is said to have the insulating qualities of a 20cm layer of concrete. For privacy, or if it does get too hot inside – and Arcadia's designers are adamant that it won't – there are blinds down the sides and overhead, so you can cocoon yourself in a white modernist box.

The interior does stay true to those Bauhaus principles, with an uncompromising, hard-edged mix of stainless steel, glass and



A big stand-up sailing yacht wheel is a rare nod to nautical tradition.



The open aft-deck spaces are well protected by the overhang above.

leather furniture (not fixed – although at least the table lamps are bolted down), leavened with contrasting highlights of ebony veneer and marble. Bulkheads are of flat, oak-veneered foam-sandwich construction, 2in thick. A marketing tie-up with Poltrona Frau means that cabinets, chairs and tables come from the likes of Cassina and Cappellini, while the Italian interiors group also helped with the overall design. It shows. It is more concerned with cool rectilinearity than with the pampering opulence you often find on yachts of this class.

One key design feature is all Arcadia's work, however. The main deck layout makes up for the lack of a flybridge by ensuring that the cockpit is enormous – fully one-third of the boat's overall length. There are seats, tables and sunloungers, and a dining table under the overhang where fabric screens can be lowered from the overhang during dinner if, as the Arcadia man put it, "you don't want people to see what wine you are drinking".

So the saloon is actually quite small. That it doesn't seem so is down to its glass walls and substantial headroom – and the fact that the dining table is forward, on the other side of a full-beam galley. One layout option provides a day heads at the expense of a smaller galley, and down below you can also choose an additional cabin, although the four-cabin layout of the test boat worked extremely well. The owner's cabin is especially successful, with lots of floor space and an exceptionally roomy bathroom area. Apart from the headroom – which is 6ft 4in (1.93m) – it feels like a luxurious suite in a really good hotel. The VIP and the two ensuite twin cabins also benefit from the width of the hull – and have better headroom, too.

There are two, twin-bunk ensuite crew cabins in the bows, reached via a hatch under the sunbed on the foredeck, and in the stern there is an unusually large tender garage, big enough for a 4.2m RIB as well as a PWC. The straight, overhead hydraulic gantry for handling them is a model of logical simplicity.

You will have noticed the photo-voltaic cells in the roof glass. Arcadia are making no claims about this being a 'green' boat, but they have decided to make it possible to sit at anchor without running the generators, which will almost certainly make it greener than the 85-footer next door. On a sunny day, Arcadia say, the PV cells (part of an impressive suite of standard equipment that also includes stabilisers, two 20kW gensets and air-conditioning) are capable of running the TV, the refrigeration and the aircon fans, as well as some lighting. There are plans for a full-on hybrid version of the 85, with a huge bank of lithium-ion batteries and electric motors, but Arcadia admit that the technology is still in its infancy. It would also cost an additional half-million euros. Nevertheless,



The sides of the dining area slide open.



Guests will find plenty of places for lounging on deck.



The greenhouse effect: Arcadia say you'll stay cool in the saloon.

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they reckon a hybrid 85 could have an electric cruising endurance of over seven hours at eight knots. For those used to modern planing motor yacht designs, the Arcadia's twin 720hp engines will seem rather modest. The Arcadia doesn't just look different – with a design cruising speed of 16 knots, it really is.

Below the waterline, the Arcadia 85's hull design is a version of the established 'NPL' series – as used by, among others, the US Coast Guard – which is known to be efficient, seakindly, and rather wet. Modifications by Arcadia's Francesco Guida include a couple of longitudinal spray rails, to help keep the sea where it belongs, and beefed-up chines, to increase stability and provide a little more lift and efficiency.

The previous day's gale was the sort that makes the local TV news, but in the morning it was pretty much spent. By midday the wind had dropped to nothing. It left behind a confused sea of big, steep, rounded waves piling in from the south – not unfriendly, but challenging, as some of them looked to be at least 3m high.

With its unsecured furnishings and vast glass areas, this did not look like the Arcadia's natural habitat. But her builders were as keen to get to sea as we were, explaining that they had taken her out the previous day with the owner, when the gale was in full voice. Apparently, everyone had lived to tell the tale.

Key to the Arcadia's assured and confidence-inspiring ride in these extremely lumpy conditions was the Rodriguez fin stabiliser

system, which did a ruthless job of ironing out the roll. Pitch was another matter, of course. With the wheelhouse set as far forward as it is physically possible to go, we felt every contour, rising and falling like a fairground ride. And while you might not think it possible to get spray on a windscreen that sits so far forward, somewhat to our surprise, we did.

Getting an accurate set of performance figures was not easy. While the GPS did flicker briefly around 20 knots or so on one occasion, in the conditions we had, the steadiest and most reliable read-out was just over 18 over the ground at maximum revs. Expect more in flatter water. It was eerily quiet in the wheelhouse. With the vertical windscreen and the front-row seats, the whole experience of conning this capable craft through those seas was strangely remote, like watching television. An enormous sailboat steering wheel made it easy to wind on lock, and reaction to the rudder was immediate. Throttle response, too, in spite of the modest horsepower, was quick and positive. At the helm we felt in complete control, unruffled by the boisterous seas.

A faster planing boat would have struggled to fulfil anything like its performance potential in these conditions, which ideally suited the softer, more organic underwater shape of the Arcadia's semi-displacement hull. But having throttled back, a half-decent vee-bottom would still have been able to make progress, maybe just on the plane, and keep pace with the Arcadia.



Near-mirror-image twins to port and starboard.



There are his'n'hers sinks and showers in the owner's bathroom.



The galley on the main deck serves the forward dining area.



The 85's astonishing array of rooftop photo-voltaic panels.

There is a psychological element to being in a 30-knot yacht that is forced by the waves to throttle back to 15 knots. You're likely to feel a little on edge – pressured by the elements. But if you're in a yacht designed to cruise at 15 knots which can maintain that speed in the rough stuff, you're going to be pretty smug about it – perhaps even exhilarated. So although both boats will arrive in port at the same time, the smiles on the 'slower' one are likely to be a lot wider. They were certainly wide enough aboard the Arcadia as we turned and headed back to the marina. It exceeded all expectations. There was no sense that it was merely coping with the conditions – it was revelling in them.

And the furniture? Didn't budge an inch. **MBY**

ARCADIA 85 SPECS

Length overall	85ft 0in (25.90m)
Hull length	78ft 7in (23.97m)
Beam	23ft 6in (7.15m)
Displacement	55 tonnes (light); 68 tonnes (loaded)
Draught (max)	5ft 5in (1.65m)
Fuel capacity	1,760 imp gal (8,000 litres)
Water capacity	352 imp gal (1,600 litres)

	600	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,150	2,340
RPM	600	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,150	2,340
SPEED	5.6	8.9	10.6	12.0	13.5	15.0	16.5	18.2
LPH	14	35	52	76	118	188	250	280
GPH	3.1	7.7	11.4	16.7	26.0	41.3	55.0	61.6
MPG	1.81	1.16	0.93	0.72	0.52	0.36	0.30	0.29
RANGE	2,548	1,633	1,309	1,014	732	493	422	408
TRIM	0.0°	1.0°	1.5°	2.0°	2.0°	2.0°	2.0°	2.0°

Fuel consumption figures from MAN fuel computers. 14 crew, no stores, 45% water, 50% fuel; 13°C air temp, 8°C water temp, 998mb air pressure, 72% humidity, 6-10ft seas; Force 1 for speed trials. Speed in knots. Gallons are imperial. Range in nautical miles. Range allows for 20% reserve.

Slow cruising	12.0 knots, 1,014 miles @ 1,500rpm
Fast cruising	16.5 knots, 422 miles @ 2,150rpm
Flat out	18.2 knots, 408 miles @ 2,340rpm
Price from	€3.80 million ex tax (approx £3.921 million inc UK VAT)

Engines Twin MAN R6 diesel inboards, 720hp @ 2,340rpm, driving 37in diameter by 54in pitch (940mm by 1,372mm) four-blade Nibral props through ZF325 IV 2.417:1 gearboxes.

Design Arcadia
RCD Category A (for 16 people)
Contact Arcadia Yachts, Torre Annunziata, Italy
 Tel: +39 0811 955 4898
 Email: info@arcadiayachts.it
 Website: www.arcadiayachts.it



Lower deck This four-guest, two-crew cabin layout is standard



Main deck The wheelhouse is as far forward as possible

The Arcadia's interior is more concerned with cool rectilinearity than with the pampering opulence you often find on yachts of this class



The master suite double berth is offset to starboard and faces forward.