

STORY TIM THOMAS PHOTOS HANSE YACHTS

CRUISING ON HIGH

Low on cash and down on crew? No worries, Hanse has the answer with the new 575 — the value-for-money big-boat for the shorthanded sailor





Push-button tacking (this photo). The mix of night-lighting is practical and mood enhancing (inset).

When I'm not out on the water throwing yachts around the cans, I like to head to the mountains to get away from it all. They might seem like disparate pastimes that have little in common, but confronted with the towering topsides of the Hanse 575 as she sat on her berth in Hamble Point Marina in the UK, I wondered if I might have been better prepared leaving my foulies at home and packing the climbing gear instead.

Hanse sprang into the market two decades ago and quickly developed a reputation for building reliable cruisers at an unbeatable price. It remains somewhat unlike its German and French contemporaries, where economies of scale and vast production lines have helped keep costs low. Taking over the Moody and Dehler brands in 2007 and 2009 respectively has certainly given the marque bulk-buying power when it comes to components, and this all helps the keep the price tag down for the customer.

The relatively modest production run also means a reasonable level of quality in fit and finish can be maintained, if not quite at the level of some Northern European brands. After all, with the Hanse 575 you're getting a 56-footer for a price that would have most builders exercising the more colourful end of their vocabulary.

JUST PEACHY

Before tackling the yacht's north face via the side boarding ladder, I took a moment to study her from the pontoon. She has a presence, there's no doubt, with a plumb bow and squared transom, plenty of flare aft and a sheerline that runs straight from stem to stern. The Judel/Vrolijk hull is a peach, with a waterline length that is only a foot less than overall length and with a beam that hits max amidships and is carried nearly all the way aft. A sleek coachroof and flush decks complete the rakish look and she seems a world away from her nearest rival, the Beneteau Oceanis 58, an example of which just happened to be bobbing on the berth next door.

But the key to the 575 lies concealed in her stern. This is not a ground-up new model as such but rather a 545 (which the 575 replaces) with a clever tender garage tucked away under the cockpit. The garage took five months of development work to get right and the result is a convenient hidey-hole for a dinghy (the test model was carrying a Williams 285 jet RIB with express wheel), with a relatively simple launch and recovery system over the dropdown transom. Moreover, with the transom folded out you get not just a boarding/swim platform, but also a superyacht-style mini beach club — a perfect spot for setting up a couple of chairs, cracking a tube and watching the sun go down.

You can specify the Hanse 575 without the garage but that defeats the point of this boat, and all you gain is a very large cockpit locker. With ample space elsewhere — the large foredeck locker is big enough to take crew berths and a small head, while the cockpit seat lockers offer room enough for the essentials — it would seem a pointless sacrifice.

TOWERING BELOW

When you descend the companionway steps, the advantages of that high-sided hull become immediately apparent. The headroom is extraordinary, so good, in fact, that Hanse provides a set of steps so that the vertically challenged can still reach the hatches. With a combination of forward and aft opening hatches from Lewmar — some custom built for the yard — hull windows, and coachroof side hatches that can be locked just a fraction open, natural light and fresh air below are abundant.

Hanse offers the 575 with a variety of interior layouts, several different wood finishes and a multitude of optional extras, all generally divided into packs. Our test boat was the first hull and had left the factory just four weeks before on a tour of the autumn boat shows and was decked out with most of those options. Included were the Cruising Pack, which among other things adds an enhanced battery package, teak cockpit sole, hydraulic backstay,



The test boat's interior (photos this page) would suit most yet there are five more alternative layouts to choose from.



THE HEADROOM IS EXTRAORDINARY — SO GOOD, IN FACT, THAT HANSE PROVIDES A SET OF STEPS SO THE VERTICALLY CHALLENGED CAN STILL REACH THE HATCHES

retractable bowthruster and hot-and-cold transom shower; the Performance Pack, whose additions include Elvstrom tri-cut radial sails, composite wheels and a gennaker; the Simrad Navigation Pack, with a cockpit touchscreen plotter, autopilot and twin IS40 cockpit displays; and the Comfort Pack, which sadly doesn't include beer but does add things such as cockpit cushions, twin electric cockpit tables that convert the area to a sunpad, and an electric deckwash forward.

This layout featured three double cabins, one forward and two aft, each with its own en suite. With

[AT THE WHEEL]

The Hanse 575 is impressive under sail, although it would have been nice to put her to the test in a bigger breeze and bigger seas. Being able to reach everything from the helm, and with the addition in particular of electric winches, means she is easily sailed singlehanded. Also, with a retractable bowthruster, you shouldn't have any trouble getting her on her berth at the end of the day.





SHE HAS A PRESENCE, THERE'S NO DOUBT, WITH A PLUMB BOW AND SQUARED TRANSOM, PLENTY OF FLARE AFT AND A SHEERLINE THAT RUNS STRAIGHT FROM STEM TO STERN

six basic layouts to choose from, including twin doubles up forward, replacing the port head with a single cabin, and throwing a crew cabin in the foredeck locker, there is something for everyone. In fact, Hanse claims up to 1200 variations are possible with berths for up to 13 people. A pretty good shout whether you like intimate cruising for two, heading out with lots of friends or family or are thinking of chartering your boat out.

The U-shaped saloon seating can be matched to an electrically operated table that lowers to create a great daybed or spare berth, an ideal spot for catching up on the latest movies, particularly if you have specified the big flatscreen that rises out of a longitudinal unit just to port of the centreline.

The galley runs longitudinally along the port side offering every amenity you might care to specify from dishwashers to coffee machines. The really important stuff, namely wine, even gets its own dedicated stowage in the bilge, and if you want to show off your cellar you can specify a Perspex cover in place of the standard floorboards. For cooling the whites and rosés there is a wine chiller in the nav area, which itself runs transversely across the yacht at the starboard aft end of the saloon. There is no repeater for the Simrad touchscreen down here, although you can press your iPad into service should you wish to monitor what's happening on deck.

There are some nice touches down below. The companionway steps on the Hanse 575 have been designed at a 50-degree angle, meaning you can walk down facing forward with ease. The boat also features additional handrails below, an essential safety aspect for moving forward underway, and the lighting system throughout has both standard white and night-

[HIGHS]
› Bang for buck
› Innovative tender garage
› Ease of handling shorthanded
› Sailing performance
› Headroom below decks

[LOWS]
› The noise levels under power were intrusive around the engine compartment
› One or two elements of fitout could have been better finished (as it is the first hull out of the factory, and no doubt rushed to make the boat shows, we can probably forgive this)



[tradeboat SAYS...]

A vast array of options may bump up the price of the base boat but the Hanse 575 still makes for a mouthwatering proposition, and with this bang for buck puts her right at the head of her class. The dinghy garage and launching system is a great innovation that makes her stand out from the crowd.

time red modes both in deckhead and sole lighting and with the various reading lights. The lighting system is on dimmers that can also hold two different settings in memory, meaning you can change ambiance below with one touch.

Engine compartment access is easy either by lifting the steps or opening hatches in the aft cabins. All the service points on the engine appeared easy to reach and with space to manoeuvre, Hanse also adding a top-down access hatch from the forward end of the cockpit so fluids can be topped-up without bringing oil cans into the boat. The test boat was also fitted with a Fischer Panda generator, amply accommodated in the compartment.

Inevitably there will be little bits and pieces here and there that niggle, particularly with regard to trim and especially on the first boat out of the factory that has been rushed down to the shows. While it's easy to decry the lack of mitre joints you always have to bear in mind the astonishing value for money you get with a yacht like this. Besides, the most important aspect

is how she performs on the water, and thankfully here the Hanse really shines.

UNDER WAY

Heading out on a crisp September morning into a benign Solent, I was looking forward to putting the Hanse through her paces. As we slid past the cardinal at the end of the River Hamble the breeze built to a pleasant 12kts.

Under power, she is easily driven. With the smaller engine option fitted, the 110hp Volvo Penta D3, she cruised happily at close to 9kts in flat water at 2300rpm, drinking an almost teetotal 7lt/h of fuel. Push the pedal to the metal and she will nudge 10.5kts in this configuration if you need to get home in a hurry.

The 575 behaves well on the helm, turning tight ahead and resisting the urge to snatch when manoeuvring astern, and while her high topsides might add a little windage the addition of a retractable bowthruster helps nudge the bow around in trickier situations. For all-out precision a sternthruster can also be specified. Given that everything

about the Hanse 575 screams shorthanded sailing, these additional aids are always welcome.

The 575 carries 520lt of fuel in two tanks, one on either side of the yacht. While it is possible to switch between the tanks underway, they are not linked meaning you can't easily balance them to affect trim. And my one gripe from running her under engine is that while the engine itself was fairly quiet the engine compartment fan on the test boat screamed like a banshee in the aft cabins and around the bottom of the companionway steps, which would make it difficult to communicate with the cockpit.

Of course, the best solution is simply to hoist the sails. Using the electric winches and hoisting from the helm, we had the fully battened main up in just over a minute, the self-tacking jib out and set in considerably less.

Ignoring the sage advice of Hanse's Jörn Brock to "never sail higher than your age", we sheeted in and headed upwind with the breeze fluctuating between 10 and 12kts. At 25 degrees apparent (around 40 degrees true) she slipped along happily at between 6 and 7kts. Cracking the sheets and footing off a few degrees brought her up to 8kts at around 40 degrees apparent, pretty impressive for any yacht given the wind strength and testament to that Judel/Vrolijk hull



The lack of a mainsheet track across the cockpit (above) means this would also make a great boat for safe family cruising. She is certainly a doddle to sail singlehanded.

and well-cut Elvstrom radial sails.

Putting her into a tack was a bit of a non-event. With the self-tacker you just roll the wheel, saunter over to the high side and settle on your fresh course. The addition of electric primaries also means that trimming the main and jib from the helm are child's play, perfect for sailing singlehanded or with inexperienced crew.

As we broke away through a close reach to a broad reach, the speed understandably dropped and here you would certainly feel the benefit of the optional 105 per cent genoa or the gennaker. The only downside to this is that the gennaker's tackline is a fixed strop that shackles to the anchor lead forward, which doubles as a sort of bowsprit. With no way of controlling the tackline length on the fly, sailing hot or sailing deep might be somewhat compromised.

It was hard to tell how she would handle a seaway, the only waves we could find being the wash of passing ferries but she didn't seem to bleed any speed when the Southampton-Cowes hydrofoil blasted pass at close range. A larger and more consistent chop might show-up the shortcomings of a smaller headsail but overall she felt pretty balanced. For much of the close-hauled work I was able to let go of the wheel and watch her track straight and true. The helm has great feel, with enough weight to send feedback on your trim and help you feel connected, but not so much that she felt a handful in manoeuvres.

The German mainsheet system means that full main control is fed

back to both helms and with all other key sheets and halyards fed aft into rope bins by the helms, this is a ridiculously easy boat to sail singlehanded. The lack of a mainsheet track across the cockpit means this would also make a great boat for safe family cruising, and you're unlikely to have that drink knocked out of your hand as it's passed back from the cockpit.

The view from the helm is good; the sprayhood frame will be raised slightly on future builds to save your forehead but this shouldn't impede visibility, and the Bimini's aft frame has been modified on subsequent boats to get it out of the way of the helmsman. The test boat was missing footblocks for the helm but these are custom fitted according to the buyer's wishes on placement. A nice touch.

As we arrived back on her berth I was able to take another look — from the 575's lofty decks this time — at the Oceanis next door. Hanse has really made strides to meet the competition head on and in doing so has developed a large, good-looking, family-friendly cruiser that's a doddle to sail and has oodles of room. At a price that is hard to beat and with that tender garage aft distinguishing her from the competition, it would seem that Hanse has set its rivals a mountain to climb. Hang on, isn't that where we came in? 🏆

Test day weather information supplied by



Facts & figures

HANSE 575

PRICE AS TESTED

\$900,000 (approx)

OPTIONS FITTED

Cruising Pack including enhanced battery package, teak cockpit sole, hydraulic backstay, retractable bowthruster and hot-and-cold transom shower; Performance Pack including Elvstrom tri-cut radial sails, composite wheels and a gennaker; Simrad Navigation Pack with a cockpit touchscreen plotter, autopilot and twin IS40 cockpit displays; and Comfort Pack including cockpit cushions, twin electric cockpit tables that convert to a sunpad and an electric deckwash forward

PRICED FROM

\$685,000

GENERAL

MATERIAL GRP

TYPE Keelboat

LENGTH 16.7m (hull); 15.15m (waterline)

BEAM 5.2m

DRAFT 2.85m (standard); 2.25m (optional)

WEIGHT Approx 19,500kg (standard keel); approx. 20,400kg (L-shape keel)

BALLAST Approx 5900kg

CAPACITIES

FUEL 520lt

WATER 810lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Volvo Penta D3

TYPE Diesel saildrive

RATED HP 110

SAILS

AREA 87.5m² (main); 63m² (self-tacking jib); 74m² (genoa 105 per cent); 210m² (gennaker)

RIG I 20.7m; J 6.4m; P 21m; E 7.1m

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Team Windcraft,
Bayview Anchorage Marina,
Waterfront Office 2,
1714 Pittwater Road,
Bayview, 2104, NSW
Phone: (02) 9979 1709
Website: www.teamwindcraft.com

LAYOUT

