

Pint-sized



With running backstays and a retractable bowsprit, the Django 6.70 is a sporty boat to sail

ALL PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY

Django Unchained

Sam Fortescue runs riot in a Brittany-built mini-cruiser

Sometimes you step onto a boat and you just know you're going to have a lot of fun sailing her. Regular readers won't be surprised to read that I fell for this sporty but diminutive cruiser, which is drawn by exactly the same naval architect as the Malango 8.88 (see ST211).

Pierre Rolland was asked to produce a boat that would be fast but stable, and flexible enough to cruise offshore and dry out. The boat is actually based on the 6.5m Mini Transat class, but she has been stretched by 20cm, the boom raised 30cm for better headroom and the mast extended by 50cm.

Like the larger Malango, she has a marked chine, plumb bows, an open transom and twin rudders. She is built in Concarneau (in a shed adjoining that belonging to Malango builder IDBMarine) using vacuum infusion technology and a foam core, making her 'unsinkable'. And also like the Malango, she skips over the waves like a randy fulmar.

I interviewed her builder, Luc Le Pape of Marée Haute, at a 30° angle, scooting upwind. I was supposed to be helming the boat, but just as Luc had promised, she beat hard to windward without a hand on the tiller – we made noble progress in this way for about five minutes,

reeling off an easy 6 knots in around 12 knots of wind. It was ample proof of Luc's claim that she was easy to handle with a young family aboard.

And yet the boat has clocked up to 17 knots on a blustery reach. "She's easy up to about 12 knots speed," Luc said. "Even in 30 knots of wind, she's not a scary boat to sail."

Sail controls are pretty straightforward – with the mainsheet spanning the transom on a curved metal track. My only niggle here was that the traveller is on a line that prevents it from being adjusted at all to windward – though with its responsive dinghy-like rig, this is less of a problem than it would be on a larger yacht.

Our boat had running backstays, which was a pain to manoeuvre for a clumsy cruising sailor like me. Get it wrong in a blow and you can lose the rig heading downwind. But for everyday sailing it's not a concern – just an obstacle for the boom when you want to sheet out.

We flew the asymmetric for a lightning run back towards Concarneau as the clouds gathered. At this small scale, it was easy to hoist, douse and trim, and it added several knots to our pace. All of a sudden the boat seemed to be more flying than sailing.

At speed, I found her a little jumpy on the helm – the slightest input

caused the boat to lurch. The sail was much more sensitive to poor helming (mine) than on the larger Malango. Indeed, we broached a few times – annoying but harmless.

Standard instruments are wireless Tacktick units. There is a plotter option, but Luc uses an elegant Wi-Fi set-up to beam data to a tablet.

The simple life

Below, the boat is all bright white gelcoat and foam upholstery. She's as basic as you'd expect from a 22ft (6.7m) boat, but well thought out. A couple can sleep under the foredeck in the forepeak, where the depth is 2m. There's another berth to port and starboard in the main saloon – four in all. A nice design touch is the removable back rest which transforms the saloon berth into a seat. And on the lift keel version, a removable table can be fixed via an arm and clamp to stainless steel tubing around the lift keel.

A small sink and single burner hob is located in a cabinet to port, while to starboard is the radio, VHF and the electrics, with room for storing charts on top. A chemical loo is nestled ahead of the sink, although some have replaced this with a proper sea heads. There is tankage for 40lt of pressurised fresh water. Along with ample lockers and stowage, it's a simple but workable set-up.

What occupies most of the space below, or so it seems, is the rig for raising the 1.6m T-keel. Even with the 4:1 purchase from blocks, it's a hearty wind from the halyard winch on the coachroof. Several minutes of work will raise the keel a metre up the



Above: At 140° off the wind, she flies along at eight knots
Above right: A 6hp outboard is more than enough
Below: With the fixed keel version, a table replaces the keel box and lifting guides



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stainless steel guides. There's what seems to me a slim 10cm of keel box between the water level and the open cabin, but Luc says this has never been a problem as you wait to ground the boat, even in a roly anchorage.

Balanced on its two strong, stubby rudders and the bulb of the raised keel, the boat will happily take a sandy or a muddy bottom, extending your cruising in areas with high tidal ranges. Lifting the keel cuts the draught to a mere 60cm, meaning that you could almost beat the motorboats out over the marina sill. ✨



VERDICT

You won't see many of these (or her larger sisters) in the Med. The Django is a quintessentially northern European boat, at home among the rocks and beaches of Brittany and the grey waters of the Channel. She is ludicrously good fun to sail and flexible enough to accommodate four for an (intimate) weekend or longer cruise. Her chief joy is her liveliness on the water and her ability to take you anywhere along the coast. She's a little pricey by production boat standards, but you're paying for a craft perfectly adapted to her environment.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

ACCOMMODATION: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

DJANGO 6.70

LOA: 22ft (6.7m)

Beam: 9ft 10in (3m)

Draught up/down: 2ft/5ft 3in (60cm/1.6m)

Sail area: 355–400sqft (33–37m²)

Price: c£47,950 (€61,250)

Builder: Marée Haute

Contact: www.mareehaute.fr

