

A Current **AFFAIR**

Yacht master, yacht owner and ABC reporter MICHAEL TROY reports from a testing Tasman Ocean aboard Hanse's latest uber-chic and sneaky quick 545



Windcraft's Peter Hrones stands at the wheel of the Hanse 545, top. Running lines emerge from under the coach housing, above, just ahead of his helm position, with electric winch at the ready. Seagull's view reveals the extent of the optional teak decking, the cockpit's separate guest seating area, opposite, and the neatly stowed in-mast mainsail.

With room for up to 18 people for a day-sail, the 545 can double as a pretty good party boat

If you are a couple under 45 or have young family, and are considering buying the Hanse 545 to cruise around Australia and beyond, well, don't. Not because it's not a great shorthanded cruiser but because you'll be driven mad by the envy.

The Hanse 545 looks chic, fast, and expensive. And at 16.2m or nearly 54ft she is a big yacht with all the features one would normally see on a million-dollar offering. However, with a basic sail-away \$659,000 package from the local distributor, this big bluewater cruiser is not so far out of reach of the young upwardly mobile couple or footloose family.

In any case, the Hanse 545 is not going it entirely alone. A whole new breed of big production-built cruising yachts has lobbed in Australia and this year's Sydney International Boat Show featured three of the latest offerings from

Europe: the Bavaria Cruiser 55, the Jeanneau 57, and this Hanse 545.

At first glance, the German designers of the 545 may have been thinking Audi A4 on steroids. The brochure describes the 545 as a trendsetting new interpretation of a classic yacht design with an almost flush coach roof construction and harmonically integrated aft and mid-ship cockpit areas.

My Australian interpretation is of the yachting equivalent of a classic muscle car. She just looks fast and, well, sort of masculine. The view forward from the space-age twin helms is all-teak 'hood' with the accent on straight, uncluttered lines from stern to bow.

There's no growling V8 engine, but below decks there's considerable cruising grunt available from the 110hp Yanmar, which is connected to an optional folding three-blade prop. For extended cruising there's also room





back on deck and get “the beast” onto the high seas. Twin thrusters made exiting the marina pretty easy, although we had only light crosswinds to contend with. Given the high freeboard, the 545 may take some getting used to when greater windage comes into play.

Yet it’s immediately obvious that even under motor she’s a spirited vessel. There’s a real surge of transverse thrust across the large single rudder and she tends to veer to port if you release your grip. This “muscle yacht” certainly needs a bit of muscle when helming, but the steering system is very direct and responsive.

The test boat did not have the standard stainless steel wheels but twin black carbon fibre ultra-lightweight ones that really suit the style and, at \$12,000, might just have to be one of the must-have options. When I jokingly offered

importer Peter Hrones the base price for the test boat he said I might have to dig a bit deeper — with the teak decks, generator, ducting for air-conditioning, wheels and a few other extras I would be looking more at \$850,000. I’ll have to talk to the bank manager.

With room for up to 18 people for a day-sail, the 545 can double as a pretty good party boat. But it’s what’s down below, and by that I mean underwater, that might be the biggest problem for the stay-at-home big boater. I’m talking about the keel.

Anything over a seven-foot draft can be a real pain, as you tend to find every sandbar in the harbour. To balance the 24m mast and 156m² of sail area there’s a standard 2.8m (9ft2in) T-shaped keel. That’s a pretty big draft and, while appreciated on the open seas, will prove a challenge in the harbour.



Trimmed in light mahogany veneer, as per the rest of the interior, the aft cabins feature a double berth each, above. This photo, *Trade-a-Boat* got to test the first Hanse 545 in Australia under ideal conditions.



Light streams in from vertical hull windows, coachhouse portholes and hatches, top, illuminating a modern and spacious interior. Hydraulically operated transom hatch, above, drops to reveal a tender garage and double as a teak-topped swimplatform.

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for a generator above the engine and large fuel and water tanks below the living areas. Which is to say nothing of the big head of sail.

SEA TRIAL

Trade-a-Boat was given the option to test-sail the first 545 in Australia, along the coast from Pittwater to Sydney in mid-July. A real sea trial, especially considering the conditions. But before we headed off into the fray, your “delivery crew” noted the superyacht features, such as a potential crew quarters in the bow and a ‘dinghy garage’ in the stern. Local Hanse importer Windcraft prefers to call it a “toy box”. Not only can a 3.5m dinghy easily be stored behind what turns into a brilliant bathing platform — handy since the transom is a long way off the water — but there is room for stowing other watersports gear here, too.

By the way, the high freeboard in this hull works wonders, enabling the designers to virtually flatten

the coach roof but still allow comfortable headroom inside.

INSIDE VIEWS

Below decks the first thing you notice is, well, you don’t feel like you are below deck. Two pairs of large vertical windows illuminate the main settee area and bring the view inside. They’re also fantastic for watching the water blast past when she’s powered up.

The fitout is clean and modern with a fairly light mahogany veneer, white bulkheads and trim. It’s all very functional. The main cabin in the bow has an island bed and en suite, and the two aft cabins both have doubles. The communal head is opposite the modern-looking galley with two fridges (200lt in total), a microwave and even a built-in coffee maker. Lots of grabrails are well positioned for getting around safely in rough seas. That I can assure you!

But for all the comforts, *Trade-a-Boat*’s test crew was keen to get





With high freeboard, headroom in the saloon and bow cabin is not compromised by the big Hanse 545's low coach house profile, top. There's an en suite in the main bow cabin and a communal bathroom, above, to port opposite the galley.

With full main and jib the Hanse 545 was on the edge at times and we had no problems getting speeds in excess of 11kts running close hauled at about 45° through a short bouncy swell

Although there is a 1.95m shoal-draft option, Hrones is a veteran of many bluewater races and is adamant that the big keel is the best and safest for this yacht. Hamilton Island here we come.

FEW HANSE ON DECK

Of course, when it comes to sailing a 50-plus-footer for a bit of fun round the harbour, they can be a bit of a handful. However, Hrones assures me a couple can sail this big yacht on their own. You know what? I tend to agree (though I wouldn't recommend it as a first boat).

Two 54 AEST electric winches make all the difference as the crew effortlessly pulls the vertically battened, furling main from inside the mast. There's also no need for shouting as all running lines are hidden below the coach housing to emerge near the cleats, not far from the steering wheels.

A total of 87m² of sail power is quickly out and the self-tacking jib unfurled. Holding it all up is a towering 24.8m mast. As I bear away in the calm waters, she powers up quickly to around 7kts and with a keen eye on the depth gauge we head back up Pittwater as the wind pressure is forming. A squall with 20-knot gusts sees us quickly to 10kts before easing back. The yacht feels balanced but at the same time frisky.

Of course, Hanses are designed and built for a self-tacking headsail and it works like a dream on all their yachts. The big 545 is no exception — you can throw in tack after tack with no effort from the crew. The vision, too, for the helmsman is the best I have ever experienced on a yacht — you can see everything around you — and special stand-alone padded helm seats and pushpit seats were also comfortable additions.

[HIGHS]

- › Wow factor = 9+
- › Unobstructed view from twin helms
- › Angled footholds are the helmsman's best friend when sailing hard into it
- › You'll get wherever pretty fast with a cruising speed of around 8kts
- › Easy to sail for a big yacht with all controls aft, electric winches, optional in-mast furling and self-tacking jib
- › Massive cockpit with Australian touches
- › Light and modern stylish interior with large vertical feature windows
- › Excellent L-shaped galley with two big fridges
- › The toybox dinghy storage and bathing platform

[LOWS]

- › Long, single rudder makes for a relatively heavy helm that can jerk hard in rough seas
- › Standard foam mattresses a little too hard and main bed quite small for cruising
- › Relatively small nav station for a cruiser
- › Little underpowered in light winds with standard jib
- › Deep keel a must but problematic in shallow water
- › Constantly explaining how you could afford it



THE WINDCRAFT WAY

The Hanse brand has been gaining popularity in Australia over the past decade to the point it's a common sight on our waterways. Models range from 32 to 63 feet. In the interests of independent journalism, I should admit to a potential bias in that I am a Hanse owner myself. I chose the Hanse 320, as I wanted a reasonably-priced performance cruiser that was easy to sail singlehanded.

I should add the Windcraft sales team are a joy to deal with and Hanse sales director Mary Bickley is quite a character. Together, they organise a really touching handover ceremony when you take delivery of your yacht. More importantly you can trust their after-sales team. That's important, as there are always niggling problems with all production boats.

To this end, it's nice to know shipwright Dave Griffin and Allan Bridge are retained by Windcraft to rectify any issues when they arise. Of course, Windcraft organises big Hanse regattas. But that, as they say, is a story for another day.



Island berth takes pride of place in the owners bow cabin, top. Above, left to right, companionway stairs lift on struts to access the 110hp Yanmar main engine and Panda 6kVa gennie, helmsman has a 45 per cent foothold platform to balance on when the yacht is heeled over, and flush-fitting cleats pop-up for mooring.



The minimalistic design concept means there's just nothing in the way and, while you might feel a bit exposed to the elements, it's worth it for the view. The workers, too, can keep an eye on the others in business class, lazing away in the spacious cockpit with their only obstacle a locally made timber drop-side table that doubles as a good, solid handhold in rough conditions.

TEMPESTUOUS TEST

Now the fun bit. As we head out of Broken Bay, the weather is closing in, necessitating that the crew change into the serious offshore kit. Rounding Barrenjoey lighthouse there's a strengthening southerly with wind gusting now up to 20kts and serious rain squalls. With full



main and jib the Hanse 545 was on the edge at times and we had no problems getting speeds in excess of 11kts running close hauled at about 45° through a short swell. Hrones says they have had her at 30° to the wind, but in the bouncy conditions we struggled to get that high.

As the beamy yacht sails on a high lean when close hauled, the helmsman shifts to the coaming to sit, then reaches down and pulls out a 45 per cent foothold platform. This is an excellent feature when heeled over — it can be tricky to maintain balance otherwise.

The short seas did grab at the big, single rudder and, while controllable, the motion made for tired arms after a few hours. The modern, relatively flat underwater





Thoroughly drenched after the near three-hour test, Trade-a-Boat's crew is keen for more, top. Drop-side cockpit table, above, incorporates the instrument dash in the frame. Helmsman gets a padded seat and, on the test boat, optional carbon fibre wheels.

As the beamy yacht sails on a high lean when close hauled, the helmsman shifts to the coaming to sit, then reaches down and pulls out a 45 per cent foothold platform

hull shape is easily driven but as with most yachts there was a bit of slamming punching into the sharp waves. When hitting speeds of more than 10kts, showers of spray rained all the way to the helm, adding to the sensation of speed.

Meanwhile, the instruments in the cockpit were a tad small and therefore not in your face. So it took me a little while to notice them as we sailed her on feel alone. But full credit to Hanse: the bumpy ride didn't seem to shake anything loose and that's also testimony to Hanse's sound boatbuilding techniques.

The hull is constructed using epoxy-based vinylester resin that increases strength and reduces weight. Osmosis will not be a problem and, with bulkheads laminated to the hull and deck, we're confident the 545 is a very

safe and tough cruiser. The Hanse 545 and her valiant crew completed the 20nm voyage straight into the gnarly teeth of a southerly in less than three hours. Despite being soaked to the bone, Trade-a-Boat's crew were willing to take her farther. Unfortunately, the bank manager said no. Hopefully, one day. 🚦



Facts & figures

HANSE 545

RUN DOWN

There's no doubt this is a big, rugged and fast yacht that is capable of sailing anywhere in style and comfort. While not in the superyacht category, she does have some of the features like a dinghy garage and

separate crew quarters. Primarily, though, it's a DIY cruiser for couples or a family with an easy-to-handle rig. The 545 is very responsive and performs well on all points of sail and would make a very stylish liveaboard home on the water.

PRICE AS TESTED

\$877,000 fully loaded with luxury options

OPTIONS FITTED

Panda 6kVa generator with air-con ducting, teak decks, in-mast furling, hydraulic opening garage with remote, pushpit seats, twin Danish Jefa carbon wheels, cockpit cushions with backing, Cruise Pack (anchor winch, anchor kit, hot cockpit shower, interior blinds, extra batteries, stereo, stainless steel gas bottles with local compliance), Raymarine Wind and Log, two electric winches, three-blade folding prop, upgraded cherrywood interior, upholstery Monte Carlo modern upgrade, coffee machine and microwave oven, pop-up 26in TV, and more

PRICED FROM

\$659,000

GENERAL

- MATERIAL:** Vinylester sandwich hull and composite deck (Epoxy hull option)
- TYPE:** Monohull by Judel/Vrolijk & Co
- LENGTH OVERALL:** 16.2m
- HULL LENGTH:** 16.08m
- WATERLINE LENGTH:** 14.6m
- BEAM:** 4.91m
- DRAFT:** 2.8m (2.43m/1.95m optional)
- MAST HEIGHT:** 24.8m
- WEIGHT:** 18,700kg
- BALLAST:** 5300kg

CAPACITIES

- BERTHS:** Three doubles (four-cabin optional)
- FUEL:** 400lt
- WATER:** 700lt
- FRIDGE:** 130lt + 63lt

SAILS

- MAINSAIL:** 87m²
- HEADSAIL:** 57m² (self tacking)
- GENOA:** 69m²
- GENNAKER:** 195m²
- TOTAL SAIL AREA:** 156m²

ENGINE

- MAKE/MODEL:** Yanmar 110hp
- TYPE:** Saildrive
- RATED KW/HP:** 80.9/110
- PROP:** Folding three-blade Gori prop

SUPPLIED BY

Windcraft,
Bayview Anchorage Marina,
Waterfront Office 2,
1714 Pittwater Road,
Bayview, NSW, 2104
Phone: (02) 9979 1709
Fax: (02) 9979 2027
Email: boats@windcraft.com.au
Website: www.windcraft.com.au

FINAL REPORT

Big yachts are making a comeback and if you're in the market for one, the Hanse 545 should be on the top of your shopping list. The Hanse brand has a reputation for style, performance and integrity and the 545 is no exception with a distinctive look that is minimalistic and futuristic. The only dilemma is whether to scar the clean lines with a spray dodger or bimini, as the big open cockpit puts you right among the elements.

