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Hanse Up

Hanse's hugely successful 455 has been superseded by their new 458. So how does the new yacht shape up against her predecessor? **Sam Jefferson** finds out







A couple of years back I tested a Hanse 455 in the Solent in virtually nil wind. It was a frustrating experience but I recall that the boat seemed to tick all the boxes required of it and was also extremely good value. Later that same summer I was fortunate to spend a week working as a charter skipper on a 455 out in Croatia and was glad that my initial feeling was correct. Even with eight guests, the yacht was comfortable and on the final day when a savage Bora kicked in, she also performed very pleasingly under sail. So when I was told that the 455 was to be superseded by the new 458 after just two years in production I was surprised. How do you improve on a successful model after such a brief period of time? Well, reader, the answer is by not doing too much at all. The team at Hanse are no fools and they know a good thing when they see it. The new 458 is very much a MKII, a 'reimagining' of the 455.

This is no bad thing. Back in the day when I tested the 455 I was struck by the modernity of the yacht. View her from the quayside and it pretty much slaps you around the face. Back then I wrote that this was a yacht that came from a school of naval architecture that's almost brutalist: a yacht where the designer has defiantly raised a Teutonic middle digit at the accepted rules of aesthetics and pulled off an unlikely triumph.

Essentially, Judel/Vroljik pulled

ABOVE
Generous freeboard is offset by a sleek, low coachroof

BELOW
The cockpit is a very comfortable with ample lounging space

off a bit of a coup and where they led, others have followed. The combination of aggressively straight up and down transom and stem meted by a soft turn to the bilge is a style that has been imitated since – perhaps most notably by Solaris Yachts. It means that, two years down the line, the hull looks fresh, and still startlingly forward thinking.

There have been some changes too – obviously – otherwise she couldn't really be labelled a MK II. To this end, portlights have been expanded forward and aft to let in yet more light and the cockpit has been tweaked to make it even easier to handle. And these Hanses are easy to handle; again, they pioneered the concept of the small, self tacking headsail combined with powerful main. Marry this with all the sail controls

led right aft to the twin helms and you have a yacht that really is a breeze to handle. Unsurprisingly – sensibly – Hanse has not opted to fiddle with that system too much, although there are new instrument pods on the binnacles.

The 458 offers four different layout options while fit-out choices are very extensive thanks to what Hanse terms 'mass customisation'. This may sound a little sinister, but it basically means that each yacht is custom-made to the order of a client and there is a plethora of options to choose from. Below the waterline you also have a choice of the standard 'T' shaped foil, with a depth of 2.5m. Alternatively, you can have an 'L' shaped keel of the same depth or a shallower version which reduces the draft to 1.82m.

Even before you step aboard the 458 you are already aware that this is a seriously voluminous yacht. Judel/Vroljik's solution to the endless dilemma of volume over looks has been to build a yacht with high freeboard and a relatively low, sleek coachroof. This works well out on the water where the boat looks purposeful rather than chunky but it does mean that there is a substantial step up to get aboard. It could potentially make the boat a caution under power in strong side winds but, to be honest, having spent a week trying to jam a 455 into unlikely Med mooring spaces in Croatia I can confirm that the boat is so docile under power that, with the addition of a bow





thruster, there really isn't a problem.

Stepping aboard and that feeling of space is confirmed. The cockpit is broad and roomy as you'd expect although it's broken up nicely by a cockpit table with good handholds. Locker space is adequate rather than immense but the addition of a pair of helmsman's seats with a clever deck shower/sink compartment to port and the gas locker to starboard adds a storage option, while there is a huge storage locker up forward just abaft the anchor locker which could happily swallow up whole dinghies if required. The bathing platform is huge and slips down on its hydraulic strut with a pleasing hiss and conspicuous lack of effort. There is also a liferaft locker tucked cunningly behind here. With the platform raised up, you are enclosed within the cockpit and feel very secure.

I have already mentioned that Hanse tends to favour a system whereby all lines are led directly to the helmsman and this is kept tidy by running them through channels built into the coachroof and coamings which re-emerge through clutches set within reach of the helmsman. The lines are then tidied away into rope bins situated outboard of the wheels. Throw in the self-tacker and electric winches and you genuinely do have effortless sailing. Not much has changed in this regard when compared with the old 455. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

'It almost goes without saying that the 458 also feels absurdly roomy down below.'

Light and bright

Head below down very thoughtfully angled companionway steps and, again, much remains from the 455. The stress has been on softening things up a bit down here and I have to say that I found the space infinitely preferable to the 455 I sailed on. I'm not really sure what has changed; the layout is largely identical but somehow there is a greater softness to the interior which feels like a more homely space.

The 455 had a slight feel of the Travelodge; clean, neat and just a tad soulless. The 458 felt more like home. One thing I would never level at the old 455 was that it was in any way dingy but, remarkably, the 458 has even more light. Up forward and aft in the cabins, the enlarged portlights provide yet more light and there is the addition of two extra windows in the saloon as well.

She's comfortable down below too; the huge U-shaped seating →





area around the saloon table means that if the weather isn't playing ball, there's plenty of space. It almost goes without saying that the 458 also feels absurdly roomy down below. There is masses of headroom and a wonderful feeling of space. That theme continues when you head forward into the master cabin, which is positively palatial. You could fit two doubles into this space, which is no coincidence because that is one of the configurations available – two doubles forward, two aft. That set-up is strictly for the charter fleets or Jacob Rees-Mogg. An unusual and extremely pleasing feature is the separate shower room which is situated to starboard with the heads to port. This is a nice touch, as there is always something slightly grubby about showering while pretty much standing in the toilet. Again, two massive skylights provide huge amounts of light. Inevitably the two aft cabins are more modest affairs but, again, the larger portlights compared to the 455 make for an even brighter space.

The galley is set to starboard and comes with a number of optional finishes, but the main factor is that it is very sensibly laid out with plenty of places to brace yourself against and everything nicely to hand. Plus without wishing to sound high maintenance, I always like to have both an upright and chest fridge just for ultimate convenience. This was a feature of the 455 and once again, Hanse has obliged with the 458.

On the water

Conditions were very variable on the Solent on test day but, after a weird, flukey start, the breeze settled, stopped swinging all around the compass and proceeded to blow a nice steady 15kn. This was all very useful as it allowed the 458 to demonstrate just what a versatile performer she is. In the light airs she was remarkably agile and that powerful main pushed her through the lulls with Impressive ease.

The 458 weighs in at around 12,000kg when all kitted out yet, despite this, she felt surprisingly lithe. I've always been a fan of the steering on Hanses. It's nice and light but still has good feel. The combination of this and the stiffening breeze all made for a rather joyous sail in beautiful conditions. We peaked out at around 9kn but

ABOVE (left) the amount of light that Hanse has managed to get into the interior is impressive (right) the forward cabin is the master cabin and is extremely roomy

the boat sailed consistently well and the sheer effortless joy of throwing her through tacks without having to even stir a rope is a luxury that I continue to enjoy. Regrettably we had no Code 0 but the boat still powered home downwind at an impressive speed and also showed impeccable manners.

Like all modern fin keel boats the Hanse performed well under power and the 53hp engine is also very well insulated, cutting back on intrusive noise very well. Combine that with bowthrusters and you have a recipe for easy handling. If I had one grouse – and this is from my time sailing a 455 in Croatia – it is that the throttle is sited rather low which means you have to reach down to adjust while manoeuvring. I personally prefer a throttle on the binnacle itself. But that's perhaps a personal preference.



SAM'S VERDICT

The Hanse 455 has been a hit with good reason and it makes sense to refine a yacht that is two years old rather than tear up the book and start again. In terms of the minor tweaks, I have to say that while the expanding of portlights was hardly vital given how light the vessel already was – you can hardly see it as a negative. Meanwhile, the slight softening of the interior has made a big difference and I found this a pleasant space. In terms of the actual sailing, very little has changed but you would have to say that is a good thing because the

boat performs exceedingly well. That powerful main is a real plus upwind as she gets going very quickly, while off the wind any Achilles heel you might expect due to the small headsail can be met by simply unfurling a Code 0. The advent of the easily handled roller furling Code 0 has changed the way we cruise and Hanse was one of the harbingers of this change in terms of rig set-up. Two years after the 455 was launched, their 'Mk2', the 458, remains ahead of the curve and an effortless pleasure to go sailing on.

ALTERNATIVE YACHTS



DUFOUR 46 GRAND LARGE

Dufour is another brand with a very progressive ethos, its 460 is also strikingly modern and shares a similarly voluminous hull. Perhaps the most striking thing of all about the 460 however is that she boasts a wine cellar and shoe caddies in her bilge.

Dufour-yachts.com
£184,000



BENETEAU OCEANIS 46.1

Another smart offering from the masters of mass production. The Oceanis 46.1 is brand spanking new. The yacht boasts class leading amounts of space forward combined with dramatic styling and masses of comfort

Beneteau.com
£200,000



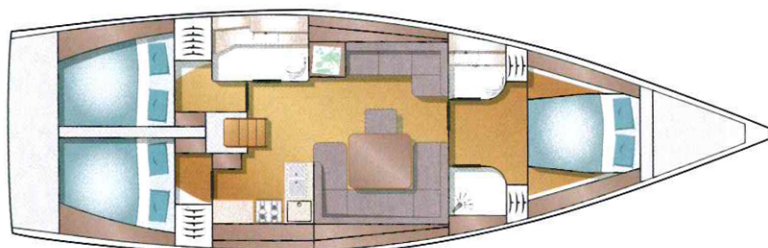
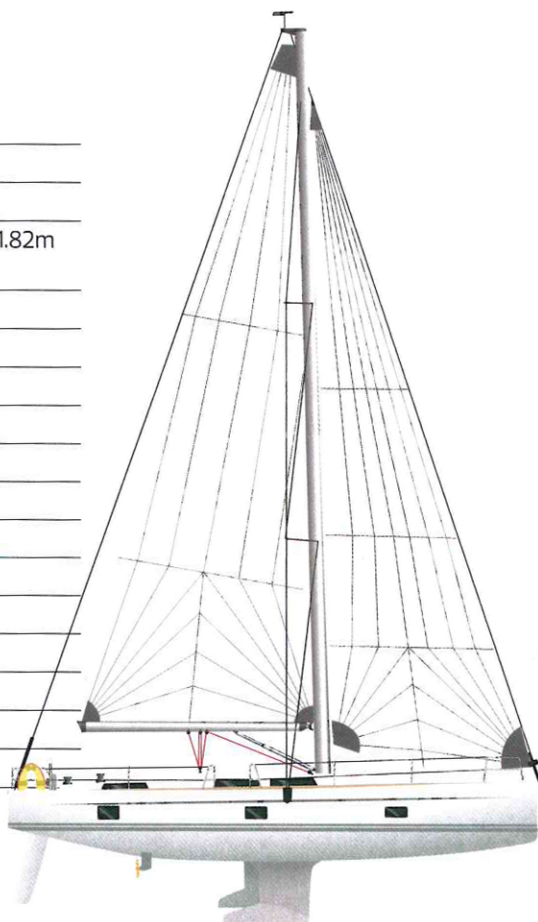
JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 440

Jeanneau's 440 is all new and is a striking yacht featuring a plethora of innovative new touches. She's a tad smaller than the 458 but features innovative 'champagne glass' hull sections forward that vastly increase her internal volume.

Jeanneau.com
£210,000

THE SPEC

LOA 14.04m (45ft 8")
LWL 12.2m (40')
Beam 4.38m (14ft 4")
Draft 2.25m (7ft 4") (standard), 1.82m (5ft 8") (shallow draft option)
Displ. 11,600kg, (25,570 lbs)
Ballast: 3,500kg (7,716 lbs)
Ballast Ratio: 31.82%
Engine: Volvo Penta, 53hp
Tanks: Fuel 220 litres
Water 450 litres
Disp/LOA: 178
Sail area/disp: 20.4
Sail Area
Main: 59sq m, 635 sq ft,
Jib: 44 sq m, 476 sq ft,
Price as tested: £280,000
Base price: £196,000



CAULISTA PAXTON