



The Hanse proved to be a lively performer in a blow. Here we were over-canvassed and under-crewed

Competitive compromise

Hanse's new 350 is a quick cruising boat that offers sporty styling and plenty of choices, as **David Harding** discovered



It's no easy job to produce a successful all-round performance cruiser. Compromises are inevitable, and that's one reason why many of the big builders, such as Bénéteau, Jeanneau, Dufour, Bavaria and Elan have a sporty range and a cruiser range. The boats still have to be compromises, but to a lesser extent than if they're aiming to satisfy both markets.

Hanse, however, have always adopted a straight-down-the-middle approach, building fast cruisers that can also be raced. Compared with the likes of the Firsts and the Sun Fasts they're fuller in section and heavier, with shallower draught and more freeboard. Yet they're lighter, slimmer, deeper and more powerful than your typical cruiser.

So you might argue that nobody's going to be happy, but Hanse's success suggests that there's a good market for the

'broad spectrum' sporty cruiser.

A quick glance at the new 350 in standard guise tells you that she's aimed at the cruising market. While she has a reasonably slippery hull and a generous sail plan, her freeboard is positively towering compared with that of a more performance-orientated design. And height doesn't simply mean more headroom: because of the shape of the hull, it allows you to push the accommodation further outboard and gain space laterally as well as vertically.

Below the waterline, the standard iron fin is 1.85m (6ft 1in) – a reasonable compromise – or you can have the 1.45m (4ft 8in) alternative if draught-dodging is more important than windward ability. More cruiser features

include the self-tacking jib and the coachroof-mounted mainsheet without a traveller.

Slippery customer

Sailing ability has always set the Hanses apart from many of the other cruisers with which they're compared, so this is a good place to start a closer examination. It's only fair to say that our test boat had been sailed very little and had yet to be tuned, so there was doubtless a good deal more to come.

Nonetheless, with 20-plus knots on our quarter and one slab in the mainsail, she slithered downwind at 8-9 knots in flat water despite dragging a two-bladed fixed prop.

As soon as we hardened up on to a beam reach, it was clear that a second slab was in order – so we tucked it in, only to find that the slots in the integral sail cover were

too far forward for the leech reef pennant so we couldn't get enough tension on the foot. Combined with cap shrouds that had stretched slightly on the boat's previous outings, leading to excessive forestay sag, this put us at something of a disadvantage for upwind work. We also needed a deeper reef: the second reef in the mainsail was positioned where you would expect to find the second of three reefs, so we were still carrying a good deal of sail for a wind that was gusting to 27 knots or more.

Yet another challenge was playing the centre mainsheet in the gusts. By now they were banging in heavily from all angles, making it tricky to keep the boat on her feet, but she took it all in her stride as long as we were quick enough at the helm. If pushed too hard, she rounded up reasonably smartly at about 30° of heel.

The rest of the time she clocked between 6 and 6.5 knots with a wheel that remained pleasantly

Sharp lines and a fine entry point to the performance pedigree of the 350, though freeboard is high and the standard deck layout geared towards cruising

PRICE:
from
£67,669
(ex-yard)



We were pushing things a bit in conditions when some boats would have been a serious handful



Having the mainsheet on the coachroof makes it hard to control from the wheel, but a traveller in the cockpit is an option. As standard, instruments are mounted on the aft end of the coamings

light, partly because of good rudder balance and also because the steering is lower-g geared than on most sporty boats. It's 1.75 turns from lock to lock, again suggesting that she's aimed predominantly at the cruising market. Racing helmsmen usually favour a higher-g geared system for

a more rapid and precise response – one to one-and-a-quarter turns is the norm. The low gearing meant a lot of wheel-spinning in the gusty conditions, since we were having to steer aggressively to swing the bow through up to 30° as each gust approached. That's not how you would sail in normal cruising mode.

Given what the boat was asked to cope with – an un-tuned rig, too much sail and testing conditions – she gave a good account of herself. Just remember that broad-sterned boats with single rudders prefer to be sailed reasonably upright, and that sails need to be on the flat side in strong, gusty winds when there's no sea running. Most modern boats like this need to be tuned, trimmed and steered with a degree of precision: they're less tolerant than older, heavier and narrower designs with masthead rigs. Tweaked properly, however, they will often get you home a lot faster.

Keeping control

It's in conditions like this, especially when sailing short-handed, that I find it hard to think charitably about coachroof-mounted mainsheet systems. If you're at the wheel and your crew happens to be down below or up on deck when a strong gust hits, the boat rounds up and there's little you can do about it.

Travellers or strong-points near the helm have been falling from fashion in the interest of clear cockpits, but there are times when maintaining control of the boat seems more important. Even if you're well reefed and not pushing the limits, you can get hit by gusts or squalls that rapidly take you to broach-point. Passing close downwind of anything in a situation like this is not good for the nerves.

Thankfully, Hanse offer their owners a choice: you can have a traveller just forward of the wheel if you ask for it, and I should also

point out that this boat retains control at a greater angle of heel than many.

On our test we skidded around a few corners and performed some handbrake turns because we were pushing things a bit in conditions when some boats would have been a serious handful. In relative terms the 350 is an easy and predictable boat to handle. She maintains steerage-way when pinched far too close to the wind, and (at least with the self-tacking jib) can be spun through 360°. Coming out of the circuit, she gradually builds up speed again with minimal stalling.

As we were beating back home later, the wind died to around 15-18 knots. We left both slabs in and she proved remarkably docile while still making good speeds. With an easily-driven boat like this you don't need to have your foot flat on the floor. She motors nicely, too, the Yanmar 3YM 21hp saildrive pushing her along at up



to 7.6 knots smoothly and quietly. Manoeuvring manners were hard to fault.

Looking around

Ergonomically the Hanse's cockpit works well, though most people will find the seats too far apart for leg-bracing: it needs a foot-brace down the centre.

Unusually, there's no provision as standard for mounting instruments on the pedestal.

Instead the coamings each side are shaped to accommodate instruments that can be seen from the helm. It works after a fashion, because you can see the instruments on the side you're sitting but not on the other side. Alternatively Jefa, the Danish makers of the steering system, can provide a range of pedestal-mounted pods.

A neat feature back here is the access to the steering, a rod linkage that you reach simply by lifting a section of the cockpit sole. The rudder arm fits above the top bearing and there's no need to cut a hole in the rudder tube to install an autopilot.

More neat thinking is in the transom arrangement. Instead of sporting a sugar-scoop, the 350 comes to an abrupt end just abaft the cockpit. If you want a bathing platform, you order one that hinges down (£700 on the options



ABOVE Lewmar's flush-fitting hatches were designed into the coachroof, where lines run aft from the mast in troughs. Some more non-slip would be a useful addition. Note the plinth for the self-tacking jib track. **LEFT** To reach the steering linkage you simply lift a section of the cockpit sole

list). This maximises cockpit space but won't suit everyone.

Cockpit stowage is a shallow locker to port forward of the wheel and another one each side where the helmsman would normally sit. If you have just one aft cabin, to starboard, the port side becomes an enormous locker that can be reached both from the cockpit and down below.

Further forward, you find a pair of Lewmar 40 self-tailing winches on the coachroof. They handle the lines led aft from the mast in recesses that are open by the centre hatch and covered with removable sections of moulding further aft. There's no non-slip finish in these recesses, on the hatch garage or around the

edges of the coachroof.

Our test boat had pre-formed teak decks about 5mm thick that are fastened to the deck moulding by adhesives and vacuum-bagging rather than mechanical fastenings. The sealant could be tidied up around the outer edges of the teak. It's also visible around the black-framed windows as well as below the solid aluminium toerail, where it's used to stop water collecting.

Otherwise on deck the most notable features are the flush Lewmar hatches, now fitted to most of Hanse's range, and the moulded plinth for the self-tacking jib's track. An anchor roller is fitted on request.

Hardware comes principally

from Harken and Lewmar, the double-spreader, high-fractional rig from Sparcraft and the sails from North's loft in Turkey. The mainsail has four full battens and, while not being built or finished in quite the way you would expect from one of North's European lofts, looked OK – problems with the reefing notwithstanding. It would be nice to see it drop rather more readily – lower-friction batten cars would help here – and some sailmakers maintain that sails of this size should have five battens.

Accommodation

Hanse's previous generation was distinguished by the glossy, red-stained timber trim and white bulkheads. Now the bulkheads are still white, contributing to a light, bright and airy feel, but the trim is satin-finished mahogany. Cherry is an option, as on our test boat, for an extra £2,400.

Never afraid to do things differently, Hanse originally designed the boat with the heads forward, between the saloon and forecabin. Occupying the broad stern were either twin double cabins or one larger cabin and an enormous, walk-in (at a stoop) locker. Two more options have since been added, both centred around having the heads to port by the companionway with a locker further aft and a double aft cabin to starboard. Layout B2 has an athwartships chart table between the heads and saloon; with B3 it's a hanging locker.

Whichever you choose, you will find extensive use of internal

Technical specification

Length 10.5m (34ft 4in)

LWL 9.6m (31ft 5in)

Beam 3.55m (11ft 6in)

Draught - standard fin 1.85m (6ft 1in)
- shallow fin 1.45m (4ft 8in)

Displacement 5,760kg (12,698lb)

Ballast 1,845kg (4,067lb)

Sail area 64.86sq m (698sq ft)

Displacement/length ratio 20.51

Sail area/displacement ratio 137

RCD category A

Engine Yanmar 3YM 21hp Saildrive

Headroom in saloon 1.96m (6ft 5in)

Designer Juel & Vrolijk

Builder Hanse, Germany www.hanse-yachts.com

Distributor Hanse Yachts UK.

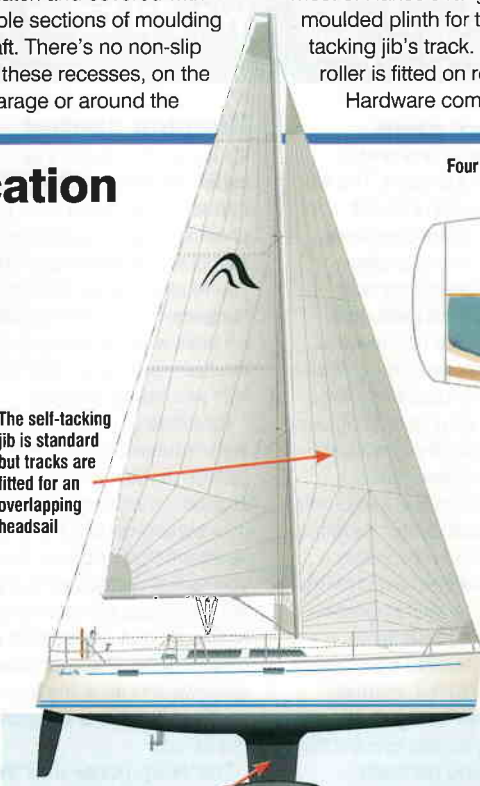
North: Bowness on Windermere Tel: 01539 447700

Email: north@hanseyachts.co.uk

South: Hamble Point Marina Tel: 02380 457008

Email: south@hanseyachts.co.uk

The self-tacking jib is standard but tracks are fitted for an overlapping headsail

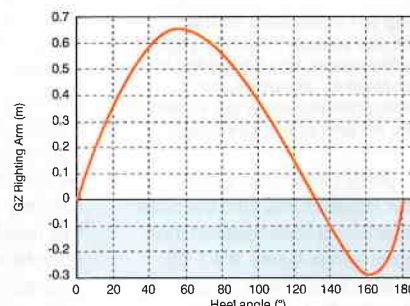


Keels are a standard or shallow fin, both in cast iron

Four accommodation layouts are offered, with the heads forward or aft and a choice of two or three double cabins



Fine bow sections indicate the Hanse's performance pedigree



The GZ curve shows the maximum righting moment at 53° and an AVS (angle of vanishing stability) of 133°

mouldings. Most of the headliner is moulded too, though some vinyl panels remain, and areas of the hullside are lined in stuck-on plastic. This looks better than it might sound, but does restrict access to the outer hull in places. Linings are even used in many of the under-bunk lockers, creating a smooth surface at the expense of stowage space.

In the bow on the test boat (forward heads, one aft cabin) is what might be regarded as the owner's cabin, where some hull-side stowage above bunk level would be a useful addition. Moving aft through the roomy heads and shower compartment brings you into the saloon, with the chart table (largely unsupported and not designed to be sat on) at its aft end. Beneath it are most of the electrical terminals and bus-bars, difficult to reach and rather too close to the bilges for my liking. The other side of the companionway is the galley in a conventional layout. Here, as elsewhere, a few more lights wouldn't come amiss. Neither would a crash-bar.

Access to the front of the engine is via the hinge-up companionway steps, below which a screwdriver is needed to remove the bottom of the casing. Removable panels in the aft cabin give access to the engine's back and starboard side.

Construction

As some of my earlier comments might suggest, my impression is that Hanse have started watching the budget rather more closely with the 350 than with earlier models. They have clearly attempted to streamline production to a greater extent, and in some



In the Hanse tradition, bulkheads are painted white. Trim is matt-finish mahogany or, as on this boat, cherry

ways I think this detrimental.

On the other hand, detailed changes are due to be made (the test boat was an early example) and the basic structure appears to be sound. Bulkheads are bonded directly to the hull and deckhead all the way round, not spot-bonded as on many modern production boats or set into recesses in the headlining. The hull is a solid laminate up to the waterline, then cored to just below deck level. This reduces potential complications in the event of underwater damage.

Lifting the sole boards reveals a glassfibre matrix bonded to the hull around the keel. The two fore-and-aft stiffening members either side of the centreline are filled with resin, as are the transverse

members that join them; the others are hollow and limbered to allow any bilge water to run through.

Keels are cast iron and the rudder uses an aluminium rather than a stainless shaft.

PBO verdict

The 350 continues the sporty-but-conservative approach that has helped Hanse to become Germany's second-largest boatbuilder. The finish is generally tidier than on much of the competition, and while some of the penny-pinching seems to have been carried too far this is often in areas that an owner could do something about. I just hope that Hanse aren't going to start pursuing a policy of trying to get

closer to the bargain boats on price – it would be a shame if they did when their designs have so much in their favour.

Where the 350 stands out is in being fast, responsive, fun to sail and, in most obvious respects, sensibly built. She combines this with a roomy layout and a wide range of interior options that should make her a worthy successor to the 342.



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Other yachts to look at



Bavaria 34

PRICE: FROM £64,000

Bavarias tend to be the budget benchmark and this brand-new replacement for the 33 offers a lot of boat for the money. An increased spec and extra cockpit space are among the changes. www.clippermarine.co.uk



Elan 34

PRICE: FROM £75,000

Racier than the Hanse but designed with cruising in mind as well, she replaced Elan's well-established 333 and was a European Yacht of the Year winner in 2007. www.premiermarinas.co.uk



Hunter Mystery 35

PRICE: FROM £119,403

This Stephen Jones design is more expensive and has no double aft cabin, but she's fast, stiff, powerful, predictable, easy to handle, a joy to sail – and built in Britain. www.selectyachts.co.uk