



Princess V48 Open

Exactly the same – but deliciously different



The cockpit is where the biggest changes lie, with an expansive open-air living area



The helm apes the deck saloon version, but adds useful adjacent seating for the crew

A few months later I'm standing on the pontoon at Sutton Harbour marina next to a V48 Open and, just for good measure, we've got a V48 deck saloon along too. In fact, with Princess International (the manufacturer) and Princess Motor Yacht Sales (the UK distributor) both having boats here sheltering from the recent storms, I count more than half a dozen spanking new V48s. Clearly already a success story, then.

The V48 Open shares the basic profile and vertiginous topsides of its deck saloon doppelgänger, but the open-backed hard top is sleeker and the transom more raked, meaning it wears those high sides more comfortably. The grey hull band reaching just to the rubbing strake rather than to the gunwale helps the sportier vibe too. Similarities are suspended once you reach deck level however, the Open swapping its sister's short cockpit and capacious deck saloon for a more traditional sports-cruiser-style full-length cockpit. A huge sunpad aft hides a dinghy garage big enough for a jet RIB, while further forward a large settee around the obligatory fixed table sits opposite a useful wet-bar. At the front end of the cockpit the double helm apes the V48 to starboard, but benefits from a curve of forward-facing seating to port allowing more crew to enjoy the drive.



“That huge opening roof and open back link you to the elements”

The other big change is of course overhead. The Open earns its nomenclature by being, well, open. The roof has a fabric rather than GRP sliding section allowing a far greater aperture, and the rear is completely clear, allowing unfettered access to the great outdoors.

Get your coat on

Head downstairs and you'll discover a layout that is the same, bar a few subtle changes. The steps themselves are a more stylish “floating” design and the dinette has become a C shape rather than an L. The galley and forward cabin are unchanged, but the door to the full-beam mid cabin has switched sides and the master en suite has shrunk slightly. Essentially, though, it's business as usual. Of more interest are the changes to the drive.

Longitudinal centre of gravity, essentially the fore and aft balance point, has been moved forward by repositioning the holding and water tanks as well as the calorifier. Further changes lie outside and aft. The original V48 we tested had Interceptor trim tabs, blades either side of the transom that lower vertically into the water flow. These have been swapped for Bennett trim tabs, a more traditional aileron type that extend horizontally from the transom and hinge into the water flow. In addition, a single fixed Interceptor tab has been



The dinette switches from L to C shape and the master en suite shrinks slightly

positioned centrally to add low-drag lift.

Conditions are ideal. Not long after the gales that took out the main south-west railway line at Dawlish, a brisk westerly wind offers enough calm in Cawsand Bay for video work and boat swapping, but plenty of residual rough stuff to test the mettle of the modifications.

I try the deck saloon first. The seas are confused, with a low swell and plenty of steep chop, exactly the sort of conditions that caught out the first V48 I tried. Princess knows its stuff so I'm expecting an improvement – but this is a revelation. In seas more challenging than those that had me gritting my teeth at 20 knots, we barrel through painlessly at 25. Princess has transformed the ride from rough sea endurance to rough sea enjoyment. All previous attributes remain; visibility is if anything even better, and I don't touch the wipers once. The creaks have been banished too, the result of a new one-piece dash moulding rather than the previous three.

The Open is up next. With an identical hull and engines, the Open does exactly what the deck saloon does, puts its bow down and shoulders confidently into a head sea or picks up its skirts and winds easily past 30 knots across or down it. What is different is the experience. Where the deck saloon comforts and cossets, giving you just a flavour of the outside world via the sunroof and back doors, the Open feels more connected. You're still sheltered, but somehow



'Floating' companionway steps of the V48 Open

that huge opening roof and open back link you to the elements, the rush of the water, the smell of the briny, in a way that the deck saloon doesn't. You put on a coat to drive the Open in February, and I like that.

So which is best? If you boat in Scandinavia or berth in Banus then the ability to control the climate becomes key and the deck saloon is for you. I'll take the Open. It's simply a more visceral experience – and about £6000 cheaper.

LENGTH OVERALL	51ft 10in (15.8m)
ENGINES	Volvo: Penta IPS600 (435hp)
PRICE:	From £526,200 inc VAT



V48 and V48 Open side by side demonstrating the differing aft profiles