



New Sail

Space racer

German builder Hanse has pulled a rabbit out of its hat with its voluminous yet compact 445.



Anyone fortunate enough to have been born into a family with several generations of sailing history and a tendency to hoard the related reading material will doubtless have access to shelves of books and magazines illustrating just how far cruising has come since its early uptake in the first half of the 20th century.

Judging from its well-thumbed pages, my grandfather's reference book of choice was a 1930s' edition of *Cruising and Ocean Racing*, being Volume XV in the Earl of Lonsdale's *Library of Sports, Games and Pastimes*, to be precise.

Comparing the yacht designs illustrated in that hefty tome with their modern equivalents is of course a rather fruitless exercise, but perhaps the most significant gap between then and now lies not with the obvious developments of design and performance but in the expectations of – and experiences sought by – the cruising enthusiast.

Lord Lonsdale's fine compendium takes the reader through the 16 most important aspects to look out for when purchasing a cruising yacht and remarkably not one of those refers to anything below decks (apart, that is, from a brief mention

By Crosbie Lorimer



the yacht's interior; for the Hanse 445 is the nautical equivalent of Doctor Who's famous Tardis.

Even to modern eyes the amount of cabin space is quite astonishing for a boat of this length (she carries more beam than most of her competitors) and the yacht's designer, judel/vrolijk & co, has once again combined with Design Unlimited to focus on making the crew feel right at home, quite literally. This isn't a yacht, this is an apartment!

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Indeed, the hallmarks of yacht cabins that would reassure the old sea dogs that everything is shipshape are conspicuously absent. "Where is the mast?" they would ask. "Where are the crawl-in quarter berths? Is that really the navigator's desk? Where are the pump handles, seacocks and confusing operating instructions for the heads? What's with all this natural light below decks?"

As to the galley, that would be unrecognisable to Lord Lonsdale's readers, who are rather alarmingly exhorted to "line the galley, perhaps a space of 2ft by 18in high, with asbestos board, metal sheathed with galvanised iron or better still zinc sheeting, which is easier to keep clean."

No such frugality or health hazard on the 445 with its smart double sink, gimballed stove, microwave oven and an option of two fridges, suggesting that guests and crew will expect more than simple maritime fare while aboard. There's even a wine 'cellar' neatly fitted into the bilges in

of the unsuitability of concrete as fixed ballast in the bilges!).

STARK CONTRAST

So for the salty dogs of yesteryear the concept of the modern cruising yacht – as realised in the likes of the Hanse 445 from the Windcraft team – would be a thing of horror: no ropes to pull, no logs to trail, no bilges to pump, no stoves to prime and, worst of all, no isolation from the rest of the world.

But perhaps the greatest shock for our cruising predecessors would be had when confronted with



Clockwise from right: The chart table serves more as a compact laptop desk; The saloon is surprisingly spacious and flooded with natural light; Plenty of room to stretch out and relax; The galley comes with all the mod cons; The master cabin has an abundance of storage plus its own shower and head; Hanse has thought of everything – there's even an underfloor wine cellar!



the galley floor, while the built-in Nespresso coffee maker is standard issue on all Hanse yachts now (sorry girls, George Clooney is not included in the options package). And at last a sensible dedicated waste and recycle bin in its own locker behind the galley and away from the food.

LAP OF LUXURY

The master cabin forward – there is an option for two cabins here – is bright and airy with an island bed, a neat toilet/basin to port (you simply cannot call this 'the heads'), a shower space to starboard and ample locker space throughout, although the full-height hanging space present on the larger Hanses seems a surprising omission on a yacht that would still appeal to those likely to bring the glad rags along for an elegant night out.

The day toilet in the main cabin includes shower, toilet and basin, all compactly designed but still with generous head height, while the two bright and well-ventilated aft cabins are generations away from the claustrophobic quarter-berth tunnels that were once the domain of the most junior crew member, or perhaps the paid hand.



The copious natural light in the cabin from skylights, long cabin ports and the vertical hull windows during the day is complemented at night by an LED light system operated from a smart-phone-style controller; choose your theme, from dance party to romantic mood lighting for two, with a sound system to match.

In this digital world our response to navigation stations is proving something akin to our view of the human appendix: no-one's quite sure what purpose they serve anymore. Hanse takes an each-way bet with a small chart table (aka laptop desk), which will probably be used more for storing keys and mobile phones than studying paper charts at sea, one suspects.

HIT THE DECK

Moving up the companionway stairs only a pedant could find fault with anything of substance on the deck; the layout is clean, the teak decks look



smart, moving around feels safe with the slightly raised continuous coamings (I'd have a preference for a longer grabrail on the cabin top) and there is endless space for rope-free sunbaking.

Forward visibility is extraordinary (the spray dodger would add comfort without any compromise here), the bow set up is blissfully devoid of clutter and the trajectory of overall user-friendliness in boat handling simply keeps rising in the Hanse brand.

Options are available on rig and sail packages, with our test boat sporting a standard two-spreader aluminum mast with fully-battened North ACL sails set on sliding cars with lazy jacks and Selden furling gear (in-mast furling is also available, if preferred).

Neat details abound on deck, indeed they are almost expected of Hanse these days. For the most part such features are robust, effective and evidently well tested, while a couple here

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Above right: Unfortunately, conditions on the day of the test were far from challenging ...

Above: It's top-quality hardware all the way, as you'd expect.

Below: No shortage of sunbathing space on the clean and uncluttered foredeck.



and there suggest some minor finessing would complete their contribution.

One such feature is the teak helmsman's seat that folds down from the swim platform, which itself forms the counter when in sailing mode; clever stuff. The simple timber blocks on the deck that lock in the seat legs are, however, small enough to be a trip hazard when the seat is up. It's hard to imagine that a steel fitting recessed in the deck would not be a cleaner solution or indeed that a fold-up step for the helmsman to



use when the boat heels could not be combined into this otherwise nifty feature.

The smart teak covering to the cockpit coaming trough that carries the sheets and halyards aft to the rope clutches and winches on the Hanse 545 (see the review in *Club Marine* Vol 25 No 6) seemed to be missing on the 445, which was surprising, while the area of cabin top around the fitting area for the spray dodger seemed unnervingly squeaky and bendy underfoot. Having said that, with the dodger in place this area of cabin top wouldn't be walked on anyway.

But these are really minor quibbles in the broader perspective of what is a handsome, robust and very user-friendly deck layout, as was proven as we left the dock.

EASY HANDLING

The salty dogs would doubtless scoff at the lack of boat handling skills required to manoeuvre the yacht in and out of the dock. Bow thrusters are *de rigueur* for boats of all sizes these days and are getting ever quieter, as witnessed by the retracting Maxpower thruster on the Hanse, the only audible evidence of which was the periodic beeping before we left our berth, reminding the helmsman that it was engaged and ready for action as he let go of the lines to the pontoon.

The Hanse design team clearly includes some revheads, as all of the boats in its range feature Volvo diesel engines with plenty of grunt and the option to add extra punch if preferred (the 445 comes with a 39kW/53hp unit as standard with a 53kW/72hp as an option), so the high-sided hulls should present no problem when battling headwinds and crosswinds when heading out or home.

Alas headwinds and crosswinds were nowhere in evidence in the week leading up to the appointed date for a test sail, as a high pressure system sat stubbornly over Sydney delivering days of beautiful, warm and bright afternoons with barely a skerrick of wind. The forecast for the days ahead promised much the same, so our on-water test sail could hardly be described as revealing, much less conclusive.

Fortunately the best-selling 445 has proven as popular with sailing journalists as it has with buyers around the world, so there is no shortage of independent boat tests to provide evidence of the boat's sailing performance.

The much-respected *Yachting World* in the UK spoke with some surprise and a nod of approval at this voluminous boat's balance and ease of handling when reefed in a gusty 25-knot test sail, while here in Australia tests in lighter airs have confirmed that the beam and weight that comes with the boat's spacious and well-appointed interior will not prevent her from holding her own on the twilight or club racing scene in those conditions.


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Certainly the rig could not be easier to handle, even one up, much less with two or more aboard. Halyards and sheets fall easily to hand from the helm position, the self-tacking jib looks after itself once unfurled and the German mainsheet system sits atop the cabin well clear of crew or guests. For those with crew who prefer a little more involvement and exertion, there is an option for additional forward sheeting winches.

Indeed the only reason to move forward of the cockpit while under sail would be to rig the optional gennaker that can be set off the short bowsprit for downwind sailing.

So it would be hard not to agree with Windcraft's Sales Manager, Mary Bickley when she says that this yacht will have equal appeal to families, younger and older couples and those keen to take novice sailing friends afloat for a quiet cruise or even a twilight race without scaring them on their first outing.

Whether it would have the same attraction for those seeking to really learn the ropes – quite literally – is less evident, but the Hanse 445 would be just the sort of boat to kick-start an interest in racing or cruising that might encourage a newcomer to try their hand on a yacht where ropes still get pulled by hand, winches get wound without buttons and sails get hoisted by physical exertion.

Lord Lonsdale would at least have been happy about that. 

SPECIFICATION: HANSE 445

Length overall:	13.5m
Beam:	4.4m
Displacement:	11 tonnes
Total sail area:	96.4m ²
Power:	Volvo D2-55
Fuel capacity:	220lt
Price (as tested):	\$395,000

For more information, contact Windcraft, tel (02) 9979 1709, web: www.windcraft.com.au

