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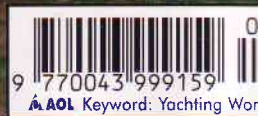
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EVERYONE'S A WINNER

TESTED

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downsizing?
Four dayboat
options





TOFINOU 9.5

Across the English Channel, tucked away in the picture-postcard fishing village of Saint Martin, lies one of the sleekest dayboats around. Even at rest the Tofinou 9.5 is an alluring sight, her deep varnished mahogany coachroof and jet black carbon mast glistening in the low spring light. Viewed in isolation, her slender, low profile lines give her the appearance of a scaled-down Wally, yet this is a design that springs from an entirely different background.

Designed by Michel Joubert and built by his brother Philippe, the 9.5 is a big sister to the Tofinou 7.0 from the 1920s – more of her later. The overall concept was for a

versatile gentleman's dayboat, capable of single-handed sailing, even perhaps some modest racing, but with contemporary looks and performance.

She's one of the prettiest boats I've seen in a long while, a clever and sensitive mix of modern and traditional. Sure there are areas and angles where you wonder if she looks quite right – her stern for example – but she's an easy boat to fall for. But what is even more appealing is what you can't see.

She has a lifting fin and bulb keel that can reduce draught at the touch of a button from 2.20m to 1.20m. She has a retractable carbon bowsprit for the asymmetric spinnaker, which tucks away under the

“Tucked away under the coamings she even has an autopilot, presumably to allow you to open the Chablis without straying off course”

foredeck when stowed, and a 9hp inboard engine with a saildrive unit to get you home when the evening breeze dies.

The deep comfortable cockpit has decent seating and a simple but comfortable cabin under the foredeck with a V-berth forwardmost and a pair of single berths under the side decks.

All control lines are led back, not just to the cockpit, but to a pair of peninsular mouldings just in front of the helmsman so he can handle all controls without even standing up, let alone moving forward. Tucked away under the coamings she even has an autopilot, presumably to allow you to open the Chablis without straying off course.

I liked this boat before we'd even set sail and as Philippe Joubert showed me around his small yard, it was clear I wasn't the only one to fall for her. Actor/director Harrison Ford bought a pair of these boats which appeared in the film *What Lies Beneath*, starring Michelle Pfeiffer – a useful starting point for conversation should I ever meet either of them.

Beautiful mover

One word says it all – beautiful. With her high aspect ratio sail plan, which includes a self-tacking jib sheeted home for upwind work, the Tofinou 9.5 slips along effortlessly. In 15 knots of true breeze we



Top: a simple but comfortable interior for sleeping off lunch or after missing the afternoon tide. Above: a great cockpit for single-handed or fully crewed sailing. Above right: the lifting keel mechanism. Below: modern looks, traditional style



were maintaining over 6 knots with ease. Off the breeze with the asymmetric spinnaker set, she hit 9 knots and more as we heeled her up onto a reach. She is nonetheless a narrow boat and will heel to the breeze quite readily but then she heels no more, her deep draught and deceptive waterline beam making her a stiff boat.

She's also a sensitive boat when on the wind and responds immediately to small changes in heading, all of which makes her fun to sail without being twitchy. Indeed, her performance gives her the feel of a sprinter and would make her a great club racer – I for one would find slipping away for an afternoon or evening race impossible to resist were she mine.

My only reservation about the handling is her performance under engine, especially with the keel up, when she has a larger

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Tofinou 7.0

turning circle than you'd expect and with a folding two-blade prop, takes a while to slow down.

Other than that, she is the perfect day sailing indulgence – immaculately built, with stunning looks and an ease of handling that others only talk of. All of which comes at a price, around £65,590 ex VAT, yet 16 have already been built with Joubert anticipating a run of 20 per year.

Designed by: Michel Joubert

Built by: Latitude 46

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Belay pins and a beautiful varnished finish aboard the Tofinou 7.0



Decent ball race blocks and modern cam jammers make life easier elsewhere



Modern rig controls for the ample sail plan and instruments for the 21st Century

With close to 200 boats afloat, the established Tofinou 7.0 is the better known of the two and, over the years, has achieved cult status. The boat was originally designed by Captain Merle in 1929 as a cruiser for shallow lagoon sailing in and around the Ile de Rey.

"She's like one of your British X Boats," explained builder Philippe Joubert. "I found her in a bad state and because I knew a bit about her background I decided to restore her for fun.

engine. She also has a lifting keel, a centreboard type emerging from her traditional long keel and a furling jib with 2:1 jib sheets. Furthermore, while the existing fleet of Tofinoux may indulge in some racing during the season, which may well be taken seriously by some, she is essentially a family daysailer. The XOD was born into racing.

Having said that, the Tofinou is no plain Jane to sail. She has an ample sail plan, most of it in the mainsail, and a sprightly performance

"How she remained such a well-kept French secret is a mystery, but now the cat's out of the bag"

To get her afloat we glassed the outside of her hull to make her watertight. This worked well for around 4-5 years but it was clear that she wouldn't last forever so we decided to take a mould off her with a view to building a handful of boats."

Fifteen years later the Tofinou has not only been a success for Joubert's company Latitude 46 but is such a well known name around the world that he had no choice but to name the new boat after her.

Broadly speaking, she does indeed look like a fuller, more beamy XOD and has a similar displacement, but there the similarities end. For starters, she's a glassfibre construction, she has 38 per cent more sail area and an inboard

for such a traditional-looking boat. In 20 knots she barrels along upwind at 5 knots. Crack her off and she accelerates quickly to 7 knots. She is a terrific boat for simple family sailing, and is as happy pottering around creeks and harbours as she is in open water.

Under engine she's an absolute doddle with her 9hp engine complete with shaft drive and fixed prop, which help to provide a decent kick to port. Not that she really needs this; for a long keel boat she's impressive for her ability to turn about her keel with ease.

All in all, for £25,840 ex VAT she's a terrific little sailing boat. How she remained such a well-kept French secret is a mystery, but now the cat's out of the bag.

