

Fleet of hull



The Sun Odyssey 349 is Jeanneau's new entry-level cruiser. But she's far from basic, as **Sam Fortescue** reports



Since it was launched at the Paris Boat Show in December, Jeanneau has sold more than 70 examples of the new Sun Odyssey 349. For most boatbuilders, this would fill the order books for years and keep a smile on the face for even longer.

But Jeanneau is one of the biggest production builders in the industry, and its business plan requires this sort of colossal output. To justify the cost of tooling three new moulds, the yard aims to produce two boats per day.

There's no messing about with hand lay-up: lean manufacturing principles require vacuum infusion, precise computer-controlled cutting and a host of other efficient technologies. It's all about volume. And this is not a bad thing, as my test sail of the new 349 in Cannes showed.

From the quay, she had a sleek, whippet-like look to her with her twin carbon wheels (€1,400 extra) and low coachroof. She was moored up Med-style, stern to, so I stepped aboard over the wide teak-decked bathing platform – an extra but now almost

mandatory on new production yachts. With no backstay, access is good between the twin wheels and the cockpit is large.

The boat has been designed to replace the Sun Odyssey 33i, which was launched in 2010. Marc Lombard drew both boats, but he has taken quite a different tack on the new hull. The most striking thing about her is the gentle positive sheer to the deck, reaching about 10cm above the level amidships. This gives her a marginally better righting moment, but its main function is to increase headroom and volume below. It also helps keep the coachroof relatively low to the deck.

The boat is available with a variety of different keels, but ours (and she is something of a prototype) comes with a lifting keel. The keel weighs 1,500kg, so it takes a hydraulic ram to raise it. But the set-up is such that any collision with the seabed under way forces the keel to start swinging up – like a giant shock absorber. This option broadens the keel box under the saloon table (and costs about £7,200 extra), but there is also a shallow and deep keel option.

No backstay

The cockpit feels open and uncluttered thanks to the swept-back spreaders, which mean there's no need for a cumbersome backstay

SUN ODYSSEY







SAM FORTESCUE

Innovative rig

The various sheets and bridles make the coachroof something of a cat's cradle

Under sail

Despite a heavy swell and Force 5-6 in Cannes' Napoule Gulf a day earlier, test day dawned still, flat and sunny. Once out of the Vieux Port, we registered 4 or 5 knots true wind from the southeast.

Sometimes a yacht's potential becomes clearer in extreme conditions – whether violent or mild. In this case, the low wind gave us a great opportunity to unfurl the Code Zero on a Harken furler on the boat's stubby bowsprit. A tug on the sheet was all it took, to add an impressive knot to our boat speed.

With our test boat's fat-head main in Mylar taffeta (a c£3,000 option), we caught the faint zephyr and tiptoed along at 3.2 knots, 60° off the true wind.

On a broad reach, she picked up a bit of way – 4.2 knots in 5 knots of true wind – and as the sea breeze filled in a fraction, she made a very healthy 5 knots at 130° off a true wind of 6.5 knots.

A Belgian journalist who'd taken her out the day before said she'd performed well in blowy conditions, the helm still very well balanced (as you'd expect from twin rudders) and the positive sheer keeping the deck and cockpit dry. Jeanneau's own tests indicate that she will charge upwind at more than 6 knots in a 25-knot blow (the Code Zero well out of the way by now), rising to

nearly 10 knots on a broad reach. So make no mistake, this boat delivers on her sporty looks.

Dinghy rig

Jeanneau reckons that the key to growth is to attract new boatowners into the market, and this means demystifying the actual process of sailing. Nowhere is this philosophy more obvious than in the way the boat has been rigged.

For simplicity, Jeanneau has used the common German mainsheet system, which brings both ends of the mainsheet back to opposite sides of the cockpit and allows adjustment from either side. The sheet winches are in easy reach of the helm – ideal for short-handed sailing. So far so normal.

But instead of using travellers to move jib and main sheeting points about the deck, the 349 employs a series of 'soft' rope handling devices. So the mainsheet runs from the boom to a block on a dyneema bridle fixed either side of the companionway. When the main is sheeted right in, the block almost touches the boom, putting it close to the centreline of the boat – good for beating. However, this arrangement deprives one of the ability to tweak sail trim using the traveller – notably twist in the sail, which can be useful in strong and very light winds (see ST201/202). And with the sheeting point halfway along the boom, you'll want to avoid a gybe all-standing, which could break the spar.

The jib sheets are routed inside the shrouds using a lightweight lead eye



Bowsprit option

You'll need to take the performance pack if you want the bowsprit, but it's well worth the extra c£2,835 for the ability to easily launch an asymmetric sail

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SAM FORTESCUE

Mainsheet handling

This clever arrangement combines a German mainsheet with a low-weight block and bridle-sheeting system that is more common on dinghies, giving easy and efficient handling

actually simplifies the control lines and is more intuitive for novice sailors. It certainly saves on weight and expensive metal deck gear.

There's no backstay, as the spreaders are swept back 30°, so the shrouds fulfil that role. This keeps the cockpit and swimming platform uncluttered, but limits the headsail options to a 110 per cent genoa – any bigger and the sail snags on the shrouds. That said, the fat-head main and Code Zero options provide plenty of power.

The cockpit is roomy and uncluttered with two sheet winches on the coaming by the wheels and two halyard winches on the coachroof. There's a good sized locker to starboard, while to port, the locker lifts to reveal a hatch set into the deckhead. In the two-cabin version this gives access to the technical area/wet room below decks, or can be replaced with a moulded plastic locker if you opt for the three-cabin model.

Modern finish

The Jeanneau 349 comes with two basic interior configurations: two cabins or three. There is a good roomy fo'c's'le cabin with V-berths on both versions, but owners can choose to have two double cabins aft, or just one and a technical area and larger lazarette to port.

The stern cabin(s) provides a generous 6ft 8in (203cm) length berth that is 4ft 7in (140cm) wide. Headroom on entry is 6ft 3in (190cm), with two reasonable wardrobes built into the outboard side. Opting for the two-cabin version buys you a dedicated shower area in the port-side heads, rather than a more cramped shower-over-the-loo arrangement. But from here for'ard, the configuration is the same. To starboard at the foot of the companionway is a U-shaped galley with a sink, two-burner hob and oven, and bags of stowage space.

Hard chine

Common on production boats these days, the chine gives extra stability when the boat heels and increases interior volume aft

Cockpit detailing

Left: She's a small boat for twin wheels, but the helm position is well thought out with a footblock and seat moulded into the coaming

Right: Main and jib sheets run through a lead eye on the coachroof, on a Dyneema bridle

'A tug on the sheet and she gave us an impressive knot of extra speed'

attached to a barber hauler (above). This allows the sheeting point to be moved in towards the boat's centreline, or out towards the toerail for a much better-set jib upwind. It creates a bit of a cat's cradle on the coachroof, but Jeanneau says it

LUC GERNAERT

SAM FORTESQUE

Hull lights 1

With wide hull lights, ports in the coachroof and a main hatch, it is very bright below



Chart table 2

The chart table slides up and folds away to give more space at the table, or to use the saloon seat as a berth

Keel box 3

On this lifting-keel version, the keel box under the saloon table is slightly bigger than the standard version

There is a small chart table to port, with something of a twist. For chartwork, you perch on the saloon seat facing aft or sit on the specially designed stool. When it's no longer needed, the table can be folded up to extend the saloon berth to a very decent 7ft 4in (223cm) long.

It's an ingenious double use of space, but it does have a downside. Not only are you quite far forward, facing the wrong way, making rough-seas navigation more of a strain, but there is also a stool that

must first be dislodged from its nook under the table: fine at anchor, but inconvenient on the move. The folded-up chart table also conceals the VHF and other instruments.

My only other niggle was the lack of a camber on the edge of the companionway steps, which are helpful when the boat is heeling.

As usual with Jeanneau, there's a huge range of wood and upholstery options to suit all tastes.

Turn on a sixpence

The standard engine is a 20hp Yanmar, giving plenty of power for such a slippery hull. It cruises at just 2,500rpm, making for a quieter ride. Cruising speed is around 6 knots, but it achieved 7.3 knots at a maximum rpm of 3,200rpm. The twin rudders make her a little slow to react when manoeuvring ahead at slow speed, but going astern, she is very responsive. It is easy to spin her in her own length in the marina.



Beds in the bow

Generous fo'c's'le cabin standard on both versions. Double doors open out to spacious saloon with twin cabinside seating.



Good size heads

The two-cabin option gives space for a dedicated shower area (behind the heads), as well as a technical area behind that



VERDICT

As modern yachts go, this is a small boat, but she is a capable cruiser. I'd have no problem taking her offshore and with the new lifting-keel version, she's great inshore as well, although you still need legs to beach her.

A lot of thought has gone into a clever rig, and though her lack of travellers may have more traditional sailors shaking their heads, it is elegantly set up and looks almost racy.

As usual, you wouldn't get far without taking a host of options, but this certainly gives flexibility.

You'd be unlikely to buy a boat this size for ocean passage-making, but there's no reason you couldn't take her further afield with some extras installed. She's been designed with the Channel cruiser market in mind and her stiffest competition probably comes from secondhand boats.

SAILING ABILITY: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★☆☆☆

SPECIFICATION

PRICE: FROM £63,174 (UK ON THE WATER)

LOA: 33ft 11in (10.3m)

LWL: 30ft 10in (9.40m)

Beam: 11ft 3in (3.4m)

Draught (fin/shoal):
6ft 6in/4ft 11in (2m/1.5m)

Displacement: 11,795lb (5,350kg)

Upwind sail area: 595sqft (55.3m²)

Fuel: 130lt (28 gallons)

Water: 206lt (45 gallons)

Berths: 6/8

Engine: Yanmar 3YM20, 16.2kW

Designer: Marc Lombard

Builder: Jeanneau

UK supplier: See distributors at
www.jeanneau.com

PERFORMANCE

AVS: 138.5°

Sail area/Displ ratio: 19.5

Displ/LWL ratio: 182

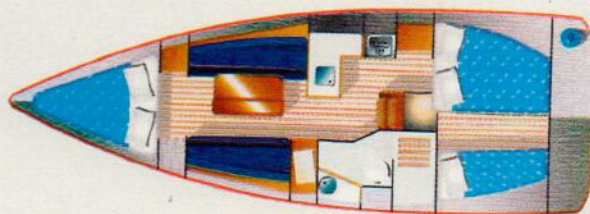


Weight



Speed

For a fuller explanation of stability and performance figures see
www.sailingtoday.co.uk



IF THE SUN ODYSSEY 349'S NOT RIGHT FOR YOU...



HANSE 345

FROM £102,688

Pretty quick and agile for a family cruiser, with a generous sail plan. Engineered with a powerful composite subframe to stiffen the hand laid-up hull. Comes with two or three cabins with dozens of options of finish and upholstery.

Inspiration Marine, +44 (0)2380 457008
www.hanseyachts.co.uk



BAVARIA 33C

FROM £77,668

With a new hull, new rig and a new keel, this is a significant update of the old 33. Hull ports and a long coachroof combine to give lots of space below. Swept spreaders mean no back stay and fold-down bathing platform.

Clipper Marine, +44 (0)2380 605060
www.clippermarine.co.uk



DEHLER 35SQ

FROM £160,000

The Dehler 35SQ is a development of the popular Dehler 35, but with twin wheels, hull windows and a full-width folding transom bathing platform. The cockpit now has the mainsheet track across the cockpit sole allowing easy access to the stern.

Inspiration Marine, +44 (0)2380 457008
www.dehler.co.uk