



PHOTOS DAVID LOCKWOOD

THE PHANTOM

Yachts are evolving to the point they're competing with motorcruisers for ease of handling and comforts.

DAVID LOCKWOOD does lunch on the Hanse 495...

You could be forgiven for thinking sailing is all about winning. For the competitive spirit is alive and well, palpable even, at this time of year. You can feel it at the startline for the 67th Sydney to Hobart, with a fleet of 80-plus yachts; as the Melbourne to Hobart Eastcoaster and Westcoaster races set sail; as locals look forward to the Festival of Sail (formerly Geelong Race Week), where some 400 yachts will tack the bay from January 26 to 29; and Australia Day regattas right around the country.

But what if the measure of a good day's sailing was the sheer fun of it all. No barking orders, calling right of way, dramatic tacks, and mark roundings. Go for the relaxation, lunch aboard, and gad about nowhere much at all. Least for now. Let me explain once I peel my prawns, enjoy the oysters, and wait for the fickle wind to fill in from picturesque Portuguese Beach on Pittwater. What a setting!

Yacht owner Nick, an anaesthetist, is no stranger to boats. For several seasons, he owned and operated a 31ft and then 36ft sport and game fisher. But his recent switch to sail has been a real shot in the, err, arm. Not only is he having more fun, the servicing costs are considerably less — about half a similar length powerboat excluding fuel — and the wind is free, he reminds me.

At the same time, yachts are becoming easier to sail thanks to push-button winches, self-tacking headsails, and in-boom or in-mast furling. Then come thrusters or joystick docking devices that make berthing a breeze. Indeed, the lure of sail has never been stronger, especially now that manufacturers are fitting cruiser-like comforts down below. This is the clincher.

The stove might still be gas and gimballed, but the galley is increasingly mimicking a kitchen rather than a workspace. Interior design has become edgy rather than traditional, saloons have gained greater connectivity — more light and volume — while going to the bathroom is a far more dignified exercise thanks to electric rather than push-lever loos.

HANSE DOWNUNDER

Enter Nick's choice of yacht — the stylish Hanse 495. The new model was launched in January this year and already seven have been sold in the Antipodes by local dealer Windcraft. Its principal Peter Hrones



Lunch settings (left) don't get better than this, the high dodger (above) and bimini with zip-in infill shading the whole cockpit. Handy grabrails either side will assist travel through the companionway entrance (below), and with all the winches, clutches, sheets and halyards back at the helm you get a flat kid's daybed under the dodger.



is proud that Australia represents 10 per cent of the giant German yachtbuilder's turnover — 600 boats were built by Hanse last financial year — and while we're at the other side of the world he will tell you we're influential in the company's new designs.

When asked about how our market influences Hanse yachts, I'm told we've encouraged better ventilation and more opening windows, bigger fridges and freezers, the sexy black epoxy wheels, while both Kiwi-destined 495s were to be fitted with dishwashers. Local owners tend to also go for all-teak decks ex-factory, upgraded North Sails (Advanced Cruise Laminate or ACL) on the yacht sailed hereabouts, and more. But we'll get to all that.

In recent years, Hanse has been busy tooling up rather than worrying about profits, we're told. To this end, it's extended its factory by the length of a football field, fitted massive machines that identify each piece of timber for consistent fit, and trotted out three new models fit this year each with a design and tooling cost of about Euro 1 million. The huge investment in future commanded new investment by way of the Aurelius Group, which bought out founder Michael Schmidt's majority holding.

While the European yachting market is off 40 to 50 per cent, locally, it's firing. Hrones says he's heading for \$20 million turnover — his best ever year — having sold 45 yachts up from 35 last year. Tellingly, the yachts are getting bigger, with \$550,000 to \$600,000 tickets typical for this hot-selling 495. There were 44 Hanses at



Windcraft Regatta on Pittwater this year, making it the biggest for the brand in the world.

I will also add that the Windcraft has succeeded because it's a service-orientated business, with four to five people in that department alone, a contracted shipwright that performs the pre-deliveries, and owners get a set-fee maintenance program.

All this helps keep Hanse owners in the fold and the 495 has been popular with previous owners, like Nick who came out of a Hanse 430E following his gamefishers, and the three mates who just bought a 495 in syndicate. Of course, the documented service history doesn't harm resale, either.

LOADED BASE

As a loaded base, the 495 will cost you about \$550,000. There

are layout options: this one has three cabins, with the excellent stateroom forward boasting oodles of floor space for pulling on the glad rags, and its own split en suite with separate shower and toilet compartments and trick fold-down towel hooks. The bed's an island double with plenty of legroom — I tried it — flanked by stylish reading lights, opening portlights and his-and-her hanging spaces.

There's a second bathroom off the saloon with rigueur floating porcelain bowl mounted atop timber-veneered vanity, a nice spread of bathroom fittings and storage for personal effects, and separate shower stalls. This large communal amenity contributes to the broad appeal of Hanses to the sailing minions. While twin aft double cabins don't so much break the mould as enhance it by way of



Maximising speed is the Hanse 495's (above) long hull waterline length. More than just a nav station (left), this area will double nicely as the office, too. Light beech joinery extends from the companionway steps (below left) throughout the yacht creating a bright interior.

PERFORMANCE-WISE, THERE'S TRADEMARK HANSE EASE OF HANDLING THANKS TO THE SELF-TACKER BUT THE RIG HAS ALSO BEEN MODIFIED TO INCLUDE A BIGGER HEADSAIL. IT SAILS BETTER OFF THE WIND AND GETS THROUGH THE TACKS BETTER

surrounding timber cabinetry on the outboard side of their double beds. There's headroom near the entrance to tug on clothes from the nearby hanging locker, while three hatches assist with cross-flow ventilation.

Charter versions can sleep up to nine in four cabins with a separate crew berth in the foredeck hold. I couldn't sleep there and, on Nick's boat, he had the Windcraft shipwrights fit out the space with shelves and other clever storage solutions. Back below, the boat has a big spread of flush deck hatches

— handed down from the Hanse 630 — fitted with Oceanair insect and shade screens, while the portlights have pull-down blinds. You can midge-proof your interior gadding about tropical climes and stop people looking in from the marina.

Meanwhile, the beamy saloon is inviting thanks to deep powerboat-like portlights, lots of opening hatches, and light beech joinery instead of the sombre mahogany preferred in Europe. Coming from a powerboat, the interior helps counter the down-below and



[HIGHS]

- › Easy to sail near-50-footer with homelike amenities and volume
- › Longitudinal galley is an entertainer's delight
- › Saloon portlights improve connectivity
- › Great value-for-money and product support
- › Very good performance even in light airs
- › Snappy styling

[LOWS]

- › The contemporary edge joinery might be construed as minimalist high-production finish
- › Some cruising types like twin bowrollers for setting two anchors before weather changes
- › Boat could do with optional rubrail
- › The manual drop-down transom is great but surely there's a dependable worm-driven mechanism?



Longitudinal galley (left) has an adjacent island bar with pop-up TV (above), it's base forming a backrest for the dinette settee (middle left).



disconnected effect on traditional sloops. And with a longitudinal galley along the portside, fold-down dinette and centre island bar, you can stage a party in the saloon as good as any in a motorcruiser.

The option here is to delete the island bar and fit armchairs instead. But press a button on the side of the bar or pedestal and up pops the television. Then there is the small recessed stainless steel garbage bin alongside that could so easily fit a bottle on ice. That, to me, makes the bar worth fitting. As it was, you could easily seat eight on the L-shaped lounge to port opposite the galley. And once extended, the dinette's oversized and eager to please.

The leather-bound rails, recessed timber ceiling handholds, and strip lighting with eight mood combos were other nice touches. Starboard side, the navigation station is located close to the companionway. Such is the comfort that I wrote nav station/office in my notes. Tap



The test yacht's accommodation includes a spacious master cabin forward (below left) and twin aft double cabins (below). Second bathroom (left) is off the saloon.



“WHILE THE EUROPEAN YACHTING MARKET IS OFF 40 TO 50 PER CENT, LOCALLY IT'S FIRING. HRONES SAYS HE'S HEADING FOR \$20 MILLION TURNOVER — HIS BEST EVER YEAR — HAVING SOLD 45 YACHTS UP FROM 35 LAST YEAR



EVIDENTLY, NICK IS A FAN OF THE PHANTOM. NOT ONLY IS THAT THE NAME OF HIS 495, BUT A THREE-METRE TALL OUTLINE OF THE GHOST WHO WALKS FLEW ON HIS MAGNIFICENT GENNAKER

As you can see, the drop-down transom/swimplatform (above) is a cool place to hang out for sundowners. With the transom in place (below), the seats simply fold-out for helming.



away at the laptop and you can telecommute.

Among the other options, our 495 had the Cruise Pack with electric winches, inverter and folding prop; the Comfort Pack with the leather-clad handrails and impressive upgraded lighting plan; and the Navigation Pack with a full suite of Simrad electronics. Oh, and there were full teak decks, the upgraded North ACL triradial performance sails and a gennaker that we flew — eventually — in the ensuing light airs.

But the expansive portside longitudinal galley is very much a centrepiece. Ironically, initially, it was cause for consternation. As time has proven, it's become the clincher. You get abundant Corian counters, timber cupboards, Miele microwave, Nespresso machine in a dedicated drawer, and cool drawer-style stainless steel fridges and freezer that are de rigueur on, well, powerboats. Oh, and a gimbaled three-burner — when have you ever needed more? — stove.

Collectively, such things create a lot of sway and I could well imagine setting sail on the 495. All one

needs is the time to ride the wind. And for the wind to come in. That said, light airs are a real test of performance in a cruising yacht, upon which many don't get going till it hits 15 to 20kts. No so the 495.

WINDS OF CHANGE

As I mentioned, we began our sortie sitting on the anchor waiting for wind. It's an anchor attached to 60m of chain to which you might add 40m of rope if you're heading north. The flat walkaround decks are traced by toerails but the optional rubbing rail was omitted. I'd fit one for pivoting around mooring poles in unfamiliar marinas. The dropdown washboard into the companionway was DNA from sister German yard Dehler.

Back aft, I found a locker for twin 3.5kg stainless steel bottles. About then prawns and oysters were forthcoming and someone lowered the drawbridge aka transom panel and took a swim. The lunch revealed some great things about the 495. The cockpit is obliging, the folding teak table is big enough for six, while the fold-out transom and clip-in swimladder add to

the waterfront real estate. The drinkholders in the cockpit cushions are another nice touch.

Thanks also to that big bow locker, storage is a highlight. However, the aft lockers under the drop-down transom door haven't the biggest apertures and retrieving the swim ladder held inside on clips was kind of fiddly. Conversely, I do like the high dodger and rear bimini with zip-in infill from local trimmers. It ensured our stage remained in shade. Kicking back with Portuguese Beach in the background gave stimulus to shoot the breeze. Right about then it started filling in. Time to weigh anchor, with the press of a button, and head into the wilds of Broken Bay.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

The last number in the 495's model designation points to it being part of the new Five Series. It's in part the birth child of Hanse's Luka Modrijan, these days brand manager of Hanse, with whom this writer talked about the yachting world at large during his last visit to the Sydney International Boat Show. But it's also very much a Judel/Vrolijk design with a long waterline length and the weight kept out of the ends.

The improvements to these yachts include aft-mounted winches and clutches so the helmsperson can raise and lower sail and trim. And genoa cars for extracting better performance. But with the trademark Hanse self-tacking headsail you're not left pulling lots of strings. The yacht almost sails itself. No kidding.

While Hanse has been using the self-tacking headsails to great effect since 1993, the new Five Series has a redefined rig with a slightly shorter Seldon — tapered for extracting more rake — mast shifted farther aft. The boom is longer to retain mainsail volume, but the big gain is a deeper headsail, with longer J section, for better downwind performance and, I reckon, snappier tacking.

With all the lines leading back to helm-side clutches where there are electric winches and twin wheels, you can sail the 495 on your own. Sight lines were good, even though we didn't experience too much heel in what is a relatively modestly ballasted boat that derives considerable righting moment from its deep 2.38m T-shaped cast-iron keel. ⚓

Facts & figures

HANSE 495

AT THE HELM

From my brief time behind the carbon-look twin epoxy wheels, the 495 seemed to have a light and balanced helm. In 6 to 7kts, we were covering 4 to 5kts helped by the yacht's long hull waterline length. Tacking was only a matter of alerting crew and throwing the wheel. The boat maintained its speed, the sails refilled, and away we went pointing at about 40 degrees.

But the drama was yet to unfold. With 10kts of wind in Broken Bay, the decision was made to hoist the optional gennaker. This sail is perfect for downwind beam or broad reaching in winds to 18kts. The sail lives in a sock of snuffer that you pull down with a line.

Evidently, Nick is a fan of The Phantom. Not only is that the name of his 495, but a three-metre tall outline of the ghost who walks flew on his magnificent gennaker. You can't miss him coming. All of which underscores the fun he's having in his new yacht. We saw 8.2kts on the GPS. Hey, better than ghosting.

PRICE AS TESTED

\$570,633 sans aftermarket extras

OPTIONS FITTED

Retractable Maxwell bow and stern thrusters, Cruise Pack (with electric halyard winches, inverter, and more), Comfort Pack (with three-burner stove, leather-clad handrails, trick LED lights, and more), Navigation Pack (with Simrad electronics suite; black composite steering wheels; teak sidedecks, and coachroof), North Sails ACL triradial main and jib plus gennaker, drawer freezer, Miele microwave, Nespresso machine, TV lifting system in saloon, beech joinery, custom storage solutions, and more.

PRICED FROM

\$443,000

GENERAL

MATERIAL: Foam-cored laminate hull and balsa-cored laminate deck w/ isophthalic gelcoat and vinyl ester first layer
TYPE: Keelboat
LENGTH OVERALL: 15.4m
WATERLINE LENGTH: 13.54m
BEAM: 4.75m
DRAFT: 2.38m (standard); 1.96m (optional)
MAST HEIGHT: 22.1m
DISPLACEMENT: 14,100kg
BALLAST: 4000kg

CAPACITIES

BERTHS: Three and four double-cabin layouts
FUEL: 300lt
WATER: 650lt

SAILS

MAIN: 67.5m²
SELF-TACKING JIB: 51.5m²
GENNAKR: 185m²
TOTAL: 129m²

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: Volvo D2-75 Turbo
TYPE: Saildrive
RATED HP/KW: 75/53

SUPPLIED BY

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tradeboat SAYS...

The 495 has captured the hearts of Hanse owners, with sales of the \$550,000 loaded yacht defying gravity. Performance-wise, there's trademark Hanse ease of handling thanks to the self-tacker but the rig has also been modified to include a bigger headsail. It sails better off the wind and gets through the tacks better. With the gennaker we reached back home at up to 8kts in 10kts of seabreeze... great for coastal romps. Although she sails well in light airs, the yacht appeals at anchor thanks to its terrific entertainer-style cockpit and saloon, where portlights enhance the sense of connectivity. A great solution for today's pleasure-seeking sailors.

Phantom, ghost who sails...

