

Jeanneau Prestige 34 Sport-Top

The first pukka sports cruiser from French builders Jeanneau offers something most of its rivals don't: the option of an integral hardtop with an opening sunroof. But that's by no means its only selling point. **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

French boatbuilders Jeanneau have steadily been building up their motorboat range on many fronts. Their flybridge line-up now runs from 32ft to 46ft, while their choice of smaller powerboats is wider still.

However, what has been missing to date is a proper sports cruiser, one that offers the two-cabin cruising accommodation that is most buyers' idea of comfortable but affordable motorboating.

Finally, they have plugged this niche, and they have done so with a design that sets out to trump other rivals in several areas – not least by offering a choice between Open (open-helm) and Sport-Top (hardtop) versions.

We tested the latter, in its most powerful twin diesel outdrive guise.

DESIGN & BUILD

Jeanneau are major builders with their own in-house design office, but they admit that much of the concept and styling of their Prestige range is down to the Italian designers Vittorio Garroni and Musio Sale. And here, as on the other boats, their positive influence is not hard to spot.

There is the excellent arrangement for gaining access to the port side deck directly from the cockpit, for instance. And the bright and roomy open-plan interior in which the forward cabin can be opened up to the saloon via a set of double doors during the daytime.

Moreover, encroaching just slightly into the space that might have been allocated to the forward cockpit has given the midships cabin unobstructed standing headroom near the door for dressing.

However, what really makes the Prestige 34 stand out from other sports cruisers is the optional hardtop, with its electric sliding roof. Particularly impressive is that, despite being eminently practical, this does not detract from the boat's clean, well proportioned overall styling – not an easy exercise, especially when it comes to making sure that headroom is maintained when the sliding hatch is closed up.

The hull is medium-to-deep-vee, with the outdrives tucked well in under the sizable bathing platform and also quite far apart. This makes close-quarters manoeuvring more like what you would expect of a shaftdrive boat, which can be no bad thing.

A complete internal liner not only adds rigidity to the hull but also gives its inside surfaces a clean, fully finished look, in contrast to bare GRP.

✓✓✓✓
Clean styling, even with the hardtop. Sensible cockpit and side decks.

ACCOMMODATION

The sliding hatch giving access from the cockpit to the accommodation is a good width, and the wooden steps are large and kindly angled, but we question whether varnishing them is the soundest policy, as they are bound to become slippery once wet.

The central area is comfortably laid-out, and lent that extra feeling of space by way of the double-door opening through to the forecabin.

To starboard, the dinette will seat four for dinner, with a range of useful lockers outboard. There is a further useful amount of



BOAT REPORT Jeanneau Prestige 34 Sport-Top

storage within the seat-bases, their construction demonstrating very well Jeanneau's quick-build technology; precision-cut pieces of joinery slotting together like a jigsaw.

Across the way, the galley is not exactly generous but is functional enough, with a gas hob, a microwave oven, a single circular sink, a decent-sized fridge and ventilation provided by an opening port.

With one cupboard hogged by a wastebbin and calorifier, stowage is the main compromise; by the time you fill the two lockers outboard of the worktop with crockery, tea and coffee, you are left with not much more than a single

cupboard for pots, pans and victuals.

During the daytime, the intention of the designers is that the double doors through to the forward cabin will be left open to give the whole area a more spacious feel. With the well proportioned berth being a comfortable lounging height, it is ideal for curling up with a good book without being completely unsociable.

Clothes stowage here is limited to a hanging locker and a large under-berth drawer, as there is no shelf outboard of the upholstered side panels.

The toilet compartment is adequately provided with stowage and nicely turned out, with an inset sink arrangement. But it is

below The dinette will seat four in comfort, with good lockers both outboard and underneath.



below Neither the galley nor the toilet compartment is huge, although both are well specified.



below The forward cabin can be left open to the saloon. The midships one has good standing room.



somewhat compromised in terms of size, and showering will entail getting the whole compartment wet.

In the midships cabin, you get a good-sized berth along with sufficient room to stand and dress without banging your head or elbows. A couple of cave lockers set in the forward bulkhead provide easy-to-get-at clothes storage, complementing a small hanging locker.

A removable panel at the foot of the berth gives access to a whole crawl-in compartment housing the bulk of the electrical components and pumps.

EXTERIOR

The generously deep bathing platform runs full-beam so hopping aboard from the pontoon is an easy skip. The decking underfoot is teak-clad here as standard, but if you want this to run through into the cockpit as well it costs an extra £997.

The cockpit itself is well configured, with a large, comfortable semi-circular settee arrangement. This is served by a quarter segment of table when general lounging is the order of the day, but for serious al-fresco dining an extension to this can be hiked out of the generous lazaret, allowing six people to eat in comfort.

The seat-bases provide a useful measure of storage, and this extends capriciously under the helm seat moulding. The latter area also

houses the shoreside electrical hook-up, which is an odd location because you end up with the cable running round the settee backs; something on the transom would make more sense.

A sunlounger to port is the pick of the seating, allowing you to put your feet up in perfect shelter behind the screen, and join in conversation either with those seated around the main settee or with the skipper and his mate at the helm.

Ahead of the lounge are a couple of scalloped-out areas in the moulding: one bearing a hatch letting light and ventilation into the midships cabin, and the other fashioned for stowing charts.

Above all of this, the hardtop incorporates a hatch which opens and shuts at the touch of a button, allowing a good portion of the cockpit to be exposed to the elements when it suits but just as quickly battened down again if you need more shelter. An aluminium-framed canopy, stowed in the lazaret, snaps together to cover the rest of the cockpit if required.

Aft of the port-side screen coaming is the walkaway onto the 10in (25cm) side deck – a simple, safe means of moving forward to tend fenders and lines without having to make an awkward ascent from cockpit to deck level. Access to the starboard side deck is more conventional, and it is a mite narrower when you get there.

The foredeck has plenty of flat working area, and incorporates an electric windlass together with a locker which is usefully

subdivided, so you can stow the chain on one hand and throw warps on the other and they won't become entangled.

✓✓✓✓
A convivial cockpit layout and easy access along one side deck.

Mooring cleats, provided forward, midships and aft, are all a respectable size at 10.5in (28cm).

to shave almost £20,000 off the purchase price (at the cost of heavier running costs) there is a petrol alternative, twin 280hp V8s.

A cockpit hatch opens almost fully upright by means of an electro-hydraulic ram, allowing virtually unrestricted room over the engines. Indeed, most engine checks can be done from cockpit level, which is just as well, as getting down onto the treadplate between the units is tricky.

Annoyingly, the vital main fuel/water filters are located low down on the forward bulkhead. However, moving them up so they can be checked and drained more easily should not be much of a problem.

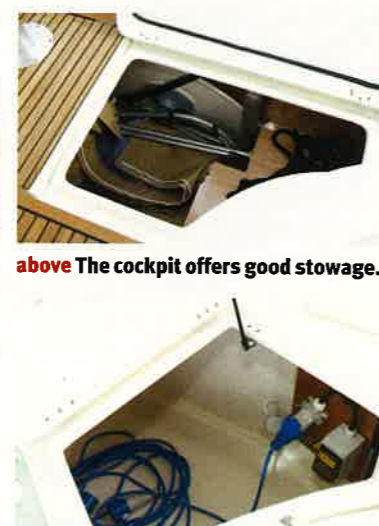
The bilge benefits from a liner and the

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

Engine options are all from the Volvo Penta stable, our test boat having the more potent diesel installation of twin 285hp KAD300s. If you don't need that much power, you can specify the new 210hp D4s, and if you want

below A semi-circular settee with an extending table will seat up to six people for dining.





above The cockpit offers good storage...

above The helm is well laid out, with a plotter dead ahead. above ...including the shorepower link.

compartment is not cluttered with auxillary pieces of kit, thanks to items such as the batteries being housed in the adjacent lazaret. Even so, there is little superfluous space in the enginebay itself, with the fuel tanks filling the wing areas.

Better access to the front of the engines can be had via a pair of bulkhead

cut-outs, enabling you to lean through from the lazaret and get at pumps and belts.

✓✓✓
The installation is accessible and tidy, if a little squeezed.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Our test boat had been dunked in the water only the day before we joined it for its delivery trip to the Southampton Boat Show. But Jeanneau's Solent-based dealers, Southern Motorboats, pulled out all the stops

below An aluminium-framed canopy can enclose the cockpit. Access to the port side deck is easy.



to get the boat ready, and it did not disappoint us even though it was fresh out of the wrappers.

We attained 36.5 knots with the engines pulling a shade under 4000rpm. This is slightly over their stated maximum revs but should reduce once loaded with a full cruising inventory.

The boat was notably easy to drive up to that speed, getting into its stride quickly and handling cleanly and without fuss. But it is equally happy for you to throw the helm over, carving a comfortably banked turn.

There is plenty of horsepower available over a wide rev band, so for cruising it is a matter of setting the throttles where progress feels most comfortable. Take your pick anywhere between 2400rpm, which keeps you jogging along on the plane at 17.5 knots, right through to 3600rpm, the engines' continuous rating.

For our money, 3000rpm gives a useful turn of speed (just under 27 knots) as well as decent economy figures (around 1.8mpg).

Conditions on the day were none too taxing, just a meaty version of the usual short chop you expect in the Solent, but this the hull disregarded completely. We ran flat-out with it, and kept up a steady, uncomplaining 22-25 knots when turning back into it, with no spray finding its way aboard even though we had shut the roof in anticipation. The only annoying rattle came from the glass lid covering the hob in the galley.

The boat we tested did not have trim tabs fitted, but we did not really feel we needed them. The hull responded to the power-trim of the drives predictably enough, keeping the boat nicely poised as we scooted around.

The builders have anticipated that most helmsmen will want to pop their head through the open roof, either at speed or when manoeuvring. To ensure this works, whatever your height, there is a drop-down footrest which will raise the footwell if necessary.

The console has been well thought-out, with instruments and controls easy to view and get at, whether you are sitting or standing. Most of the engine instruments are laid across one angled fascia, so everything can be clocked at a single sweeping glance.

We also liked the fact that the plotter/radar is placed fair and square ahead of the wheel, smack in the skipper's line of sight.

✓✓✓✓
Competent ride and handling, along with a good driving position.

SPECIFICATION & VALUE

Although the hardtop adds £4,300 to the base price of the boat, it is likely to appeal to most buyers in the UK, not least because it is something that few boats of this size offer.

If you need a cost-cutting exercise, you can plump for the smaller diesel option, a pair of Volvo's feisty new 210hp D4s, and save around £13,000 from what the boat would cost you with KAD300s.

Note that there are a few items you will want to add to the standard specification. One is the anchoring kit at £470 (although the windlass is included). Another is an electronics package at a steep £13,128, since even a log and depth-sounder, which most manufacturers manage to include in the base price, are extras. Some buyers will also choose to pay extra for a bow-thruster and trim-tabs.

However, the inventory and general build quality are pretty much as one would expect for the price.

And running costs look favourable, at just under 2mpg.

✓✓✓✓
Lots of extras you might want to add, but fuel economy is appealing.



Verdict

We spent several hours concluding our detailed inspection of the Prestige 34 after securing alongside the pontoons at the Southampton Boat Show. During that time, lots of people popped aboard and almost everyone agreed that this Sport-Top version was just the ticket.

Many said they thought the main advantage was simply that it does away with fiddly canopies. But there's more to it than that. Even with the sunroof left open, the cockpit enjoys much more protection than it would from just a screen, which is no bad thing for northern climes.

Viewers also liked the convivial cockpit, the excellent side deck access and the open-plan interior layout. Again we would concur, our only riders being that stowage is lacking down below and the toilet compartment is less than spacious.

Underway, the boat performs well and slips along very nicely. And opting for less horsepower (and therefore less cost) is not going to reduce the enjoyment factor.

MBM RATING 7/10
✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓

Jeanneau Prestige 34 Sport-Top technical data

specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	34ft 6in (10.53m)
HULL LENGTH	31ft 7in (9.63m)
BEAM	11ft 11in (3.64m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 1in (0.90m)
DISPLACEMENT	6.0 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	154gal (700lt)
WATER CAPACITY	55gal (250lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	9in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in
HEADROOM IN FORWARD CABIN	6ft 1in
HEADROOM IN MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 0in
FORWARD CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 4ft 6in
MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTH	6ft 10in x 4ft 3in

performance

engines twin Volvo Penta KAD300 EDC sterndrives. configuration 6cyl, 3.59lt diesels, 285hp at 3900rpm. conditions wind northwesterly Force 4, sea slight. load fuel 60%, water 100%, crew 2.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
2400	17.5	11	45	1.59	195	77
2600	21.5	13	59	1.65	203	78
2800	24.2	14	64	1.73	213	78
3000	26.7	15	68	1.78	219	78
3400	30.7	18	82	1.70	209	80
3600	33.3	21	95	1.59	196	81
4000	36.4	25	114	1.46	180	82

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin. acceleration 0-20 knots in 10.7sec; Noise figures are in dB(A), 0-25 knots in 12.4sec; recorded in the saloon. 0-30 knots in 14.5sec

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin Volvo Penta KAD300s & hardtop	£145,754
(includes electric windlass, teak decking to bathing platform, radio/CD-player, UK delivery)	
ANTIFOULING & COMMISSIONING	£1,248
BOW-THRUSTER	£3,850
ELECTRONICS PACKAGE	£13,128
COCKPIT FRIDGE	£1,061
ANCHOR	£470
TEAK COCKPIT SOLE	£997
BOAT AS TESTED	£166,038

ENQUIRIES Southern Motorboats, Universal Marina, Crableck Lane, Sarisbury Green, Southampton, Hampshire SO31 7ZN. Tel: 01489 565444.

the rivals



SEALINE S34
from £133,954 with diesels
Features an especially good midships cabin for the size of craft. No hardtop version, but keenly priced.
Tel: 01562 749100.
www.sealine.com



WINDY 35HT
from £176,000 with diesels
Classy performer available with or without a hardtop. But the latter option's sunroof is not particularly large.
Tel: 01590 673312.
www.windy.no



FAIRLINE TARGA 34
from £158,516 with diesels
Baby of the Fairline range offering two pleasant cabins and a split-level cockpit, but no sign of a weather-beating hardtop.
Tel: 01832 273661.
www.fairline.com