



Give yourself a Hanse

A husband and wife new to sailing love their first yacht. **Rebecca Hayter** joins Campbell Walker and Charlotte Gibbs for an afternoon on *Seawalker*.

Photos: Will Calver/oceanphotography.co.nz

Review: Hanse 400



Campbell Walker and Charlotte Gibbs have taken to sailing like the proverbial duck to water, even though they've only been at it together for "five minutes". The husband and wife team are adamant *Seawalker*, their new Hanse 400, has helped them ascend the steep learning curve.

The family's journey into sailing reflects Charlotte's childhood memories of summer sailing holidays and she wanted their three children to have similar experiences. Campbell was new to sailing but he immediately liked the Hanse 400 when he accompanied a friend to the Sydney Boat Show. Having completed the Boatmaster course, he has embraced sailing 100 percent and looks as comfortable at the helm as a cat in front of the heater. Although the Sydney Boat Show trip was a couple of years ago, Campbell and Charlotte waited until their youngest child was two before purchasing the boat.

More than 32 of the German-manufactured yachts, designed by Alinghi design house Judel/Vrolijk, have been imported new into New Zealand in recent years. These include the 350, 430 and 530, and 15 of the Hanse 400s which are priced at a global recession concession of around NZ\$400,000, putting them in the mid-range among Hanse's European competitors.

Walker and Gibbs say one of the best parts of owning a Hanse has been dealing with broker Tony Newmarch, who spent



ABOVE: Charlotte Gibbs and Campbell Walker

several days onboard with them over Christmas to help them learn the boat. Many times during our test sail out of Bayswater, both owners stressed to me that they find the Hanse easy to sail. This was especially important for them, as they accept that generally one adult has to be available for the children, which means the other is single-handed most of the time.

Single-handed

Assuming reasonable weather and sailing under mainsail and headsail, the main tasks for a single-hander on most cruising yachts are to keep a lookout and tack when necessary. The headsail is self-tacking and furling so it requires minimal work. The furling drum is recessed beneath the foredeck to protect the furling unit from the salt, keep it clear of the anchoring system, allow for the biggest possible luff length and it looks tidy. The furling line

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“The owners opted for twin wheels, partly for the better visibility.”

exits the deck just aft of the furler and is controlled on a primary starboard winch within easy reach of the helmsman so he or she can furl it quickly if necessary, such as in the event of a sudden squall or when coming in to anchor. The drum is easily accessed within the huge anchor locker. As a self-tacker, the headsail is 95%, so easy to manage.

The anchor locker has a huge cover and a step below deck level where the crew can stand to operate the windlass using a remote control on a cable. However, the chain does pyramid up beneath the windlass, although the crew member is well placed to clear it with a boat hook or similar.

The double-spreader, 19.53m mast carries a working sail area of 106m². Newmarch says the 8400kg boat is perfectly comfortable carrying full sail up

to 20 knots true upwind.

The owners opted for twin wheels, partly for the better visibility. Campbell has the height to easily see over the coachroof from a central wheel, but Charlotte is more comfortable with the better view from outboard provided by the twin wheels. They also appreciate the easy flow fore and aft between the wheels; this pays dividends at anchor when the transom infill is removed to create an open transom.

Another feature of easy sailing is the single-line reefing and the electric winch for the main halyard, to starboard.

As on most imported production cruising yachts, the mainsheet is secured on the coachroof and controlled, along with most other lines, on the jammers at the forward end of the cockpit. This will work against it as a single-hander, as it's difficult to reach it from the helm. There is a bridle in lieu of a traveller; this is easier for short-handed cruising but it removes some opportunity to trim for performance. A traveller can be fitted locally for those who want to race.

The cockpit is a standard T-shape with a central table. The perspex, lift-up

flaps either side will do service at lunch and, when stowed vertically, create a handy channel to secure sunglasses and drinks when the boat is heeling. The other notable aspect of the cockpit is the seating. The seat backs are moulded at an extremely comfortable incline, especially that all-important position when leaning back against the main cockpit bulkhead with your legs stretched out the length of the seat. Another nice touch: the washboard stows on top of the hatch when it's slid back into the coachroof.

The helmstations are reasonably comfortable too, with foot blocks on either side for support, and the option of sitting on the coaming. Self-draining lockers under both helm positions can do service as fish bins or stowage for snorkelling gear. A central locker conceals the emergency tiller and autopilot.

Wide open spaces

Heading below decks there are four attractive timber steps down to the sole. First impression of the saloon: an open,



ABOVE: *Seawalker* boasts Lewmar winches and all new Hanse yachts worldwide are supplied with the latest Simrad electronics



Saloon



Galley

friendly and useful area. The Hanse is a generous, 4.04m wide in the beam amidships, but Hanse has given much of that space to, well, space, most notably in the wide walkway forward. That translates into a feeling of spaciousness in the entire saloon area.

The aft quarter cabins have huge berths, although the port cabin lacks headroom as it accommodates a generous locker in the cockpit. The starboard berth can sleep four children, lined up athwartships like toy soldiers, and with

plenty of headroom as the locker above is quite shallow. It's not a bad thing, as it keeps everything within easy reach.

The galley to starboard is nicely set up with a sturdy handrail, double sink, deep bin for rubbish and a fridge/freezer which is accessible from above, where it is fridge temperature, or from below, offset, where it is colder. This is a great idea: one chamber, two points of access. The stove is two-burner and oven with a neat cover which slides back and down for stowage when cooking. There are attractive glass



Master cabin

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slides for food storage, which move easily and have a reassuring robustness to them. The interior finishing and quality of fittings is generally good.

One flaw with the galley is that there is little bench space while actually preparing food – you need the sinks, you need the fridge, you need the oven, which leaves little space in between. On the Hanse there is a handy set up on the port side: a chart table, with a comfortable seat either side, so it can also be a games

table, extra seating space for dinner, or preparation area.

Seawalker has three double cabins and two bathrooms but other options are available. Charlotte says she wondered why a boat this size would need two heads, but they have proved their worth, especially when they went away with four adults and five children onboard. The day bathroom, to port, is pretty big with a large shower – separated from the head by a folding perspex screen – and vanity. There

is a rack in the shower area for hanging wet weather gear – another good idea – and there's a matching rack outside in the main saloon. On *Seawalker* this is used for the children's lifejackets.

The master cabin, forward, has a generous berth, en suite and good storage in drawers and cupboards. Stowage throughout is well thought out and accessible.

The sole is an attractive faux timber, with cut-outs to access bilges. These are without latches, instead using a sucker cup to lift them. It's a bummer if you can't find the sucker cup but it does make for an absence of dirt traps.

The engine is a Yanmar 39hp saildrive, with good, all-round access. The water tank is under the forward berth.

In the breeze

We had a clear winter's day for our sail on *Seawalker* with nary a breath of wind, so it was more of a test under motor. The yacht is berthed in Bayswater which can have a strong tidal flow at times but *Seawalker's* owners have set up their lines for either bow-in or bow-out berthing to keep their options open, and find the yacht easy to manage under power. *Seawalker* cruises at

just over 7 knots at 2700rpm.

Tony Newmarch was keen for me to experience the Hanse 400 in a decent breeze so the following week he invited me for a sail on *Zeta*, a Hanse 400 with a central wheel, owned by his friend John Cowan. We had 14-21 knots on a typical Waitemata day of gusts and lulls. We reached up the harbour, sitting on around eight knots, and the helm remained pleasantly light and smooth through the gusts. Tacking was a breeze with the self-tacking headsail so that the crew were



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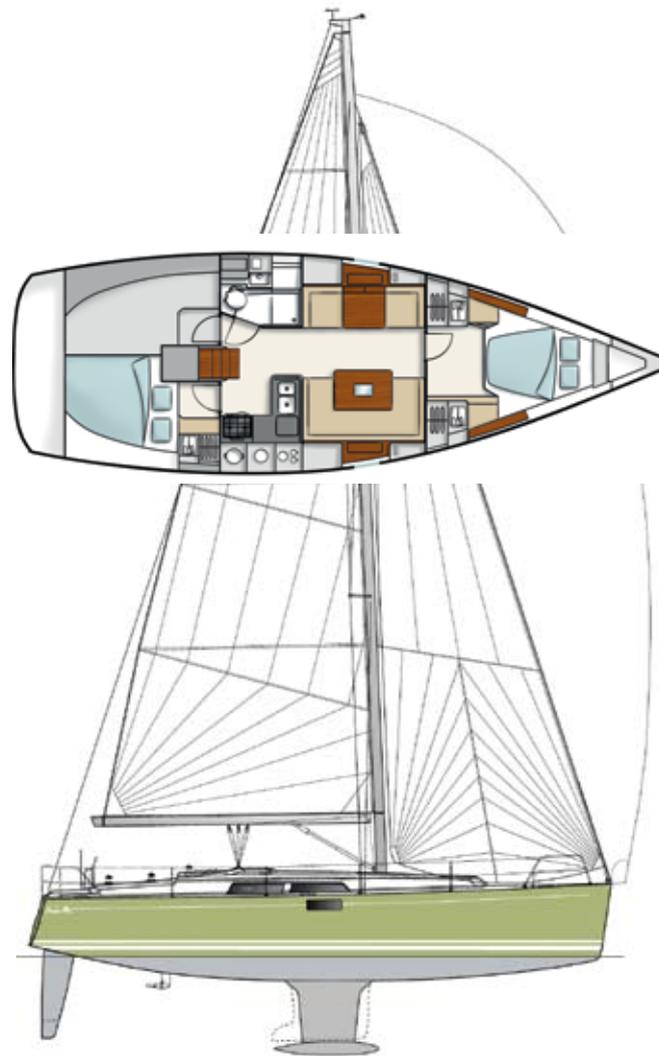
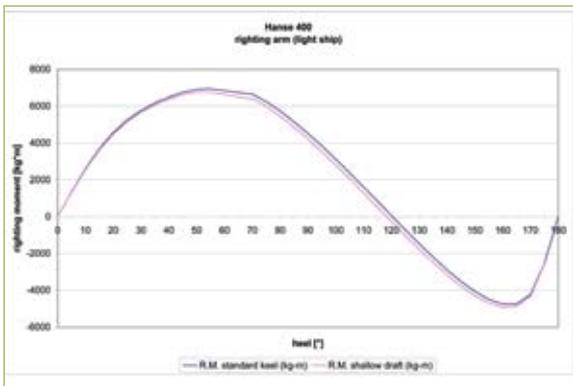
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Hanse 400

loa	39.7ft (12.10m)
lwl	35.5ft (10.80m)
beam	13.3ft (4.04m)
draft (deep)	6.8ft (2.05m)
(shallow)	5.5ft (1.65m)
sail area	106m ²
ballast	2685kg
displacement (standard)	8400kg
(epoxy)	7900kg
water	325 litres
fuel	140 litres
mast height	64ft (19.52m)
engine	39hp diesel

more like passengers as they didn't have to do anything. Coming home on the wind, with more than 20 knots apparent, the yacht remained obedient to the helm thanks to its generous size rudder. There were no surprises, even in pretty meaty gusts under full sail and we were comfortably making 7-7.5 knots.

Back at Westhaven I had a play in reverse; the two-bladed folding prop exhibited slight walk to starboard but once it had way on it obeyed the helm and was extremely manoeuvrable in forward or reverse in hard turns and spins.

The Hanse 400 is a good size for cruising. It doesn't feel like a huge boat to manage and several owners routinely sail them single-handed. It's no wonder the Gibbs-Walker family have adapted so quickly to boating life. ■

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