



STORY & PHOTOS ALLAN WHITING

# BABY BONUS

Many sailors want a yacht that's big enough to daysail with friends, easy enough for two or three people to race and cheap to berth. They need look no farther than the entry-level Dehler 29





**A**lthough a new arrival Down Under the Dehler 29 has been around for a few years — long enough to have won Europe's Boat of the Year Award in 1997 and *Cruising World Magazine's* Boat of the Year Award in 1999. Back then the slippery shape sported a Bavaria-look cabin top, but now the boat has a redesigned 'family look' coach house profile. The current upswept-portal cabin top makes the Dehler 29 fit with newer models in the range.

Although the hull shape is substantially unchanged the new interior is a welcome move away from the original's heavy-looking furniture layout, with its prominent, quirky round sink and pedestal. The new design is understated and makes the saloon look much larger and airier than you'd expect in a 29-footer.

The impression of space is heightened by the fact that the forward vee-berth is undisguised: clearly visible behind an open forward bulkhead. If you were entertaining a mob at anchor, the kids could easily pile into the vee-berth area. The open bulkhead allows unrestricted space forward, so it would be easy to launch and retrieve sails through the forward hatch.

The original Dehler 29 sported a novel deck moulding adjacent to the cockpit coamings and that has been preserved on the revised boat. The deck level in this area is raised, aft of a bevelled cutwater and the design seems to fulfil a double function:

Space utilisation has been planned carefully inside the latest Dehler 29's monolithic hull. There's almost no bilge, other than shallow depressions under the saloon's lift-up floor panels, so the cabin sole in the galley, head and aft cabin is actually the upper surface of the hull laminate. This design maximises headroom in these walking areas.

Because the Dehler 29 interior is open-plan the designers, Judel and Vrolijk, adopted a different method of transferring rig and keel loads throughout the hull and deck structure. A ladder sub-frame bonds to the hull at the keel and compression-post-step attachment points and extends outwards to bond with a pair of massive stringers that run fore and aft behind the saloon furniture. Rig loads, via cap shrouds and lowers, are fed into these stringers, with turnbuckle links between the deck chainplates and the stringers. This load-path design allows for inboard chainplates, providing room for overlapping headsails to curve around the shrouds and spreaders.

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Overall the Dehler 29 features equipment spec slightly higher than is normal on 29ft boat. No complaints here.

slightly improving headroom in the aft cabin and breaking water flow down the sidedecks. The latter feature promises to keep the helmsperson's and sheet hand's bottoms dry when they're hiking over the cockpit coamings. The edge of this raised section is fitted with a teak toerail that aids foot grip when crew need to leave the cockpit and go forward.

**NO SHORTCUTS**

It's common to find obvious cost-cutting in a 29-footer, but the Dehler 29's construction and equipment levels are impressive. Monolithic, handlaid hull and balsa-cored deck are laminated together in the mould and internal deck reinforcement panels are bonded-in aluminium. Ten keel bolts penetrate two broad

IT'S COMMON TO FIND OBVIOUS COST-CUTTING IN A 29-FOOTER, BUT THE DEHLER 29'S CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT LEVELS ARE IMPRESSIVE



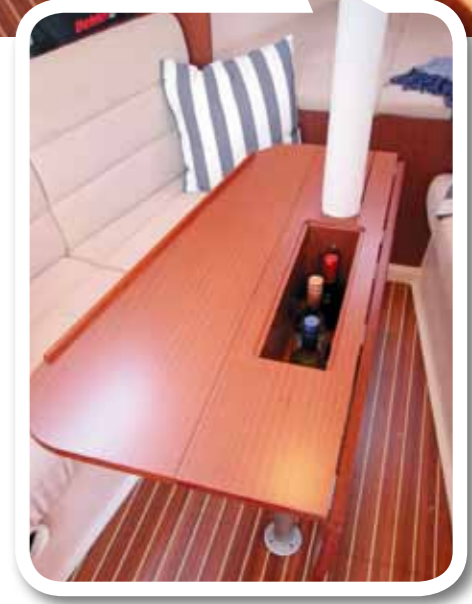
backing plates, to secure the iron/lead keel.

We crawled around the Dehler 29's innards looking for some untidy corners, but couldn't find any — fit and finish is exemplary for this size of boat.

The 9/10th rig is Selden and includes a rod vang, oversized tackle-adjustable backstay, Dyneema halyards and a jib furler. A tackle mainsheet with ample purchase runs from a cockpit pedestal or optional traveller. Wire and chainplates wouldn't look underdone on a 35-footer and sails are North tri-radial-cut of heavier cloth than typical small-yacht kit.

Below decks the saloon and cabins are spacious and well finished, and the galley comes with a large, deep sink and two-burner gimbaled stove and oven. Standard in the generous head is a wet locker with door.

What the Dehler 29 lacks in bilge storage space it makes up for in other areas. The saloon cupboards are huge, there's wine storage in the centre of the drop-side



While simplistic the interior is cleanly finished and fairly spacious thanks to the open door-less layout.

dining table and the starboardside cockpit locker is the size of many 40-footers' lazarettes. Because the fuel tank won't fit under-floor it's located in this locker; being made of translucent plastic makes it easy to check the level of the contents without the need for a gauge.

Engine and saildrive positioning optimises ease of access, with the engine located behind the leg. The companionway lifts away entirely,





**[HIGHS]**

- › Top-shelf mast and rig
- › Airy, spacious cabin and saloon
- › Quality fit and finish
- › Easy sail handling
- › Dehler companionway hatch system

**[LOWS]**

- › Rudder shake under power



exposing the leg and rear of the engine, while the engine front is reached through lift-out panels in the aft cabin and head. Extensive noise and heat insulation keeps engine noise to a very low level.

**PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

Our test sail was done in typical Sydney autumn fickle weather conditions, but we had a brief window of 5 to 6kts of sou'westerly to check the boat's light-air capabilities. Considering the heavy sail cloth and small headsail fitted to the test boat it did remarkably well to ghost along at three-plus-knots in these light conditions. An overseas colleague vouched for the Dehler 29's heavy-weather tolerance after he did a test in 20-knot conditions and came away impressed with its stability and ease of one-line reefing.

The tiller and rudder combination is ideal for club racing, with very light action and an optional tiller extension making steering and hiking quite comfortable. If anything the tiller is a tad long and we'd probably slice off a few centimetres, to allow more clearance between the tip of the tiller and the mainsheet falls.

Neutral rudder action is designed for sailing, without any weight bias in the rudder blade, so the tiller tended to wobble somewhat when under motor. We'd gladly put up with that rudder shake under power, in exchange for its superb feel when sailing.

Multi-purchase mainsheets can be a literal pain, but the Dehler 29's arrangement has easily-handled line that's sheeted at around three-quarter boom length. End-boom sheeting is more precise, but results

in lots of mainsheet lying around the cockpit. With its powerful vang the Dehler 29 should be quite easy to handle in a blow with this layout.

An optional Harken mainsheet traveller fits across the cockpit, forming a partition between the helmsperson/mainsheet hand and the headsail trimmer. The long tiller lifts out of the way when going

Clever thinking has located the engine aft of the leg (above right) which maximises the otherwise tight servicing space. Shorthanded club racers should be pleased (below).



**[tradeboat SAYS...]**

The Dehler brand is synonymous with performance and the 29 shouldn't disappoint. It's a well-made boat with quality equipment, fit and finish not normally seen in such a small package. It can club race and cruise four-up, and below decks has plenty of party space.

about, so tacking duels shouldn't be hard work. Standard is a pedestal mainsheet anchor point that would be less intrusive on cockpit space for a pure cruising yacht.

Long deck sail tracks, shortish spreaders and inboard shrouds allow a varied sail plan, with an optional offering being a 120 per cent genoa in addition to the standard 105 per cent jib. An open-front pulpit should allow easy spinnaker pole handling. Dacron is the European standard sailcloth, but the local agent Team Windcraft prefers to see Australian Dehlers kitted with North tri-radial sails.

In short, the Dehler 29 shares the high rig and equipment standards set by her larger siblings and has maximised below-deck living space. She is a budget-priced new yacht that offers ease of handling and good club racing potential for small crews. ☺



**Facts & figures**  
DEHLER 29

**PRICE AS TESTED**  
\$154,613

**OPTIONS FITTED**  
North ACL T-cut sails, Cruising Pack \$7681 (additional AGM battery, Volvo Penta D1-20 saildrive, two-blade folding propeller, 12V fridge, 230V shorepower and battery charger), Harken mainsheet traveller, H&C cockpit shower, and iron/lead race keel

**PRICED FROM**  
\$137,500

**GENERAL**  
**MATERIAL:** Polyester balsa sandwich deck; solid laminate hull  
**TYPE:** Keelboat  
**LENGTH OVERALL:** 8.75m  
**WATERLINE LENGTH:** 8m  
**BEAM:** 2.99m  
**DRAFT:** 1.58m (1.22m and 1.8m optional)  
**WEIGHT:** 2850 to 3150kg

**CAPACITIES**  
**BERTHS:** Two doubles  
**FUEL:** 61lt  
**WATER:** 100lt

**SAILS**  
**MAINSAIL:** 26m<sup>2</sup>  
**HEADSAIL:** 17m<sup>2</sup>  
**GENOA:** 25m<sup>2</sup> (optional)

**ENGINE**  
**MAKE/MODEL:** Volvo Penta D1-13 (D1-20 optional)  
**TYPE:** Saildrive  
**RATED HP:** 12 (18 optional)  
**PROP:** Fixed two-blade (folding two-blade optional)

**SUPPLIED BY**  
Team Windcraft,  
Bayview Anchorage Marina,  
1714 Pittwater Road,  
Bayview, NSW, 2104  
Phone: (02) 9979 1709  
Fax: (02) 9979 2027  
Email: boats@windcraft.com.au  
Website: www.windcraft.com.au

**LAYOUT**

