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Hanse 345



PHOTOS: GRAHAM SNOOK

The bow roller has a padeye for a gennaker tack but no fair lead for the tack line



Hanse continues to refine its range of cruisers. Its latest launch had her world premiere at Southampton Boat Show, where Chris Beeson put her through her paces

It's rare that you're the first person ever to sail hull No.1 of a design that you know will sell in its hundreds, but that's exactly what happened to me with the Hanse 345. The giant German boatbuilder worked round the clock to finish her just days before the Southampton Boat Show, where she made her world premiere, giving us the chance to take her out for her first review.

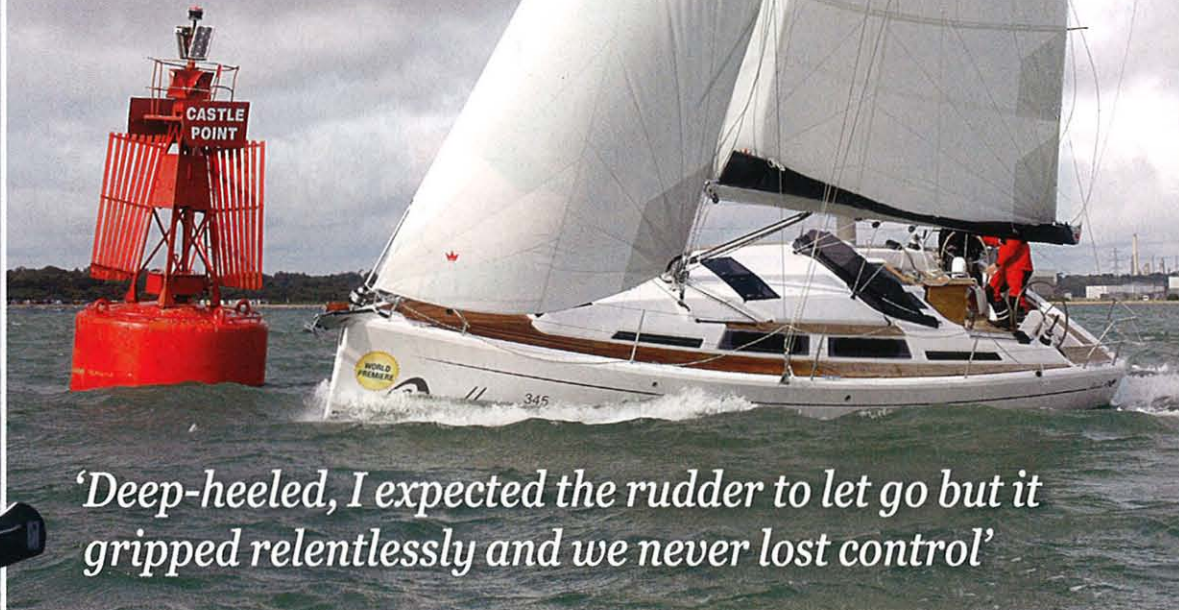
Performance

On a glorious autumn morning, with a Force 6-8 punching in freshly from WSW, we left Hamble Point Marina, hoisted the 345's Elvström



The winches look a bit small to me, but leading all the sail controls aft is a great idea

After fetching down Southampton Water we hardened up round Castle Point buoy to test her mettle upwind in a stiff breeze



'Deep-heeled, I expected the rudder to let go but it gripped relentlessly and we never lost control'

We enjoyed a cracking, comfortable sail in a stiff breeze without once losing control

laminated sails – a pricier alternative to the standard Dacron set – and rocketed down Southampton Water, fetching at 6.5-7.6 knots with 20-28 knots blowing over the deck, with the wind building as we left Fawley's lee.

Hardening up to an angle of 30-35 to the apparent wind, we logged 5.9-6.4 knots in the teeth of 22-28 knots of wind, and tacked through 110°. Deep-heeled as we were, I was expecting the rudder to let go but it gripped relentlessly and we never lost control.

We bore away onto a beam reach round West Bramble cardinal and clocked up 6.8-7.6 knots in 16-21 knots of apparent wind before gybing round as the breeze freshened to make 7.2-7.8 knots broad reaching with 23-28 knots over the port quarter, and surfing up to 8.4 knots at one stage.

The upgraded 28hp Volvo diesel (18hp is standard), and folding two-blade propeller (another optional extra) allowed us to cruise at six knots and make 7.1 flat-out.

At the helm

The helm positions are really comfortable, sitting against the pushpit with the wheel in easy reach, and excellent views forward. The wheel feels great, tight and nicely weighted. I'd have preferred a touch more mast rake to give the wheel a little more bite. Cockpit coamings stop just forward of the wheel and the helmsman sits on the sheet bin lid, which is slightly raised, so you could get wet when lots of water flows along the side deck but it didn't happen to me during our breezy test. Having all the sail controls leading to two winches forward of the wheels gives you complete control but I would upgrade to Lewmar 46 winches instead of the standard 40s, which felt a bit under-specified.

Design & construction

This Judel/Vrolijk design sailed very well, given the conditions. The stats say she's moderately canvassed, with sail area similar to a Bénéteau Océanis 34 but displacing 450kg (1,000 lb) more. Her sail area/displacement ratio is the same as the Island Packet Estero, which is leisurely indeed. The hull is solid laminate laid up with vinylester resins, and coated with isophthalic gelcoat. A liner is glued into the hull, bulkheads are laminated in place and the balsa-cored deck is laminated to the gunwales. The keel is a cast iron fin and bulb, using her ballast more effectively than a plain fin, and the rudder stock is aluminium.

Sailplan

She has a Z Spars fractional mast with two sets of swept-back spreaders and an adjustable split backstay. She is fitted with a self-tacking jib and there are also two short jib tracks. The self-tacker presents the usual issues with leech tension off the wind, so I'd get a Code Zero, a 2:1 masthead halyard and a whisker pole as well.

Deck layout

The single bow roller, to port of the forestay, might need some beefing up or a bobstay to handle Code Zero loads. There is a loop for a gennaker tack but no obvious fair lead for a tackline. The chain locker is a good size and a windlass is fitted. Moving aft along the teak sidedecks (also an optional extra), the toerails are moulded, smooth and only 3cm high (around 1in), so you'll need the recessed teak grabrail above the line ducts, aft of the shrouds and their topside chainplates.

Aft cabin hatches are

sheltered below the sprayhood, good for ventilation in any weather, and the small cubbies on the coachroof are great for storing all the bits – mobiles, sun cream, keys – that usually end up on the cockpit sole. The cockpit table is an option, one I think she needs – for bracing and grabrails as much as anything – but I might choose a different set-up for the plotter, to avoid giving myself endless dead legs on the stainless steel housing. Decent coamings and 1.5m (5ft) long benches make the



When asked about the risk of the gas bottle regulator being torn off by a line, Hanse replied that it now offers halyard bags to prevent it happening



Key cruising features

With all lines led aft and the main sheeted forward, the cockpit is entirely line-free

The helmsman has a comfy perch, windward or leeward, which always feels safe

If you go forward of the mast under way, you'll find the shallow, smooth toerails wanting

Extra coachroof windows and hatches are a plus and we like the recessed grabrails

The helmsman has all the instruments and sail controls to hand – you can sail solo

The folding transom is an innovation that complements twin wheels delightfully

'She's exactly what you'd expect – fun to sail, comfortable to cruise, easy to manoeuvre and great value'

cockpit a comfortable place to be and the walk through to the drop-down bathing platform couldn't be easier. We sailed the three-cabin version where the only deck stowage is in two sole-depth cockpit lockers. Opt for the two-cabin boat and you'll have endless stowage in the port quarter.

Living aboard

She's instantly recognisable as a Hanse, but brand fans will note she has extra ports in the coachroof. Two opening hatches above the saloon improve the already very good light levels below and there are eyelets in the coachroof sides. The saloon is dazzlingly bright with stowage in lockers outboard, below the port seating around the batteries and charger,

and under the starboard berth. The settee pulls out to create a saloon double. I liked the mood lighting above the recessed deckhead handrails which, along with a galley grabrail and the table forward, should make moving around safe.

In the absence of any ports in the single-skin hull, the coachroof skylights splash a bit more illumination around the cabins' Italian oak-look interior, but they need blinds. The forward cabin has very decent 6ft 2in headroom and a 6ft 9in berth with stowage around the water tank below. Stowage is good, in lockers either side, and thankfully she doesn't feature the push-to-open locker latches that we accidentally opened umpteen times while testing the Hanse 325. She has push-to-unlock, pull-to-open latches.

Both aft cabins boast 6ft 1in headroom.

There's an LED cabin light in each, with those hateful little needle switches, and two excellent little red/white reading lights per cabin. Both cabins have two hatches, opening below the sprayhood and into the cockpit, as well as the coachroof skylights. Stowage is abundant in lockers outboard. The fuel tank is under the 6ft 7in berth to starboard, with the calorifier and exhaust muffler to port. Both cabins have maintenance access into the engine bay and transom.

The heads is unremarkable. I liked the separate shower, but there's no shower curtain or towel hooks. Still, with good light, ventilation and stowage, it ticks most boxes.

RIGHT:

I'd like to see stowage in the empty space forward of the navigator's knees



Chart table

Aft-facing and fairly small with limited stowage, not a great example of this most embattled of features. Maybe it's time to make the chart table optional, trading off for a bigger heads?

Galley

Stowage is good, the splashback panel is great and the up-and-over stove cover offers more workspace. The big fridge is accessible from above and below, and light is well distributed but you can't open the coachroof port to ventilate at sea, you'd need to rely on the companionway.

Maintenance

Access to the boat's various systems is generally very good, but you would need to unscrew the bottom companionway step to change the impeller and you can't get at the keelbolts.

WATCH THE VIDEO

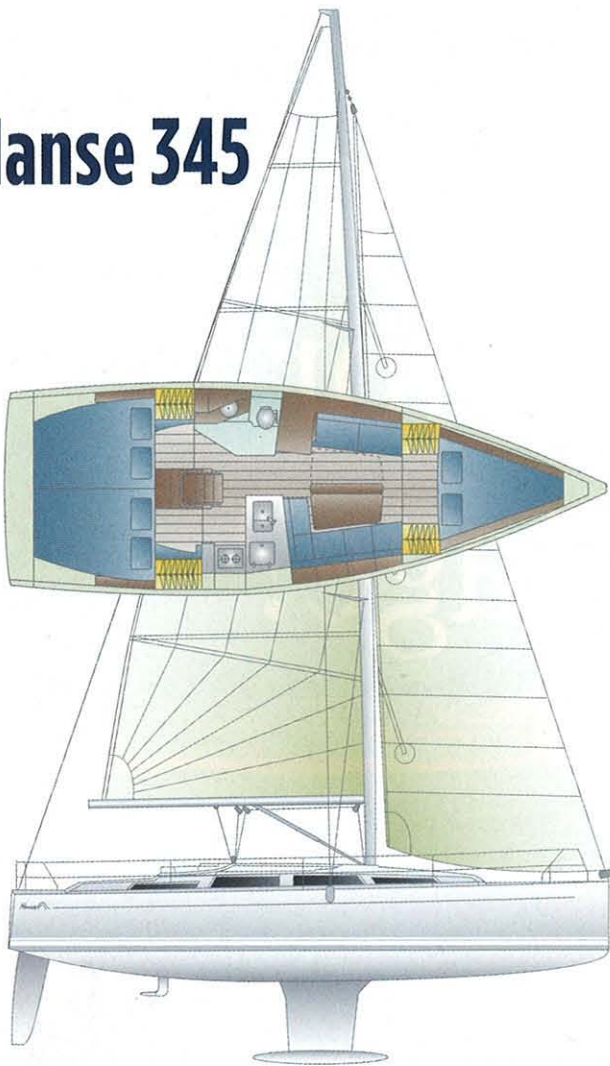
Scan this QR code with your smartphone (or go to the link below) to view a video of Chris testing the Hanse 345, PLUS a 360° virtual tour of the boat: www.yachtingmonthly.com/hanse345



The saloon area has bags of extra light from the added hatch, good stowage and a fixed table for bracing

Hanse 345

ARTWORK: MAXINE HEATH



FACTS AND FIGURES

- Price £136,682
- LOA 10.4m (34ft 1in)
- LWL 9.55m (31ft 3in)
- Beam 3.5m (11ft 5in)
- Draught 1.87m (6ft 1in)
- Displacement 6,200kg (13,640 lb)
- Ballast 2,030kg (4,470 lb)
- Sail area 55m² (592sq ft)
- Engine 18hp
- Diesel 160 lit (35 gal)
- Water 230 lit (50.6 gal)
- D/L ratio 198.5
- SA/D ratio 16.6
- Ballast ratio 32.7%
- RCD category A
- STIX 35.8
- Designer Judel/Vrolijk
- Builder Hanse Yachts
- Tel 02380 457008
- Web www.hanseyachts.co.uk



The heads covers most bases but why no shower curtain or towel hooks as standard?



Good light and storage, great fridge access but no ventilation at sea

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

I thought we were chancing it by going out in conditions that most cruisers would sensibly avoid but she acquitted herself very well. I was very pleasantly surprised that we didn't lose control once, despite her prodigious beam. She behaved well and the Jefa steering system was a delight as ever. She's enormously comfortable to helm and despite the absence of footblocks, the space between the folding transom and the wheels is confined enough to feel safe and offer all sorts of bracing.

The principle of having all the lines to the helmsman's hand is really gaining traction in modern yacht design, as it keeps the cockpit line-free, which is a real boost for young families. My one caveat is that, with just two winches, there's not much redundancy. Fortunately, with the reliability of modern kit, malfunction is going to be extremely rare, but if I was looking for a yacht to take me into the wilderness I would always prefer to have a few more options. But for the 345, which will spend its time port-hopping with couples or families, I'd be perfectly happy with the principle – indeed delighted.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

Hanse excels at providing a home-from-home and the 345 has everything you need to sail away without compromising comfort. Headroom is over 6ft throughout, light and ventilation are better than ever, though I'd still like to see a hull port or two, and the light control panel, which offers preset light configurations at the touch of a button, is a lovely detail. The recessed deckhead lights also create a premium ambiance in a boat that offers comfort and value. OK, the joinery and finishing is not a match for premium brands but, crucially, neither is the price.

On deck, the folding transom continues to delight, opening up the cockpit and making a huge difference to the sensation of space, while still retaining the security of a closed transom at sea.

With all the lines tucked away, the cockpit becomes a genuinely relaxing space. However, the halyard bin to port also houses the gas bottle, and when I mentioned to Hanse that I was concerned that a released line could easily tear off the bottle's regulator, they explained that they have already addressed this problem by mounting halyard bags on the coaming.

Would she suit you and your crew?

Thanks to the self-tacker and 'winches-at-the-wheel' layout, she's very easy for one person to handle and feels great at the wheel. The Judel/Vrolijk hull means performance is lively, which cuts down passage times in most conditions, but never out of control, so you won't frighten the children, and you don't need years of experience to get the best out of her. Down below she's got everything you might need for a comfortable week's family cruise, and at anchor the cockpit turns into a waterside terrace.

The owner of this particular example ticked nearly every option on the extras list and she still comes in at under £140k.

If you wanted the base boat, delivered to the UK, rigged, anti-fouled and ready to sail away, you'd get change from £120k.

I'd choose to upgrade the engine and the winches, and look for a less threatening plotter housing, but otherwise she's exactly what you'd expect from such a successful yard – fun to sail, comfortable to cruise, easy to manoeuvre and great value.

Would she suit your style of sailing?

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