



Fast but not furious



Early in the new millennium German boat builder Dehler re-established itself in Europe as a builder of quality performance cruising yachts. The yard has been producing yachts since the 1940s and is renowned for its innovative ideas and creative designs.

Its yard in Meschde occupies ultra-modern premises covering some 50,000m² and now produces nearly 200 new yachts every year in a wide range from 29ft to 60ft LOA.

The new Dehler 34 is built in a completely new style, following on from the introduction of the first yacht in the new range, the 44, last year. All Dehler's latest performance range employ the renowned design skills of Simonis & Voogd, in addition to its own in-house design team. The design

Renowned for its innovative, high performance racer/cruisers, Dehler Yachts has launched a new 34 in the same style as its award-winning 44. **Duncan Kent** took her for a spin to examine the changes.



into the hull, provide a framework for distributing both keel and rig loads throughout the hull. The hull and deck are then bonded together while still in the mould, creating an homogenous monocoque that is surprisingly light, but extremely strong. Her deck and superstructure are balsa-cored for lightness and rigidity, with glassed in aluminium backing plates for all external fittings and easy to clean gelcoat inner surfaces.

BELOW DECKS

The new 34 only has a few inches more beam and headroom than its predecessor, but clever

Top: A straightforward interior that provides good sea berths and comfortable living quarters.

Left: She has an excellent helming position, but her mainsheet restricts easy movement aft.

trend for performance boats is now clearly going along the IRC route and Dehler's 44 and 34 are optimised to fulfil the IRC requirements for racing, while still providing all the comfort features required when cruising.

The new 34 has a longer dynamic waterline than her predecessor under way, giving her greater speed and acceleration, but a wider beam and higher

freeboard that in turn provides greater internal volume for living aboard in comfort.

She sports a deep, cast iron fin keel with a lead bulb at the bottom that keeps the bulk of her ballast as low as possible. Her shallow underwater lines, ample waterline beam and tight turn of the bilge gives her plenty of form stability and enables a generous sail plan to be employed without

needing to carry too much extra weight in the form of ballast. She also has a deeper, high-aspect, balanced rudder that gives her improved windward performance and helps keep her tracking straight in all conditions.

The hulls are all hand laid up for a controlled, high quality finish using polyester resins for maximum osmosis protection. Laminated floor beams, bonded

interior design, combined with modern, light coloured woodwork and smooth, bright, moulded deckhead makes her look considerably larger inside.

Her after cabin is spacious, thanks to her maximum beam being continued almost all the way aft to the transom, so the double berth measures 1.99m L x 1.35m W (6ft 6in x 4ft 5in) and there is a lofty 1.91m (6ft 3in)

On Deck

The cockpit works well with a crew, but more conventionally minded folk might not take to the large wheel. Or, for that matter, the open transom, which many consider to be a bit hairy in big following seas. The former actually makes helming a good deal easier and grows on you very quickly. The full width mainsheet just forward of the pedestal forces you to climb over the seats when venturing forward, but with most cruising boats having autopilots,



Top to bottom: Deep chain locker; her decks are easy to move around safely; the deep cockpit locker also houses the hot water tank; her cockpit works well with a crew.

one would rarely venture behind the wheel on passage anyway.

The open transom takes a while to get used to by those more familiar with traditional cockpits, but even these have their advantages. Yes, they're more likely to let a following wave on board, but they are equally quick at letting it run back out, minimising the risk of down flooding through the



companionway. Furthermore, the afterdeck makes a great swimming platform when you open the wide gate wires. However, if you don't like the idea, there are purpose-built stowage boxes and a helm seat available to give her a more conventional layout.

A hatch in the aftdeck allows access to a handy lazarette locker and the steering gear and there's a dedicated liferaft locker under the forward half of the cockpit sole.

The cockpit locker is large enough to stow an inflatable, along with the hot water tank. A shelf would be handy though. Unfortunately, the gas locker is only big enough to house one large Camping Gaz bottle.

Her coamings are low and the tops slippery, but then one tends to step over, rather than on them when accessing the side decks.

The decks are a good width and the shrouds are well inboard, making access forward easy and safe. The non-slip is effective and the foredeck clear of obstructions. Six cleats are provided, mounted on top of the moulded toe rail and she has a deep chain locker and a detachable anchor roller.

The deck hatches are recessed into the teak coachroof inlay and reflect her contemporary styling.



headroom. Wooden sheathed hull sides offer good insulation and give the cabin a cosier atmosphere, while two portlights, one inboard the other outboard, provide ample light and ventilation. Stowage is in a large full-height clothes locker, a boot box/seat and underneath the berth, although a deep shelf over the berth would have been a useful addition.

The heads compartment is to starboard behind the chart table and is roomy with all mod cons, including a wet locker and a good size locker above the sink with mirrors. The outboard portlight opens, but is also partly over the chart table, so you might want to avoid leaving it open underway. A second, opening into the cockpit, is more useful.

Her L-shaped galley is an adequate size and well equipped for cruising. Stowage could be improved, as could worktop space (a cooker cover maybe), but the gimbaled cooker, 75ltr electric fridge, twin stainless sinks and hot/cold pressurised water are all easily up to the job of feeding a family. Lighting is also good with two halogens under the deckhead and a large opening portlight above that also provides air in dry weather.

Opposite is the navigation station that boasts a forward-facing chart table, albeit slightly small. There's a comprehensive, modern electrical panel with breaker



switches and a multifunction display for energy consumption and tankage monitoring and a second hinged panel for mounting instruments on. Two bins and a shelf take care of any pilot books and manual charting instruments and there is stowage beneath the seat and in the table upstand for the bosun's stores.

Her saloon is nice and bright thanks to light teak joinery with brushed aluminium trims and fiddles and headroom is generous at 1.86m (6ft 1in). The layout is pretty straightforward with two long straight settees for use as single sea berths. In port, the starboard U-shaped seating becomes a comfortable double berth by simply pulling out an extension under the cushion and placing the seatback cushion on top, making a roomy 2.09m



Clockwise from top: A well planned galley; she is very quick, even with the cruising mainsail, her cosy after cabin, her roomy heads even has a wet locker; a decent size navigation area with forward facing chart table



engine box is pretty reasonable for routine maintenance. She has two smallish batteries, 55Ah for engine starting and 80Ah for domestic use, which is a tad undersized for lengthy cruises. However, the engine has a powerful 115A alternator for replenishing electrical power as quickly as possible.

RIG, DECK GEAR AND SAILS

There are two rig versions for the 34, regatta (RS) or cruising. The former sports rod rigging, hanked headsails, spinnaker gear plus a load more racing upgrades, the latter a furling jib with Dyform rigging and semi-battened mainsail with single line reefing.

Both have Harken deck gear of good quality and well up to the job, with 44-2STA primary winches, 32-2STA halyard winches and adjustable travellers all round. All sail control lines lead aft, with those from the mainsail running neatly through a coachroof tunnel, directly to a row of five Spinlock clutches each side.

Her jib tracks run inside the shrouds, giving the 107 per cent jib a nice, tight sheeting angle for windward work in blowy conditions. A slightly smaller, self-

tacking jib option will be available shortly.

Featuring a 9/10 fractional rig, her Selden keel-stepped, tapered mast has two sets of swept spreaders and is supported by discontinuous cap, inter and lower shrouds to one through-deck chainplate each side. The mast also features a spinnaker pole track as standard and a rigid vang supports the boom.

The racing forestay terminates right on the stemhead for maximum foretriangle sail area, although in cruising form she has a below-deck furling drum, set slightly further inboard and a full pushpit with step. In either form her backstay features a mechanical adjuster for rapid tensioning under way, only with the cruising rig the backstay is split for easier transom access.

UNDER WAY

Her long dynamic waterline and fine bows make her hull very slippery, which was noticeable from the moment we motored out of the River Hamble on a fresh November day with a F4-5 northerly keeping the Solent pretty flat. She accelerated to 6kn under power almost instantly, at no more than a quiet and

L x 1.00m W (6ft 10in x 3ft 3in) double. The twin leaf table is large enough for six to eat around and there's a small bottle store in the centre, alongside the keel-stepped mast. Stowage is limited to a narrow shelf and locker each side, but there is room in bins beneath the port side seating for larger items. A water tank and batteries occupy most of the space under

the starboard settee.

Her forecabin isn't a bad size either and would most likely act as the master cabin, having plenty of good stowage in both lockers, shelves and bins under the spacious 2.10m L x 1.70m W (6ft 9in x 5ft 7in) vee berth.

Her freshwater-cooled Volvo D1 diesel runs quietly and access inside the well sound-insulated



Dehler 34 Specs

LOA	10.51m	34ft 6in
LWL	9.38m	30ft 9in
Beam	3.49m	11ft 5in
Draught	1.95m	6ft 5in
Displacement	5,110kg	11,242lb
Ballast	1,850kg	4,070lb
Sail Area	75.4m ²	810ft ²
Fuel	83ltr	18gal
Water	130ltr	28gal
Berths	6-7	
Engine	20hp, 3-cylinder Volvo D1-20 diesel	
Transmission	Saildrive with 2-blade folding propeller	
RCD category	A (Ocean)	
Designer	Dehler/Simonis & Voogd	
Builder	Dehler Segelyachten GmbH, www.dehler.com	

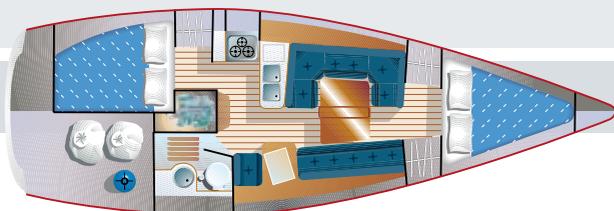
UK main agents – Dehler Yachts UK 023 8045 6100

www.dehler.com

Priced from €117,382 (£87,550 at time of writing) plus approx £3,000 delivery to, and commissioning in Hamble, UK.



Top to bottom: Sail handling proved easy; well heeled in the brisk conditions, but she stayed firmly under control; her cockpit works well with crew, but singlehanded is not so easy.



economical 2,000rpm. Increasing the revs to 2,500rpm notched this up to 7kn fairly effortlessly and flat out, at 2,800rpm, we attained 7.6kn in the flattish conditions.

She is a doddle to manoeuvre at close quarters, as was shown when Dehler's demo skipper extricated her from a space no bigger than a foot or so longer than her hull each end and then glided her back into the same spot at the end of the test after reversing her the entire way down between pontoons, despite wind-against-tide complications.

The test boat had the regatta rig and was set up for laminate sails, but Dehler kindly switched to the standard cruising mainsail before we set off so we would get a better idea of her performance as a cruiser. Despite this she was still electrifying and the addition of top quality racing sails would really make her shift and point.

As I had expected, our log rarely registered below the 7kn mark all day. With just a single reefed mainsail hoisted we were reaching at 5.5kn before we got the jib up. Once we set the jib as well, we were soon closehauled

– 33° deg off the apparent 21kn wind – and making an impressive 7.2kn, leaving little in the way of wake. A few more degrees off the wind this picked up to over 8kn and bearing away onto a beam reach gave us our top speed of the day, 8.3kn. She tacked instantly and was exceptionally easy to handle with crew thanks to the straightforward and logical cockpit layout. Singlehanded might prove tricky, though, because reaching the primary winches or the mainsheet from behind the wheel is very tricky indeed.

Her high aspect rudder gives you total command at all times and has just enough balance to give the helmsman that vital bit of feedback, without creating too heavy a helm when pressed.

Off the wind we weren't going to break any records with just our small jib, but she gave every indication of wanting to break free, tracking like a demon and crying out for more sail. I am reliably informed that, during her sistership's many successful races in the 2007 Hamble Winter Series, she would regularly hit 10kn flying her 100m² kite.



Verdict

Dehler has been at the forefront of performance yacht building for many years and is never afraid to be adventurous and innovative in its designs. I am quite confident this new 34-footer, whatever guise you order her in, will not disappoint. For the out-and-out racer she has proven herself to be truly competitive in races all over Europe. Equally, for the more cruising inclined yachtsman, she is fantastic fun to sail and provides comfortable, bright, spacious accommodation with all the luxuries expected from a modern, offshore cruising yacht. She looks pretty damned sexy too!

For

- Sleek and good looking inside and out
- Well built and equipped to a high standard
- Fast, fun and affordable

Against

- Cockpit split by wheel and mainsheet track
- Narrow door to the forecabin
- Low cockpit seatbacks and slippery coaming tops