

On test





A bright star

Bavaria's newly designed Cruiser 37
incorporates many new features.
Duncan Kent takes her for a spin

Helming

The view forward from the twin helms is very good and the steering is positive



As I mentioned in my report on the Bavaria Vision a few months ago there seems to have been a step change at the Bavaria yard in Germany. Its latest yachts, both the Vision and Cruiser ranges, look as if they have been produced by a completely different company to the one building them just a few years ago.

Its latest designs appear to have had considerable input from cruising sailors, so one can only suspect that Bavaria has been paying a good deal of attention to its large owner base. Certainly, since the Farr Yacht Design and Design Unlimited teams got together, both the interior and exterior of its yachts have improved noticeably, and Bavaria's new 37 Cruiser is a prime example.

Gone are the rather utilitarian-looking rectangular coachroof portlights and squared-off edges. She now has a far sleeker superstructure that blends gently into the decks and makes the best of modern features such as flush hatches. Out go silly fripperies like electric swimming platforms that could break within weeks. In come useful features such



Ground tackle

The foredeck is clear of obstructions, which makes anchor work simple and safe. She has a deep chain locker and sturdy roller

'She has the feel of a forty-footer down below'

as adjustable backstay, inboard headsail tracks, cockpit table-mounted chartplotter and deep cockpit locker options. There is more deck gear of better quality and even some real wood.

Of course the new boat has the now familiar attributes of all mid-range production cruisers these

days – wide stern, drop-down transom platform, twin wheels – but I'm pleased to say that Bavaria seems to have managed to blend everything together in very manageable proportions.

Deceptive size

A 37-footer (11.3m) might not sound that big in an age when some are calling a 50ft (15.2m) yacht a starter boat, but with the careful thought that Bavaria has put into its new range, this boat genuinely feels like a 40-footer (12.2m) and I'd be happy to sail her across an ocean – with the right kit on board.



For video of the test, scan the QR code with a smartphone or see www.sailingtoday.co.uk



Easy handling

Sail handling is all pretty straightforward and drama-free thanks to well placed and sensibly sized deck gear



In all she's a dead easy boat to sail and the sail controls can be set to suit. The small jib is perfectly adequate for normal windward sailing, although I'd want to make the most of her sprightly hull by adding an asymmetric to my sail wardrobe.

Under engine she's a doddle to handle, spins in her own length and picks up steering way astern almost instantly. While the standard supply 19hp Volvo D1-20 appears to be a little mean on paper, it's probably all she needs with such an easily-driven hull. Saying that, we had the 30hp option on the test boat, which I believe most tidal waters sailors are likely to choose - just for that extra bit of grunt against a foul tide.

She's so easy to manoeuvre at close quarters that I'd save the bowthruster cost and spend the money on the better quality laminate sails in the upgrade package instead.

Businesslike below

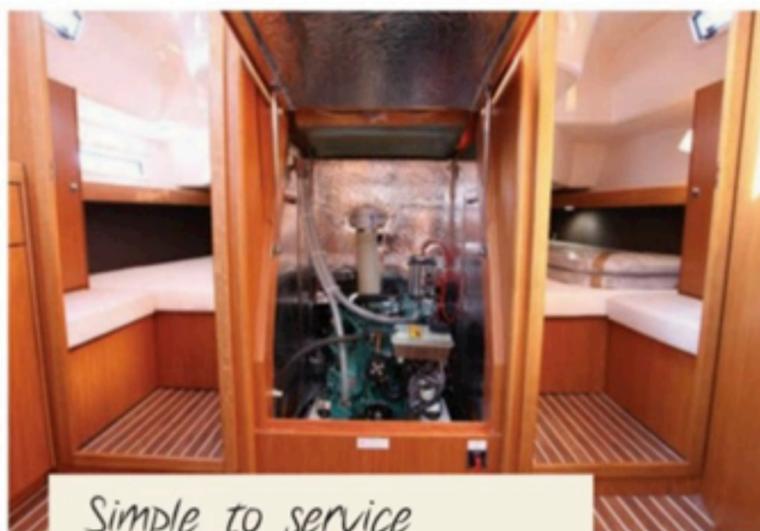
Bavarias have never been exactly luxurious below, and this one is no different, although she is comfortable, well laid out and workable at sea. The arrangements are straightforward, with a choice of one or two aft cabins, a forecabin with V-berth and two straight seats that could make good sea berths with lee cloths.

Two models are available, with either one or two aft cabins. But it's not just the extra cabin that's different. In the single aft cabin boat the heads is quite a bit larger and has a wet locker

Close-hauled she was responsive, but a little heavy on the helm – not because of any real noticeable weather helm, but just that the normally very light Jefa steering seemed a little tight for some reason. She comfortably made 7.2 knots, pointing up to a maximum 33° off the apparent wind and tacked through 78° quickly, losing little momentum along the way.

Bearing away onto a close reach nudged the log up to the high sevens, and on a beam reach this increased to 8.8 knots through the water in 20 knots apparent wind.

Off the wind she slowed a little to around 6.8 knots on a broad reach and the spreader sweep meant that sailing dead downwind wasn't possible unless goose-winging, which she actually did surprisingly well – even without a pole or preventer.



Simple to service

Lifting steps and removable side panels make it pretty easy to access the engine for maintenance

'Surprising nippy and dead easy to handle under sail'

DUNCAN'S VERDICT

This is a great family cruiser from Bavaria, which is much improved in the fit-out quality and layout stakes compared to some past models. In addition to her comfortable, bright and very practical interior (the two-cabin model is by far the best to my mind), she has an impressive sailing performance. She is quick, tracks well, is vice-free and easy to handle. She really showed her mettle in the strong gusts, only breaking free in a gentle round-up with 20 knots plus over the deck under full sail.

In all, she's very good value for money, although, like most other production boatbuilders, Bavaria now uses the 'package' scheme, which means the base price is unlikely to be what you end up paying if you want most of the cruising comforts we take for granted, such as hot water, a shower, shore power etc.

The demo boat Clipper Marine supplied had most of the upgrades, which would add at least a further £22,000 to the bottom line.

SAILING ABILITY: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

PRICE FROM £93,750

LOA: 37ft (11.3m)

LWL: 35ft 9in (10.9m)

Beam: 12ft (3.7m)

Draught (shoal/deep):
5ft 4in (1.6m)/6ft 4in (2m)

Displacement: 7,000kg (15,400lb)

Ballast: 2,080kg (4,576lb)

Sail Area: 698sqft (65m²)

Fuel: 150lt (33gal)

Water: 210lt (46gal)

Berths: 4/6

Engine: 19hp Volvo D1-20

Transmission: Saildrive

Designer: Farr Design/Design Unlimited

Builder: Bavaria Yachtbau
www.bavaria-yachtbau.com

UK agent: Clipper Marine, +44 (0)23 8060 5060, www.clippermarine.co.uk

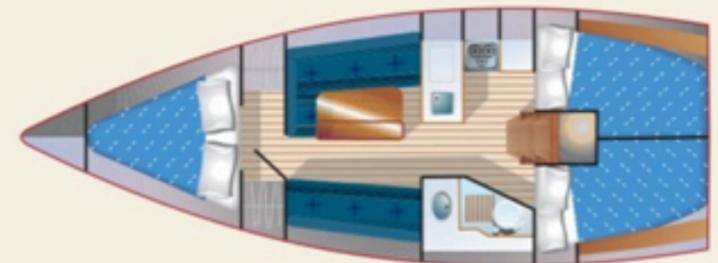
PERFORMANCE

Displ/LWL ratio: 150

Sail area/Displ ratio: 18



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



IF THE BAVARIA 37C'S NOT RIGHT FOR YOU...



BENETEAU OCEANIS 38

FROM £114,384

Only launched at Cannes boat show, this is the mid-range 'concept' cruiser from Beneteau can be supplied in three different guises – basic, open-plan for day sailing, better equipped for week-ending or fully spec'd with everything required for offshore cruising.

See www.beneteau.com for dealers



DUFOUR 380

FROM £133,000

This new Dufour is actually 36ft 8in LOA and, like the Bavaria, comes with two or three cabins and one head, with the former having a larger heads and shower stall. Performance is good and accommodation above average.

Marco Marine, 023 8045 453245
www.marcomarine.co.uk



SUN ODYSSEY 379

FROM £116,000

Part of Jeanneau's latest range of performance cruising yachts, the 379 is very modern with well thought-out accommodation and deck layout. Designed to be easily handled by a couple, all sail controls are to hand.

See www.jeanneau.com for dealers

Twin backstays **1**

The powerful backstay tensioner flattens the main in a blow, but it can obstruct the helmsman's head when sitting out

2

Jib tracks **2**

Having the jib tracks mounted inboard on the coachroof means you can achieve a nice, tight sheeting angle when sailing hard on the wind



Cockpit layout

Her cockpit is comfortable and spacious, with good transom/sea access. It's a good working platform, too

Simplicity has always been the key to easy sail handling and the 37C's deck layout is just that. A pair of chunky Lewmar two-speed self-tailing winches on the coamings is the standard layout, but having an extra pair each side, as on our test boat, offers greater flexibility. Ostensibly, the extra winches are for a spinnaker, but in white-sail mode the genny sheets can either be led to the foremost winch if you have crew, or the aft if you want control from the helm.

The genoa sheet tracks are mounted on the coachroof edges, which not only gives the sail a nice tight sheeting angle when sailing close-hauled, but also means the side decks are kept obstruction-free.

The mainsheet doesn't have a track, disappointingly, but its two anchor points are devised in such a way that you have twin sheets, each leading through a clutch to a different winch on either side of the companionway. Unlike a single anchor point, this allows you to pull the boom down on the leeward side, keeping the mainsail nice and flat in a blow.

Personally, though, I'd rather have the mainsheets led back to the aftermost coaming winch so the helmsman can trim from the wheel, and then lead the headsail sheets to the forward coaming winches. I've never found tacking the headsail single-handed a problem on a modern yacht with an autopilot. Whatever your personal preference, having six two-speed ST winches offers you plenty of scope for customisation.

She has a 9/10ths fractional rig with tapered, deck-stepped Selden mast with a little pre-bend and twin spreaders swept back 30°. The mast is supported by discontinuous caps, lowers and intermediates, the first two being led down to chunky chainplates bonded into the hull sides, giving a wide shroud base for maximum lateral support. Twin backstays open up the stern access, but can be a tad annoying for the helmsman sitting out. A powerful mechanical backstay tensioner is an option that ensures you can easily flatten the main in a blow.

As standard she comes with a semi-battened and slab-reefed cruising mainsail, a 105 per cent furling genoa, a deep, cast-iron keel and a balanced spade rudder. Options include a 1.63m (5ft 4in) shoal keel, gas-sprung kicker, full-battened or in-mast furling mainsail, gennaker and cruising chute with snuffer.

No slouch

We sailed her on a bright summer day with a SW Force 4-5 blowing. She was pretty quick off the mark, with her log soon showing 7 knots under main alone. She has a slippery hull, so it took very little to get her going. Despite this she remained stiff enough to keep her under full sail when the sea breeze filled in later at some 16 knots.



Let there be light

This hatch arrangement not only lets in loads of light, but with opposite opening, there's always air below

PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY



Table stowage

1

This is a great way to utilise space. Two drawers are ideal for quick access to stores or tools, and there's still room for a bottle store at the forward end

Galley

2

The galley is very well equipped and features a deep fridge and plenty of worktop with the covers on

Ventilation

3

I would like to see a couple more opening ports, but at least there are hatches galore to let light and air into the saloon

and separate shower stall. It is also set back much further in the boat, releasing enough room to include a full size, forward-facing chart table.

With two aft cabins, as on our test boat, the chart table is insubstantial to say the least, and can be slid away into the bulkhead when not in use. You can remove the infill cushion and utilise the aft end of the port settee as a seat, but most people would plot a quick fix on their feet. The drop-in cushion elongates the settee for sitting or sleeping if required.

Her galley is well equipped, with lots of nice wooden trim, sensibly high fiddles that are solid enough to be used as handholds, Corian-style worktops with additional sink and cooker covers to increase workspace. There is ample stowage (although some partitioning would be useful) and good ventilation through a portlight and hatch above.

Standard equipment includes a smallish Isotherm fridge (but with no basket), large sink and half-size drainer, and a two-burner cooker with oven. A better three-ring cooker and

built-in microwave are optional, as is an extra 150lt freshwater tank, which is installed under the forepeak berth.

Her saloon is bright and cheerful thanks to the twin hatches above and natural ventilation is far better than most current production boats. The attractive twin drop-leaf table seats six and has two useful drawers in one end, and a bottle store in the other.

The heads on our three-cabin boat are a bit on the small side and tend to intrude somewhat into the saloon. Headroom is good at 6ft 2in (1.9m) in the saloon and heads, increasing to 6ft 4in (2m) in the aft cabins.

I like the warm woodiness of this new interior and its lack of fragile gimmickry. The straightforward layout should work well at sea and there's enough space and stowage for long-term cruising, as well as room for all the necessary kit, batteries, hot water tanks, inverters etc that most bluewater cruisers carry. ✦

Pros and cons

All the cabins are woody but bright and the berths roomy and comfortable. In the three-cabin model, the heads is smaller and the small slid-away chart table to port will not please the traditionalists

