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“ A well-mannered companion for nurturing sailing confidence. ”



Beginner's soulmate

Words by **Lawrence Schäffler** Photos by **Bryce Taylor**

Following its 2015 debut, Hanse's mid-sized 455 cruiser (13.95m LOA) has quickly become one of the marque's most popular models. And with eight sold here so far, the yacht's shaping up as New Zealand's favourite Hanse.



I've sailed plenty of Hanses and I'll confess it becomes difficult to find another way of saying how easy they are to handle. Instead, I'll pass the baton to the owners of this brand new 455, who took delivery of her just before Christmas and departed four days later on a maiden 10-day cruise around the Hauraki Gulf.

Nothing remarkable in that – other than they had never sailed before and that this is their first-ever yacht.

They loved it – and yes, they found her exceptionally easy to handle. The fuss-free theme runs deeper when you investigate the profiles of the other seven 455 owners – two are similarly brand-new to sailing. What's going on? Something in New Zealand's water?

The 455 carries all of the simple-to-control features of her many siblings – the signature self-tacking jib, the German mainsheet system, winches and jam cleats positioned conveniently-close to the twin helms, sensible bins for

keeping sheet tails tidy and out of the way.

In addition, there's the spacious cockpit that lends itself equally well to accommodating an adrenalin-fuelled racing crew or a jovial dinner party. The open, clutter-free deck areas, the sheets running unseen along covered, coachroof channels. And the wide, fold-down boarding platform that not only simplifies water access for swimmers, but also serves as a romantic sunbathing spot for two.

So what makes the 455 different? A couple of things – and they're fairly significant, particularly relative to the model she's replaced, the 445.

First, the cockpit's been redesigned – it's much more spacious than the 445's – and that's largely because the coaming's been shifted further out. So you have deeper bench seats, comfortable, reclining backrests and more room around the centre table.

The twin helms have convenient seats alongside – and



if, like me – you enjoy sitting leeward to keep an eye on the jib tell-tales, the seats are ideally positioned, with the push-pit offering a decent backrest.

A wider cockpit also facilitates traffic to the aft boarding platform – past the table and between the helms. And after your swim, there's a fresh-water shower for a wash-down. I particularly like the built-in sink hidden under the port helm seat – ideal for rinsing detritus from the plates after lunch.

CARBON BULKHEAD

But the most impressive improvement the 455 brings is the introduction of a composite-carbon main bulkhead, separating the saloon and forepeak.





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TOP LEFT: the layout of the L-shaped galley is fairly conventional. It's fitted with a top-loading fridge and front-opening freezer. Large sky-windows keep the saloon bright and airy. ABOVE: the master suite's large, island bed.

Made up of multiple layers of carbon, its superior structural strength has eliminated the need for a compression strut – a fairly typical feature on yachts with deck-stepped masts.

This has had a profound impact on the interior. The obvious advantage is an easier and cleaner traffic flow between forepeak and saloon. But the really telling difference is the quality of the ambient light flooding the saloon.

The structural strength of the carbon bulkhead and absence of a strut – and note that the bulkhead's bonded and integrated into the hull's built-in grid – has created more roof 'space' and allowed the introduction of two more overhead hatches. Where the 445 had two hatches, the 455 has four – providing much more light and ventilation.

While the Italian oak interior is naturally bright, it's noticeably accentuated by the extra light pouring in from overhead. It's also enhanced by the larger coachroof windows running either side. All very crisp and contemporary – an attractive palette guaranteed to lift the spirits of even your most dour visitors.

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INTERIOR

The 455's available in a variety of layouts – this one is the standard three-cabin version. The master cabin's up front, dominated by a large island double bed, and features – what I always regard as something of a treat in a mid-sized cruiser – a divided bathroom. Shower and toilet are separated, port and starboard.

Aft are two, identical quarter berths, each with spacious double beds – a function of the model's 4.38m beam that pretty much runs all the aft. They share a port bathroom. Both forepeak and aft cabins are peppered with drawers and hanging lockers. No need to dress down for dinner.

And speaking of meals. Chefs will enjoy the spacious L-shaped galley down the companionway to starboard. In addition to the three-burner cooker and double sink, it's equipped with a top-loading fridge and a front-loading freezer – as well as excellent counter space, particularly when the cooker's built-in cover is deployed.

Getting the nosh from galley to guests is a matter of a few steps. This 455 sleeps six but there's space for a quite a few more in the U-shaped dinette. I like the folding table's adjustability – its size can be tailored to the number of guests.

To port is a small nav-station with a folding seat that can be

“The self-tacking jib eliminates the grind from upwind sailing.”

tucked away when not in use. I doubt the station will see much navigation duty – the twin B&G touch-screen, multi-function displays up at the helms will take care of that.

Like other Hanses, the 455 is fitted with smart lighting – all LEDs – and the entire network can be controlled by a discreet, touch-panel mounted on the galley island. Simple, logical and functional.

PERFORMANCE

I try not to tackle reviews with pre-determined opinions, but I'd have been very surprised if the 455 sailed like an inebriated sloth.

The owners of this boat – displaying admirable enthusiasm given their inexperience – elected to tick the 'performance sails' option box. Snapped on to the 20m mast, these sails – a fully-battened 59m² main and 44m² self-tacking jib – combine well and drive the 455's 11.6 tonne displacement effortlessly.

She responds eagerly to her deep, single rudder and the Jefa



steering is light and easy. We enjoyed perfect conditions on our sail, and beam reaching in about 15 knots of wind clocked up a very respectable 9 – 9.5 knots. A 2.25m keel hangs below, loaded with 3.5 tonnes of ballast. A shallow-draft keel (1.82m) is an option.

Self-tacking jibs remove the slog from upwind sailing – your main concern when flicking from tack-to-tack is not spilling your drink. A backstay tensioner will encourage a little mast bend and, together with the beefy vang, will help to optimise the main's shape. The low-profile coachroof offers great visibility of the sails – even with the dodger.

As novice sailors, the owners of this 455 have not yet explored a gennaker, but I'm picking it won't be long before they do. Running off wind is fine – to a point – after which the main tends to blanket the self-tacking jib. Switching to a genny is better – and the boat is pre-equipped with a halyard and an eye on the bow roller for just that purpose. And when the genny does arrive, it will find a handy home in the massive bow locker – along with fenders, mooring lines and other assorted gear.

A 53hp Volvo with Saildrive and three-blade folding prop provides propulsion when the wind disappears. It will push the 455 along at a steady 7 – 9 knots. This boat's also fitted with a bow

Hanse 455

- ▶ **loa** 13.95m
- ▶ **lwl** 12.20m
- ▶ **beam** 4.38m
- ▶ **draft** 2.25m (1.82m option)
- ▶ **displacement** 11.6 ton
- ▶ **ballast** 3,500 kg
- ▶ **engine** 53hp Volvo with Saildrive and three-blade folding prop
- ▶ **fuel** 220 litres
- ▶ **water** 450 litres
- ▶ **CE certificate** A (ocean)
- ▶ **total sail area** 103m²
- ▶ **main sail** 59m²
- ▶ **self-tacking jib** 44m²
- ▶ **gennaker** 160m²
- ▶ **rig** I 17.80m J 5.50m P 17.00m E 5.95m
- ▶ **priced from** \$490,000
- ▶ **design** Judel/Vrolijk & Co
- ▶ **interior** Hanse Yachts Design
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thruster, useful for maneuvering her into the fairly snug berth at Gulf Harbour marina.

With her near-vertical stem and transom, the 455's waterline is optimised for speed. Her sleek lines translate into exhilarating performance, and when you pull into a bay after a day's sailing, you'll enjoy the space, the functional layout – and most importantly, the sunset through the bottom of a glass of wine. **B**