

High life in HIGH LATITUDES

Jaw-dropping scenery among Norway's Lofoten Islands, cloudless blue skies and suncream under the midnight sun for the maiden cruise of the outstanding 180ft ketch *Adèle* – could this be as good as it gets?, ponders David Glenn

Bring your foulweather gear, ski gloves, woolly hat and plenty of thermals," warned Jan-Eric Österlund, *Adèle's* owner. Mid-summer it may have been, but when I checked the latitude of the Lofoten Islands it seemed sound advice because I discovered we were heading well within the Arctic Circle, at more than 68°N.

We would be closer to the North Pole than Iceland and Alaska and several hundred miles north of the southern tip of Greenland. As the *Norwegian Cruising Guide* puts it: "There is a feeling of being on the edge of the world: at the frontier."

In the event I didn't even unpack my boots or oilskins and on more than one occasion we dined in the cockpit wearing short sleeves and sunglasses, despite the clocks swearing it was midnight.

Strange things happen north of the Arctic Circle.

Getting used to the land of the midnight sun is one of them. Another was that since our clothing alert was issued, high pressure had established itself as a buffer to lows tracking east further south, so we were with cloudless skies and zero wind. At times it felt like the Mediterranean, which according to the pilot, is not unusual in Lofoten in summer months.

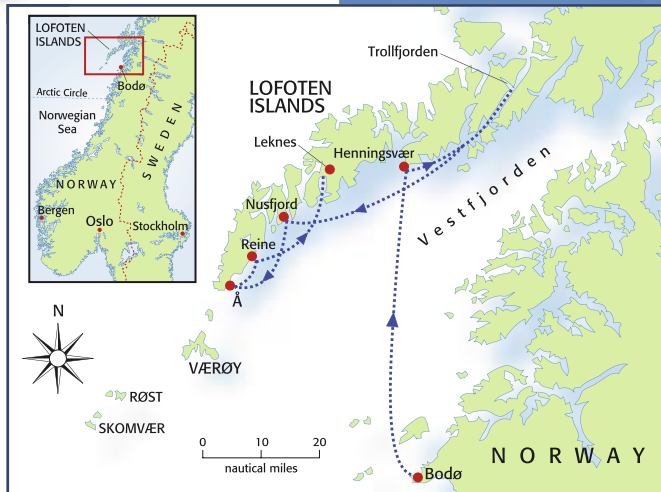
Another interesting fact I gleaned from the pilot (*Norwegian Cruising Guide*, Armitage and Brackenbury, Adlard Coles Nautical) is that if you connected Norway's mainland coastline, which runs from Sweden to Russia, with those of all its offshore islands it would stretch around the African continent four and three-quarter times. Combine that head-spinning information with the effects of the midnight sun and it was no wonder I felt slightly dazed.

But it wasn't the effects of Norway's northern latitudes or the breathtaking scenery that had



Main picture: *Adèle* in light airs off Reine in the spectacular Lofoten Islands. Sails are by North Denmark. Left: dining close to midnight! Owner Jan-Eric, far right, sits opposite his daughter Susanne





Cruising in the Lofoten Islands takes us well north of the Arctic Circle. Right: fingertip steering as we head for the islands – we're well north of Iceland but still in shorts! Below right: Jan-Eric encourages guests to study the charts

David Glenn



Rick Tomlinson

The waters around Kjerringøy, one of the oldest trading stations in Norway



David Glenn

brought *Yachting World* to one of the world's most dramatic cruising grounds. It was *Adèle*, the latest sailing superyacht to take to the water from Vitters, her builders in the Netherlands.

At 180ft overall, she is one of the largest and most impressive ketches ever launched. Intended for adventure cruising on a grand scale she took a team that includes Jan-Eric, project manager Nigel Ingram, designer André Hoek and Vitters five years to plan and build. It has been five years well spent because the detail design, seamanlike-thinking and quality of build and finish is exceptional. She is a yachtsman's yacht, with long overhangs, relatively low freeboard, narrow beam (31ft) for her length and not over-generous volume. She looks easily driven and her enormous rig suggests a lot of horsepower.

Adèle is superbly proportioned and possesses a greyhound leanness that manifested itself in a display of highly impressive light-airs sailing later during our trip. She became a perfect focal point to the incredible grandeur and desolate surroundings of Lofoten, whose towering, snow-capped peaks regularly dwarfed the yacht's 200ft+ main mast.

Meeting in Bodø

I had been invited aboard *Adèle* for this cruise in March and had pencilled in 1 July to fly to Bodø, a good base camp for an assault on the Lofoten Islands. Complex yachts often defy a yard's launch intentions, so it was an impressive measure of the precision with which the *Adèle* project has been managed that photographer Rick Tomlinson and I flew out to Norway on the due date.

After depositing our luggage-for-all-seasons aboard *Adèle* we caught up with Jan-Eric in a local fish



Rick Tomlinson

restaurant (the only time we ate ashore – *Adèle's* cuisine was exquisite) where we were introduced to his daughter Susanne and guests Philip and Florence Hands and Sanford and Geraldine Henry. Together with a crew of nine led by skipper Andre Engblom, the complement for the week was brought to 17, three short of the yacht's maximum capacity of 20.

According to Sanford, who had joined the yacht further south during a spell of much worse weather when they were thankful of the wood burner blazing in the main saloon, *Adèle* had been dubbed by the Norwegians as The Yacht, such was the spectacle as she moved north along the coast.

It was a reaction typical of a people whose history has been fashioned by the sea and whose appreciation of it runs deep. Offshore oil production may now account for much of Norway's wealth, but the humble herring has been the basis of the country's coastal economy over the past 300 years.

Before we left Bodø we took a 40-minute taxi drive north to pay homage to the old-merchants' centre on Kjerringøy, one of the richest trading centres in

Norway in the 19th Century. The inhabitants landed and processed fish then sold it in other towns like Bergen in exchange for food and materials needed back at their rugged settlement.

Fifteen buildings have been expertly restored, providing a microcosm of life 200 years ago and a demonstration of how a strict hierarchical order was maintained to enable survival in what must have been an exceedingly hostile environment. "This is unusual – it normally rains most days in summer," said our guide, visibly over-heating in the unexpected high temperature in early July. The endless night of winter didn't bear thinking about.

We returned to *Adèle* and as the luxurious aluminium-hulled ketch motored effortlessly across a glassy calm away from the mainland towards a seemingly impenetrable line of rock known as the Lofoten 'wall', I looked back at the coastline.

I had expected an Arctic Circle of barren, almost tundra-like landscape, but instead saw a vivid green vista. Moss, ferns, pasture and shrubs bearing blueberries and the much-vaunted cloudberry (a yellow, raspberry-like fruit) gave the coastal fringe, etched with white sand beaches, a softness which belied the country's latitude. The reason was the proximity of the North Atlantic Drift, the remains of the Gulf Stream which keeps the sea ice-free in winter and allows flora to flourish in the Lofotens.

Onboard *Adèle*

Conditions on our 50-mile passage across the deep Vestfjorden, the world's richest breeding ground for cod and a haven for whale, forced us to motor, but standing at either of two steering positions abaft the main on-deck dining area, one was hardly aware of



Above: at times there was only a zephyr, but *Adèle* sailed well in the light. Left: fish drying racks are typical of coastal towns. Below left: photographer Rick Tomlinson and Susanne Österlund investigate Henningsvaer in the 'trackable' tender. Below: typical scenery north of Bodø



Photos: David Glenn

Owner Jan-Eric Österlund likes finding tight anchorages such as this where the 180ft *Adèle* is moored fore and aft. Below: we are invited aft for pre-dinner drinks in the owner's private cockpit



Photos: Rick Tomlinson

Adèle facts

- Her Panasonic telephone exchange can select the most economical option from cell, satellite, Fleet and GMDS phone systems.
- There are 350 audio alarms and 40 fire detection points.
- The two-man crew's nest will lift you 40m above the deck.
- A 4ft vertical post on top of each mast allows crew to be hoisted to the masthead to examine instrumentation without their having to get out of the bosun's chair.

the V12 1000hp Caterpillar engine thundering away two decks beneath us, driving its giant four-bladed 4ft 3in (1.3m) diameter variable-pitch propeller. At 13.5 knots *Adèle* left very little fuss indeed in her wake.

Adèle is so long VHF radio communication is required for Andre Engblom to keep in touch and issue commands to crew. He is in full-time contact with mate Mark Thirkettle, deckhand Nick Jackson and relief engineer Paul, who was still getting used to the highly complex machinery compartment. Leaving the dock earlier that day appeared simplicity itself as 125hp Swing Sider bow and stern thrusters pushed the 298-ton yacht sideways into the harbour.

Andre could then choose his steering mode. Unusually for a yacht of this size there is an option of direct steering via chain, rod and cable onto the quadrant. Compared to the lifelessness of a hydraulic-assisted system, this provides the helmsman with a remarkable amount of feel, particularly when under sail. A degree of balance in the rudder (18 per cent of the 14ft (4.25m) deep blade is hung forward of the rudder post) takes weight out of the steering although the system is designed with a high and low gear, either of which can be engaged by turning a small wheel mounted on each boss.

When the Segatron autopilot is selected it can be

set for either 'tiller' steering, by a tiny joystick on the control console, for a compass heading or a specific wind angle, both selected using a small dial.

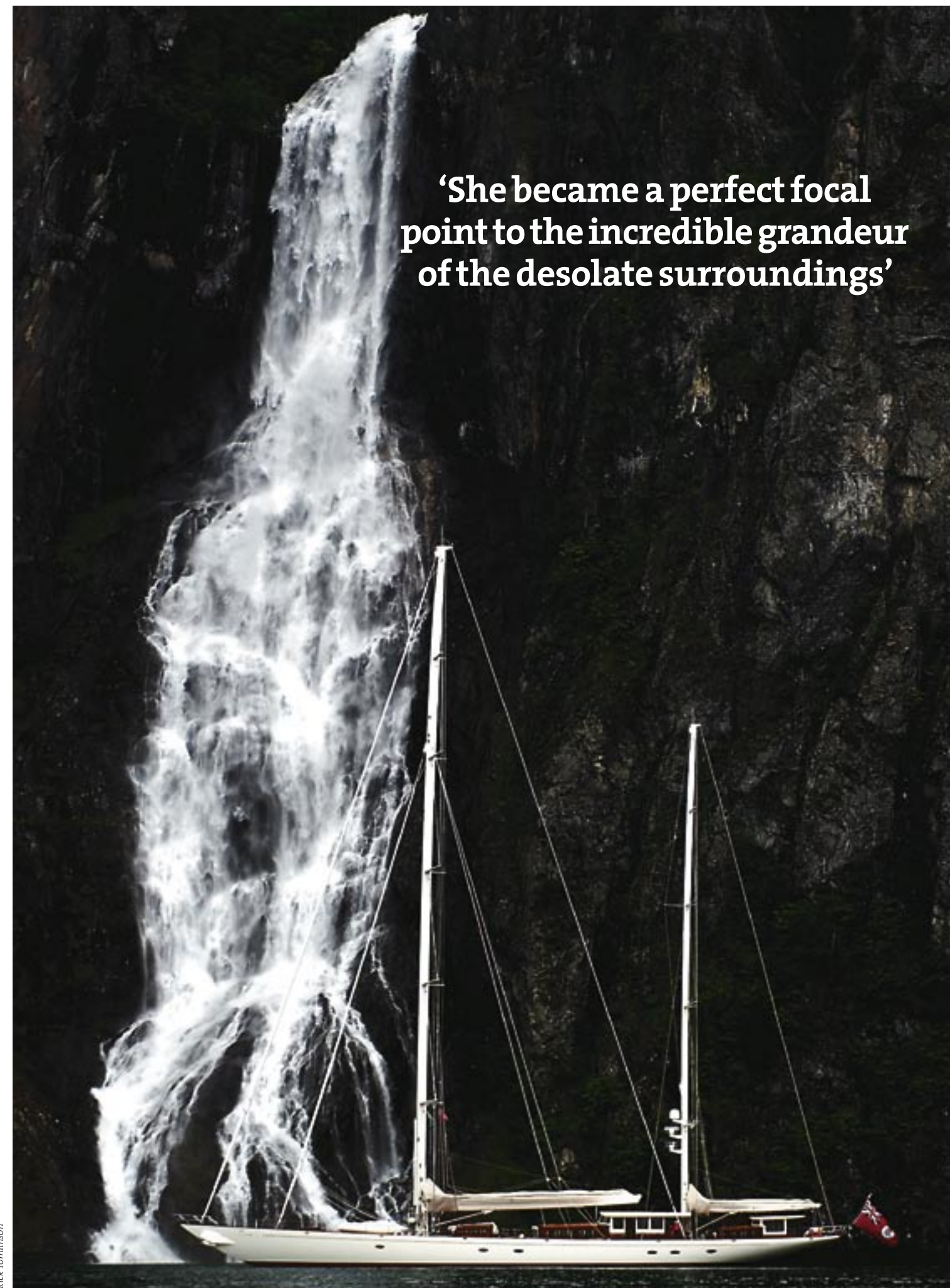
Steering and control stations are close to the main on-deck seating and dining area. Jan-Eric Österlund was keen to emphasise the latter. An experienced and passionate yachtsman he may be – he has already circumnavigated the world in his previous yacht, the 78ft Peter Norlin-designed cutter *Swedish Caprice* – but *Adèle's* owner also enjoys entertaining and wants his guests to be involved in the action. He encourages us to study current charts (the excellent Norwegian paper versions are always available for perusal at the deck saloon navigation station or on the dining table), check the chart plotter and familiarise ourselves with the wizardry of modern position-fixing, plotting and collision avoidance.

But *Adèle* is also plenty big enough to provide privacy. Jan-Eric and André Hoek designed a separate owner's cockpit aft, with its own substantial deck saloon (complete with bar, cocktail cabinet and cigar humidor) and which leads down into the owner's sleeping accommodation. It wouldn't have looked out of place as the main cockpit on a 60-footer.

Forward of the large deck saloon is another teak-clad deckhouse with its own seating area, table and eye-level views outboard. For guests it provides an intimate quiet area, but would also make an ideal relaxation area for the crew, who admitted they might attempt to annex it at a suitable opportunity, and not only because it leads straight into the galley!

The accommodation is arranged with the owner's suite aft, complete with full-size bath, two twin-berthed cabins, which can convert to take a third in Pulmans and two large double suites forward of the two saloons. The lower saloon leads to a small library or study where Jan-Eric has twin flat screens to edit

'She became a perfect focal point to the incredible grandeur of the desolate surroundings'



Rick Tomlinson

his digital photography. His library is revealing: *Columbus and the Age of Discovery*, *The Kon-Tiki Man*, *Hiscock's Cruising Under Sail*, *The Great Explorers* and *The Marco Polo Expedition*.

Lofoten landfall

An advantage of the midnight sun is that making an unfamiliar anchorage or landfall before nightfall is no longer an issue; you just have to be careful you don't exhaust yourself by staying up all 'night'. And when you draw 16ft and have an 10ft wide 85-ton bulb, the choice of anchorage is critical. *Adèle* boasts a wealth of information including the yacht's Transas chart-plotting data, but there's no substitute for human recognisance and to do this a special tender tracking system has been devised.

As we approach Henningsvaer, our Lofoten Islands landfall, the three-ton Novurania inboard diesel-powered tender is launched. Two whip aerials are deployed on her transom, one for radio contact, the other for tracking the tender from *Adèle*. Andre is then able to pick up all the data on the tender's displays including course, speed, bearing, range and, importantly, depth under the tender.

Jan-Eric and Susanne speed off into the distance to take a look at the anchoring possibilities among the islands off Henningsvaer and report observing sea otters and a large colony of cormorants nesting close to the village. We watch Jan-Eric's progress on the high-visibility Seabook M18 plotter screen. "It's also a big safety device," explains Andre. "If anyone in the tender gets into difficulty or even lost, we can immediately pick them up on the screen."

My log read: "Arrived Henningsvaer about 2115 in



Above: it looks like the main saloon, but this is just the owner's private accommodation aft. Below: the main, or lower, saloon, with a staircase that leads to the main deck saloon



Photos: Rick Tomlinson

'My log reads: "Sunglasses and factor 20 at 2330 dinner"'

hot sun, anchored in 40m – you need a lot of chain here. Faint smell of drying fish wafting across the anchorage... sunglasses and factor 20 at 2330 as the yacht gently swung through 360° during dinner; the ultimate revolving restaurant."

It couldn't get much better. But it did.

Trollfjorden is a dramatically narrow and deep fissure surrounded by snow-covered peaks. It's a renowned tourist attraction, but it's a must in a yacht. Having motored to the head of the fjord and back we anchored in 30m off the entrance – depth plummets inside the fjord – then boarded the tender for a shore excursion. Waist-deep ferns that covered boulder-strewn, boggy terrain with patchy remains of winter snow fields leading down to the water's edge made the going tough. But this was a minor gripe compared to the biting flies. They are 'the size of sparrows,' warned the pilot. Wrens, certainly, and they swarmed over us – we were glad of a high-speed blast down the fjord in the tender to de-bug ourselves.

With high pressure stuck firm over us, the prospect of sailing seemed to be slipping away;

"We really need a minimum of eight knots true," said Andre. He added that American forecast and routing specialists Commander's Weather were predicting 10 to 12 knots the following morning.

Running *Adèle* is like managing a small business and despite her size and ability to put up with almost anything the weather can throw at her, predicting precisely local conditions becomes important when you intend to organise a £5,000 helicopter photo shoot. Forecasts arrive daily via the yacht's onshore management company MCM in Newport Rhode Island.

Jan-Eric's determination for a yacht that would sail well in all conditions, particularly in light airs, has resulted in a large amount of plain sail (1,550m²) with a slab-reefed main and mizzen; crew joke about the latter as 'the little sail', but it covers 2,303ft² (214m²). North Sails Denmark's carbon Spectra sails are superb.

Mark Thirkettle controlled the hoist using a handheld remote. The main, cleverly stacked on twin tracks leading into the carbon fibre Park Avenue-style boom, went up in a minute or so and was locked off at the headboard using a conventional sprung-loaded ▶▶

Adèle facts

- All deck cushions (and there are lots) stow in a dedicated lazarette within the counter stern.
- *Adèle* was fined the equivalent of €900 for taking the tender up a small salmon stream to pick up stores. Pricy groceries, perhaps, but far better than an 11-day jail sentence.
- *Adèle* is the biggest yacht to be built by Vitters and she steps the tallest carbon spars by Marten Marine in New Zealand.



André Minkema



Photos: Rick Tomlinson

Top: *Adèle* is designed to be reefed early. Here she is on trial in the North Sea.

Above (left-right): steering options, prop pitch and engine rpm are controlled on one panel; a navigation and control screen with all rig controls; the 4ft 3in Korsor prop

'flip-out' lock activated at deck level with a lever. Separate locks for the first and second reefs alleviate the compression loads.

Faster than the wind

Much to our surprise (and even to that of *Adèle's* crew), the big ketch was up to 5.5 knots of boat speed in just 6 knots true and quickly crept up to 8 knots in 7 knots of wind. There was an alacrity about her which seemed to defy her size and weight.

As the breeze built, *Adèle* leaned into the task and was soon fully powered up sailing at more than ten knots in about the same true wind strength. Like a multihull, the apparent wind angle was quickly pulled forward, the best angle for speed being about 32°. There was eventually enough breeze to bear away and set the vast North MPS, a 1,500m² cloud of red and white cloth which set perfectly from its sock. With 500m² of mizzen staysail set from a powered

furler on the centreline *Adèle* was up to more than 12 knots and with the staysail set momentarily she could boast a spread of sail measuring 2,750m², a staggering 30,000ft².


Jan-Eric beamed like a Cheshire cat. "Fantastic! I am so pleased she goes so well in the light." It was a far cry from the conditions a week earlier, when *Adèle* had rocketed north under a reefed mizzen and double-reefed yankee to touch 17.5 knots. Her big rudder kept her on track and made her easy to steer and the crew were thrilled at *Adèle's* performance.

Photographs of the yacht on trials in the North Sea (left) show her at speed under a reefed main and furlled yankee and staysail. Jan-Eric accepts when the true wind hits about 15 knots, maybe 17 in flat water, the first reef must go in as the apparent hovers around 25 to 26 knots.

Taking in the first reef is a single-button operation using two synchronised Rondal automatic reel winches, one controlling a single-line reefing pendant, the other controlling the main halyard. Fine-tuning the winches and the line lengths to get this right has taken time but it is a cleverly thought out arrangement which should make taking in the first slab that much easier.

The second deep reef is a manual two-line operation using deck-mounted Lewmar drum winches, chosen because they are significantly lighter than the Rondal equivalents.

Despite her size *Adèle* is undoubtedly going to deliver an exciting sailing experience over a wide range of wind speeds. Jan-Eric certainly won't need to reach for the start button as often as he might and over the coming months there will be plenty of opportunity to fine tune *Adèle* as she moves on to Spitsbergen, then on around the world. We hope to follow her over the coming months.



Dimensions

LOA	180ft	54.64m
LWL	126ft	38.4m
Beam	31ft	9.5m
Draught	16ft	4.8m
Displ (half load)		298 tons
Water capacity		8,000lt
		(ability to make 10,000lt per day)
Fuel capacity		24,000lt
		(64lt per hour, cruising rpm)
Ballast		85 tons

Classification: ABS A1 Yachting Service & MCA Cayman Islands
Designed by Hoek Naval Architects
Built by Vitters Shipyard

Left: this shows *Adèle's* vast offwind sail plan. Right: tank-testing a model

