

FLAGSHIPS

This month: a fast cruiser from Germany, a dream yacht for a cruising couple and three very different new semi-custom boats

The portside settee can assume many restful positions (top right); the galley has many solid working surfaces, two refrigerators and lots of drawers and storage space (bottom right)



deck. Although it's all very dramatic and the open space provides plenty of lounging area for parties, the exposed deck seemed a little intimidating as I scanned a horizon off Miami filled with big, square-edged Gulf Stream waves. I started to wish for the protection of a hard dodger.

But my concern was unfounded. Today's crews don't have to go out on the open deck to work the vessel. All sail control lines on this boat lead aft, running neatly under covers, and are clustered handily near electric winches on the coamings. The boat is designed and set up to be sailed short-handed. The layout works.

The decks, cabintop and cockpit are all covered with an attractive teak veneer that helps unify the boat's appearance. The dinghy lives in a transom garage with a remote-control stern hatch that opens to form a passageway, just like those really large yachts.

Our test boat was hull number 12, the first 630e to arrive in North America. It had the optional carbon fiber mast, along with a standard package that includes rod rigging, electric jib furling and a wide boom. Perhaps the nicest feature is a self-tending jib that takes all the drama out of tacking as you sail to windward. You still can say

Hanse 630e

AN ENTIRELY MODERN DESIGN COMES FROM A PROUD TRADITION BY TOM DOVE

What some now refer to as the golden age of yachting occurred in this country in the early years of the 20th century, when untaxed wealth built huge mansions and huge daysailers to entertain guests on warm summer afternoons. Now in the early years of the 21st century, a certain segment of the sailing community is once again building glamorous custom vessels that combine speed, luxury, a striking appearance and ease of handling. Fortunately for the rest of us, it hasn't taken much time for these characteristics to be incorporated into production designs that make them more affordable. This is not to say that the 630e, which is the largest model in the Hanse line, is some sort of Volksboat for the toiling masses. Far from it. The 630e is big, it utilizes a lot of expensive

new technology and it isn't cheap. But compared to a one-off yacht of similar size and quality, it's a relative bargain.

CONSTRUCTION

Designers Judel/Vrolijk have drawn the lines of all Hanse boats since the company was formed. When a designer and builder know each other well, the time and expense of extensive debugging are avoided when new vessels are created.

Hanse's manufacturing skills are no secret. The company runs a modern, efficient factory in a relatively low-wage area with plenty of skilled workers. Look closely at any Hanse and you'll find neat glasswork, precise joinery and well-installed systems.

That high standard holds for the big

630e as well. The glass workers vacuum-bag layers of prepreg cloth over a Core-Cell foam core above the waterline to create a light, strong, epoxy-bonded composite hull. The chainplates are made from carbon fiber and connect to a reinforced strongback designed to carry loads from both the rig and keel. Core-Cell is also used in the deck, which is extensively reinforced with carbon fiber. There's no skimping on quality materials in this boat, which carries a full Lloyd's certification as well as the usual CE Class A rating.

Electrical power for everything except the engine starter and the electronics is 24-volt DC rather than 12-volt. That's appropriate for a boat this size, as the higher voltage is more efficient for long wire runs. The wiring is very neat, with circuit blocks,

color-coding and excellent labeling.

The engine room is a bit crowded. Raise the companionway steps and you are not greeted by the main engine, but rather by the generator housing. To reach crucial points on the propulsion engine you have to work through side panels instead. However, since the propulsion unit is a saildrive, there is no drive shaft to maintain.

ON DECK

In keeping with the boat's modern styling there's not much on deck other than deck. It's big and flat, with few grabrails, many flush hatches and a low-profile coachroof. The mooring cleats retract into the toerails, the anchor roller flips back into the foredeck and the recessed jib track snuggles into the

"Ready about" before you put down the helm if you want to. But in normal conditions this is merely a notice to guests to mind their tall glasses of iced tea.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The boat's clean, spare look is continued belowdecks, where Hanse's in-house design team has crafted a white interior with just enough mahogany trim to keep it from looking sterile. Hanse can also build the joinery in light cherry if you prefer. An expanse of overhead hatches lets in plenty of sunshine and air, while rows of LED lights take over after dark. But it's not all for show. I was delighted to see large grabrails overhead in the center of the saloon.

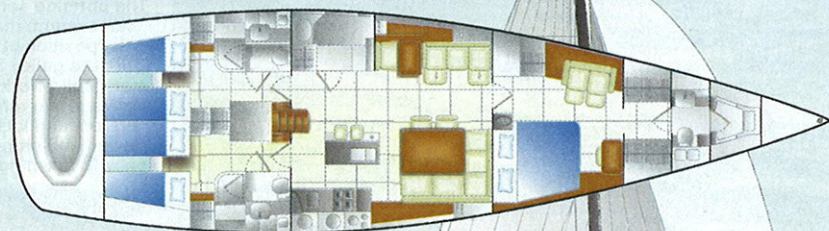
The contemporary urban look continues with the cabin sole, which is made of modular panels instead of traditional planking. Altogether, the interior has the atmosphere of a hip, upscale city apartment. Our test boat had a three-cabin, three-head layout with the shower for the forward cabin cleverly tucked into the forepeak. This is a great way to utilize the limited space that's available in the narrow bow. Though the motion can be significant here when underway, the shower is normally used only when the boat is at rest. There is also a handy pilot cabin that can be used either on long passages or as a private space for a child. The doors to the aft heads open into the passageway, not the cabins, so they are accessible to the entire crew.

As with almost all Hanse models, many options are available, including a genset, A/C, a watermaker, a retractable flat-screen TV, electronic nav displays and radar. The primary electric winches, however, are standard. When choosing an accommodations plan you can specify a three- or four-cabin layout and can also order custom lockers and furniture to suit specific needs.

If you want to explore layout options and peruse color schemes and other features, the builder's online toolkit lets you play with all the various combinations and options. Pry the kids away from their MMORPGs online and try the Hanse Yacht Configurator at www.hanseyachts.com (click on the "Yacht Configurator" tab listed under "Yachts").

UNDER WAY

A steady 20-knot southeasterly greeted us as we headed out into the Gulf Stream off Miami Beach. It was a sailor's day, and we



→ SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 62ft 3in

LWL: 56ft 1in

BEAM: 17ft 1in

DRAFT: 9ft 8in

DISPLACEMENT: 52,318 lbs

BALLAST: 19,647 lbs

SAIL AREA (100% F_A): 2,154 ft²

AUXILIARY: 100 hp Yanmar diesel

ELECTRICAL: 24 volt, 600 aH house / 12 volt, 80 aH engine

FUEL/WATER/WASTE: 190/216/15 gal per head

SAIL AREA/DISPLACEMENT RATIO (100% F_A): 24.3

DISPLACEMENT/LENGTH RATIO: 132

DESIGNER: Judel/Vrolijk & Co Am Alten Vorhaven 8 27568, Bremerhaven, Germany, Tel 011-490-471-308811-0 www.judel-vrolijk.com

INTERIOR: Hanse Yachts design team

BUILDER/DISTRIBUTOR:

Hanse Yachts USA, 1 Chelsea Court, Annapolis, MD 21403; 410-626-1493. www.hanseyachts.com

had a chance to have some real fun.

The 630e has twin wheels, so the helmsman can always find a place to sit where all sail edges are visible. There's a handy pop-up footrest on either side of the cockpit that's perfect for bracing against when the boat heels. The feedback from the helm is unusually sensitive for a hydraulic system. When reaching, I found I needed to trim the sails carefully to neutralize a substantial weather helm that, if left unchecked, required some steering muscle. But with the sails properly tweaked, we had a lovely close reach at better than 8 knots with about 20 degrees of heel.

I found the helm balanced better with only half a knot less speed when we headed up to slice through the waves close-hauled, all dry and comfy. The boat tacked through about 80 degrees, although it's hard to measure angles accurately in such conditions. Nobody aboard was tempted to set the gennaker downwind to expose a total of 4,350 square feet of sail. In these condi-

tions, we agreed, it would have been seriously unwise. However, in light air the big sail should turn an otherwise plodding day of motoring into one that provides pleasant sailing.

The engine pushed us along at 6.5 knots in smooth water, with acceptable noise levels, at 2,000 RPM. The boat turned in a boat length with the helm hard over. Backing calls for a firm hand on the wheel, as the rudder kick can be powerful.

Our boat had the standard keel with a flat-footed bulb attached to a moderately slim fin with a draft of 9ft 7in. As with all these performance keels, cruising in an area with lots of crab or lobster traps

might involve some entangling adventures.

With its straight sheer, low profile, racy rig and a waterline that stretches out like a dancer's legs, the Hanse 630e will take its crew and guests to faraway places with style, speed and comfort. And because it's a beautiful example of contemporary design, it will also impress the sightseers strolling along the shoreline. *AL*



When Tom Dove is not out sailing on new designs you can find him on his Ranger 33, *Crescendo*