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JULY 27, 2012

Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 44 DS: All Decked Out

Stylish and seaworthy, this spacious 44-footer works well at anchor and underway. Boat Review from our July 2012 issue.

by Alvah Simon

The marine industry is increasingly moving toward the automotive business model. New boats are now introduced on an almost annual basis, and individual manufacturers are offering an expanding range of sizes, styles, rigs, and keel configurations to “customize your ride.”

Furthering that trend, Jeanneau now produces a line of boats ranging from 30 feet to the flagship 57 that cater to both the “performance” and “cruising” markets, and the company’s even subdividing the cruising market into two distinct concepts.

By utilizing identical hulls in the Sun Odyssey 439 and the Sun Odyssey 44 DS (for deck saloon), the company’s betting that once potential customers are comfortable with a certain size and price point, they’re more likely to refine their purchasing decision down to either the sportier 439 or the 44 DS and its more commodious interior than to stray toward the competition.

Because the interior is the conceptual core of the 44 DS, the traditional role of the designer has been divided into two camps. Philippe Briand has drawn a hull that retains Jeanneau’s signature look and features while incorporating an increasingly popular hard chine. And Franck Darnet has created an interior that’s visually spacious, very bright, and possesses a clean, modern appeal. Because a raised-deck saloon presents topside aesthetic challenges, he was also given charge of the deck design.

Briand is of the “wide is wonderful” school of thought. The 13-foot-11-inch beam is carried well aft in the typically French fashion. This creates enormous interior volume for aft cabins and offers several additional benefits.

First, the ample beam creates an initial form stability that translates into an upright, comfortable ride. Also, because of the large, flat sections aft, the hull is inclined to surf when approaching top speeds, noticeably enhancing downwind performance. The benefits are even more apparent above the waterline. Starting aft, the beamy transom presents a wide and functional boarding platform complete with stowage lockers, a pullout swim ladder, and washdown hoses. It also accommodates a wide aft-cockpit entry without minimizing the size of the wraparound twin helm seats or pushing the cockpit coaming too far outboard.

The generous area around the twin helm makes for easy movement between wheels and offers handy access to the coaming-mounted winches. Sheets and running rigging are led under sea hoods to minimize clutter. Darnet’s decorator’s touch is found in the taupe accents on the deck coamings.

The forward cockpit benches are long and wide enough for sleeping, and the slight slope of the trunk cabin makes a perfect backrest. A large drop-leaf wooden



Billy Black

A fore-and-aft arching cabin top and large ports in the house give the 44 DS a distinctive and stylish look.

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(http://www.cruisingworld.com/sites/all/files/imagecache/enlarged_image/images/201207/jeanneau44ds.jpg)

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cockpit table houses a chart plotter that can be rotated for viewing from either helm and for easy input when you're seated to either side of the table; extra cooler and stowage space; good handholds while under way; and plenty of entertaining space.

In the companionway, a single Lexan board simply drops down into a drained well, eliminating the traditional washboards that must be removed and replaced in rough conditions. Dual access to the latches ensures that crew won't be locked above or below, as they can be with many conventional hatch setups. At the base of the entrance lies a clever little bin to stow lines from the cabin-top winches.

The flow forward is unobstructed when the fairlead for the headsail furling line is adjusted downward to deck level. Because of the raised trunk cabin, good handholds abound. The windlass is recessed into a deck-accessed rode locker. The addition of a snubber-line cleat at the windlass would be useful, as neither roller has a fair lead to the forward deck cleats.

During sea trials on Chesapeake Bay in 10 to 12 knots of true wind over a light chop, we managed 7.2 knots on a close reach and 8.0 on a beam reach. The helm was responsive. We tacked with ease and maintained angles respectably close to the wind, given the high center of effort of the in-mast furling mainsail and freeboard inherent with a raised-deck saloon. We didn't achieve sufficient heel to test the form stability theoretically added by the hard chine. As it's placed rather high on the hull, I don't believe we'd have wanted to. The vessel is well powered by a Yanmar 54-horsepower diesel and carries enough fuel, water, and propane to verify its passagemaking credentials.

Darnet's design concepts, says the Jeanneau literature, have found expression in "yachts, fine residences, and other projects of note." While Darnet states, "Interior volumes must be wide and open to maximize visual space," this may not be the best idea for a boat being tossed about on a rough sea. However, once the 44 DS is anchored or dockside, the space and style are indeed reminiscent of and equal to the finest of shoreside abodes.

Due to the raised deadlights and multiple hatches, the walnut interior is bathed in natural light. The styling might be called Modern Scandinavian, with its long, flat panels of light wood veneers offset by stark white cushions and accented by futuristic fixtures and hardware. The aft owners cabin sports a king-size island berth, cavernous lockers, an en suite head/shower, dressing seats, side tables, and an aft opening port for extra ventilation. The forward cabin features a large V-berth, a private head/shower, and a thoughtful computer/vanity station.

The well-equipped galley sits to starboard of the companionway steps. The countertops and the twin sinks are molded from white Corian. Notable galley features include a large pullout garbage bin, a sliding spice rack, and a retractable spigot hose. The main saloon table cleverly folds into three configurations, with the option to control the height electronically.

In summary, the 44 DS won't necessarily attract the performance-oriented sailor. Nor will it appeal to the aesthetic eye of the traditionalists. But for those looking for a large, cheerful, modern living space, with ample sailing and powering ability to carry them in comfort to far-flung destinations, the 44 DS deserves an inspection.

Author and voyager Alvah Simon served on the 2012 Boat of the Year panel.

See a photo gallery of the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 44 DS [here \(http://www.cruisingworld.com/gallery/sailboats/boat-reviews/jeanneau-44ds\)](http://www.cruisingworld.com/gallery/sailboats/boat-reviews/jeanneau-44ds).

LOA	43' 9"
LWL	39' 4"
Beam	13' 4"
Draft (shoal)	5' 2"
(keel)	7' 2"
Sail Area (100%)	912 sq. ft.
Ballast (shoal)	6,945 lb.
(keel)	6,283 lb.
Dsplacement	21,495 lb.
Ballast/D (shoal)	.32
(keel)	.41
D/L	158
SA/D	18.9
Water	140 gal.
Fuel	53 gal.
Holding	42 gal.
Mast Height	55' 9"
Engine	54-hp. Yanmar
Designer	Briand/Darnet/ Jeanneau Design
Price	\$298,920

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