

SHEER DEHLIGHT

With the 46, Dehler yachts have never looked better or sailed faster. By *Sam Jefferson*

You can cruise yachts for months or years at a time and never end up going over eight knots or so. With the Dehler 46, we were beam reaching at 12kts within minutes of setting the sails – I'm not talking about a gennaker or Code 0 here, just main and jib.

It was the sort of sailing that left me grinning from ear to ear and made such necessary chores as navigation seem superfluous. The sailing of the yacht became an all-consuming pleasure and the only thing that truly mattered was to keep the yacht going in that delightful groove. I could end my review there. I mean, what more do you need to say? But I shall continue...

Dehler has been putting together smart performance cruisers since the 1950s. Its unwillingness to compromise was nearly the end of the company in the 1990s when other big manufacturers drastically

cut into their market with cheaper out-and-out cruisers. But after a bumpy decade or so, the company was taken under Hanse Yachts' wing and has flourished since. The partnership makes sense, as it means Hanse can do the mass produced cruisers and leave Dehler to get on with their premium performance cruiser/racers.

Despite sharing the same design team of Judel/Vrolijk, Dehler is far from just being a souped-up Hanse; the company has a clear identity and with Karl Dehler, son of founder Willi Dehler, still heavily involved, you can understand why.

It's also indisputable that the latest generation of Dehlers are extremely easy on the eye. They feature the now-almost-trademark judel/vrolijk plumb bow and squared-off transom, but this aggressive look is mitigated by the soft turn of the bilge with no chine and her relatively low freeboard. Add into the equation a sleek, low coachroof with sharp,

purposeful, unbroken side ports and you have a yacht with real allure.

She looks like she is built for speed as, indeed, she is. The hull is vacuum-infused, cored vinylester, which keeps the weight down, and she features as standard a deep, T-shaped keel, although there are options for a shallow draught or extra deep racing keel.

There is also the option of a carbon rig with a slightly more powerful sail plan, but the standard is an alloy Selden stick which is keel-stepped and supports an 8/10ths fractional rig with a fully battened main providing most of the driving force. A self-tacking headsail is also available.

Uncluttered decks

The first thing that strikes you when you step aboard is just how uncluttered this yacht is. With the lines recessed into channels running under the coachroof, tidiness is →

JOE MCCARTHY



● **BACKSTAY**
Splitting the backstay opens up the transom for a bathing platform

● **BATTENS**
Standard spec is for a fully battened, slab-reefing Elvstrom main

● **ROUND BILGES**
Despite the trend in her Hanse cousins, the Dehler has no hard chine aft – just plenty of flare

● **JIB CARS**
Car positioning creates a very tight sheeting angle for upwind performance. Self-tacking is an option

● **TIDY BOW**
The jib furler is hidden below deck, while the anchor lead keeps it clear of the gelcoat



ALL PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY

everything. The Dehler has a decent amount of taper aft meaning her cockpit is not a monstrously wide affair, but it still feels roomy enough. Although the open transom can leave you feeling a little exposed aft, if you buy the yacht with the full cruising package, you get a bathing platform, which lifts up to enclose the cockpit nicely.

The helming position is good, and the primary winches are well sited so the helmsman can easily adjust the German mainsheet. The instruments are recessed into the cockpit coamings and well positioned. Our test yacht did not feature a chartplotter on deck although I understand this is an optional extra that could prove very useful to negligent navigators.

Other than that, there is adequate storage including a dedicated liferaft locker and the only real interruption to the wonderful tidiness of the cockpit is the traveller, which runs right across the sole directly



● **LEFT**
Genoa cars and mainsheet blocks are tight in to the coachroof, keeping side decks clear



● **BELOW LEFT**
Tidiness abounds at the mast foot with lines quickly run under the deck

in front of the helmsman – also within easy reach. The cockpit table, removable for racing, is pleasingly solid and features a useful handhold running down the centre.



VIDEO

To see video of this test and many other new boat tests, go to sailingtoday.co.uk

Step forward along nicely-finished teak decks and the clean, minimalist theme continues, with hatches all flush, pop-up cleats, an integrated toerail and the headsail roller recessed into the deck. I felt that this craze for neatness meant that the grabrail on the coachroof ended a touch too early, but the overall effect is smart.

The jib cars are well inboard, offering an excellent sheeting angle, and, up at the bow, the anchor roller protrudes a good distance outboard, which prevents unnecessary chipping of the gelcoat on that plumb stem every time you raise and lower the anchor.

Just forward of the companionway on the coachroof there is a sort of designated lounging area which you fill with custom-made cushions that clip on to the grabrails. It looks very tempting and in the brochure a healthy couple repose on this glowing with youthful vigour as they bask in the sunshine. On a

blustery day in the Solent, however, we eschewed the cushions in favour of some serious sailing.

Private jet styling

Many performance yachts favour a fairly stripped out interior, but that was not at all in evidence here and the general feel was one of ultra-modern luxury. The desire for neatness above all else is immediately noticeable, with pretty much everything under a cover of some sort or another. Even the hob has a sort of elaborate chopping board that you place over the top, while all instrumentation and electronics are hidden behind seductively curved panelling that hissed open on gas struts when I wanted to access them. The layout of the yacht is pretty run-of-the-mill, with the master cabin and ensuite forward, an L-shaped galley to starboard, heads to port and two aft cabins, one of which can be either

a standard double or a single with extra storage. Although the layout of the yacht is far from revolutionary, it is exceptionally modern, with curved lockers behind the bench seats in the saloon featuring headrests which would not have looked out of place in a private jet. The saloon table is substantial and folds neatly in half

● **TOP**
The bathing platform encloses the cockpit under way but offers a huge surface when lowered

● **ABOVE**
Classic cockpit – well enclosed for safety, but comfortable

when not in use. There is also a modest-sized chart table to port.

The finish on the yacht I tested was a dark mahogany and I found this combination of modernity, dark wood and natural light ended up making the saloon feel a little too stark and not very snug. The optional lighter teak and Italian →



oak wood finishes would suit my taste better. Nonetheless, there was an unmistakable quality about the finish, and the fittings all had the feel of a premium product.

The heads are clever, with the door also able to close off just the heads compartment, leaving the shower and sink accessible to other users. The forward cabin is also nice and spacious, with the double berth facing aft and feeling less 'jammed in' with room to walk around the edge. That said, you might pick an aft cabin in big seas.

Jet-propelled

Which brings us to the sailing: with a stiff 20kt-plus breeze crisp Southampton Water it was time



to use the Dehler. My, how she responded! With the bravado reserved for people who don't actually own the yacht they are sailing, we elected not to reef at all and the results were startling.

Although the yacht was definitely overpressed, she responded extremely well to the harsh treatment and scorched towards Cowes at 8kts and more when hard on the wind, flipping through a couple of sharp tacks effortlessly. There was minimal weather helm, she tracked wonderfully well and the Jefa steering felt light and poised. She didn't gripe and hung in there with grim determination as some of the heavier gusts endeavoured to pummel her into submission. The brisk wind had stirred up the sort of short chop that could have defeated a lesser yacht, but the Dehler swatted the waves aside with a sort of haughty disdain.

I was enjoying myself; the helming position was excellent, the yacht was stiff and more than a match for the lively conditions. Yet there was even better to come when we eased off the wind. Now the boat really began to stretch her legs and surged forward with great purpose. We were soon hitting 10kt without any



● **TOP**
Private jet-style curved headrests adorn the saloon lockers

● **ABOVE**
The master cabin in the forepeak offers a walk-round berth

fuss whatsoever. This wasn't some wild, out-of-control rollercoaster ride; the yacht simply sailed at speed with both poise and precision. By the time we hit 12kts, I was starting to wonder how well calibrated her log was. I would love to round this article off by stating that we unfurled the gennaker and planed back up Southampton Water, but I have to say our thirst for speed had been suitably slaked by that time and we decided not to push our luck. Conditions conspired to provide us with a great day's sailing, but those conditions are nothing without a good boat and the Dehler 46 rose to the occasion in a truly impressive manner. ✨

SAM'S VERDICT

Needless to say, I was impressed with the Dehler. As a performance cruiser, she ticks all the boxes. She's good-looking, well-mannered, easy to handle and, most importantly, blisteringly quick.

The standard of finish was very high and the interior was comfortable, roomy and well thought out, if a little stark for my taste.

Three different keel depths plus two rig configurations and the option of

a self-tacking jib mean this is a very versatile performer that would be as at home out on the racecourse as it would be on a lazy family cruise.

There's nothing revolutionary about the Dehler – she just does what she has been designed to do extremely well.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 47ft 3in (14.0m)

LWL: 42ft 5in (12.9m)

Beam: 14ft 5in (4.4m)

Draught: Standard 7ft 4in (2.3m), shoal 6ft 1in (1.9m), racing 8ft 2in (2.5m)

Displacement: 24,691lb (10,800kg)

Engine: Volvo D2 53hp saildrive

Sail area: 1,228sqft (114m²)

PERFORMANCE

AVS: 135°

Displacement/LWL: 145

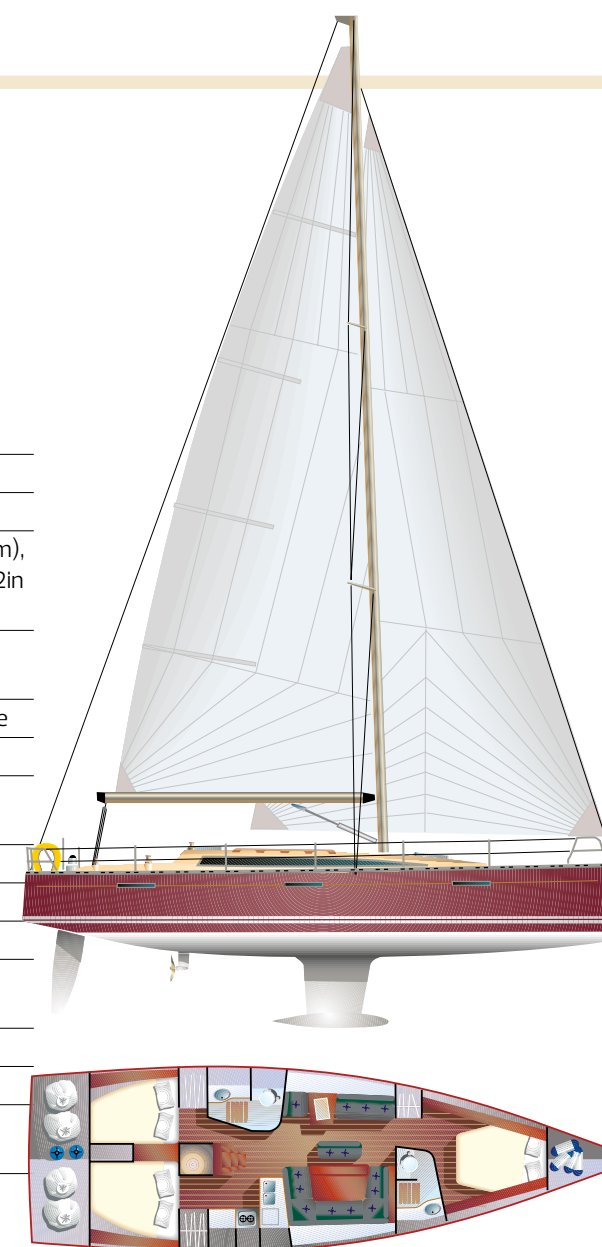
Sail area/displacement: 21.8

PRICE

Base: £185,000

As tested: c£240,000

Dealer: Inspiration Marine
inspirationmarine.co.uk



AZUREE 46

PRICE: £206,000

A stylish, modern performance cruiser designed by Rob Humphreys and built in Turkey where skilled labour maintains quality at a good price. The result is an impressively polished performer.

azuree.com.tr

craftinsure quote: £863.08



ARCONA 465

PRICE: £345,000

Swedish Arconas are well known for speed and comfort and with the new 465, they have upped the ante considerably by constructing her out of carbon, making for an incredibly light, stiff hull which promises breathtaking performance, albeit at a premium price.

arconayachts.com

craftinsure quote: £1,502.34



SOLARIS 44

PRICE: £266,000

A little bit smaller, but every bit as stylish as the Dehler, this Soto Acebal cruiser/racer is aimed squarely at the same sector of the market as the Dehler and features sparkling performance combined with well appointed accommodation.

solarisyachts.com

craftinsure quote: £1,139.02

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