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**FACT FILE**  
Beneteau Monte  
Carlo 37  
LOA: 37ft 0in  
PRICE: £147,111  
TOP SPEED:  
30 knots with  
225hp D4s

# Bénétteau MonteCarlo 37

Italian style, a stepped hull, plenty of performance and a low price: is this boat as good as it seems? **REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON**

**Y**ou have to hand it to Bénétteau. The flair and panache it builds with often belies the price tag attached to its boats. This French yard also has a wonderful appetite for rejuvenating existing boat genres. Take the daring reinvention of the trawler yacht with the Swift Trawler 42, or the exciting Flyer range that brings

so much fun to the sportsboat world. So when Bénétteau announced it intended to put these talents into a new sportcruiser range it grabbed our attention. When it said it would use its Air Step hull system on the first 37ft model, our attention turned to intrigue, and when pricing reports suggested a sub £150,000 figure, intrigue became excitement.

## Design & Build

The premise is simple: a 37ft boat for 35ft money. Sounds good, doesn't it? Add in the novelty of an Air Step hull that makes heady claims on improved performance and some Italian design flair, and it's all getting a bit utopian. The boat really looks the part with its optional red hull, neat little ports along the topsides and for those of a

more practical nature, a new hard top option will be available later this year.

So what's the catch? Or rather, where's the catch, the hinges, handrails or detail of any real depth on this boat? Behind the scenes there are glimpses of quality, such as the liners that sit under each accommodation compartment, but the in-your-face aesthetics are limited. Owners of heavily spec'd boats, like Fairline's Targas, may well walk onto the Monte Carlo's bare cockpit and enquire when it is going to be finished. But then this is not Fairline Targa money and that is the tightrope you walk when considering this new

Bénétteau – price versus fitout. With a hull length of 37ft, close to 39ft with the pulpit included, it's 1ft 6in longer than the similarly priced Bavaria 35 and a fair bit cheaper than the same builder's 38 model. Bénétteau has done its homework and positioned the 37 intelligently in the market.

The air-injected design reverses the usual forward facing step, allowing the air to flow aft. The scoops and inlets that drive the air down may look small, but the draw from under the waterline is such that air is sucked down, through the internal piping and released just below the mid cabin. The claim is that this injected air creates a

## Design & build

Exciting, thought  
provoking but  
sparse



cushion to soften the ride. Bénétteau quotes an air/water mix of 70/30 around the step, suggesting a very slippery, and therefore economic, surface.

## Engine options and access

Many of the best-performing sportscruisers we have tested have been designed with one engine model in mind. It makes sense. What the engine is and where it sits will have a massive effect on how the boat performs and honing that calculation down to one block allows the greatest efficiency. Bénétteau, with a sneaky eye on the future, has used Volvo Penta's D4 series as its one





Clean and modern, but there is a lack of substance to the saloon and some natural light wouldn't go amiss either

stop power shop, ignoring the larger D6 engine and its extra horsepower options might seem a tad careless, until that is, you realise that a 300hp D4 is due out. The far lighter 4cyl D4 engine has some obvious benefits over its 6cyl sibling, not least a lower cost that fits Bénéteau's low budget ideals perfectly.

As for the engine bay itself, space was certainly not the reason why the D6 was discounted. The

#### Engine options & access

New 300hp D4 helps the cause



we will hold back any major judgements. However, raw ply reinforcements, untreated GRP and lots of loose cables are less than satisfactory, while the plastic fuel tanks look apologetic.

#### Performance and handling

You don't get many stepped hulls in this class and adding the air flow system only gets the anticipation levels up further. So with adrenalin fuelled memories of the 25ft 755 Flyer, we couldn't wait to see what this 37ft version offered.

The first thing that you notice is how constant the trim remains as the boat powers quite imperiously up onto the plane, reaching its 33

knot top speed. A level trim is a classic characteristic of the stepped hull, but this version is less severe. Onboard it all feels normal, but the trim gauge we set up told us that the boat lifts horizontally up onto the plane, sticking to a constant 5° as it goes. Similarly, stepped hulls can ignore the effects of leg trim, and although outdrive trim does not massively effect the Monte Carlo, there is a sense of the hull tightening up as you push through to +2 using the synchronised EDC controls. In the chop, +2 is about as far as the boat is happy to go, but in calmer waters you can push out to +5 and still turn without too much slip. Basically, what Bénéteau has achieved is the best of both worlds: stepped hull that is easy to

handle, but also rewards the helmsman with some tuned-in performance.

One thing that isn't neutral is the boat's reaction to helm. The boat turns like a go-cart. Half turns of the steering wheel are transmitted into lightning fast but sure-footed changes of direction. And with the leg trim looking after itself it has never been easier to enjoy the ride.

So what of Bénéteau's other claims? In a 3ft chop, the hull generally runs very smoothly with hardly any slam. The 260hp D4s are indeed a fine match for the boat, the combination of hull and horsepower delivering the goods. To be fair, Bénéteau hasn't made any great noise on top speed, preferring instead to focus on user-friendly performance. For our money, they have succeeded. The issue of improved economy is arguable at higher speeds, but below 25 knots the MPG figures do look better than average, hitting 2.2MPG at 20 knots. Whether this is all down to the Air Step or not is beside the point, the fact is that this hull clearly works, making it a far more rewarding drive than most conventional vee hulls. Our only issue is easily rectifiable, Bénéteau isn't offering trim tabs, an oversight on

“The tightrope you walk when considering the Monte Carlo is price versus fitout”



The toilet compartment offers no separate shower



There is a decent amount of stowage in the saloon



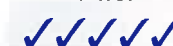
Air Step in full flight – the choppy conditions brought some great handling from this hull

a boat that does not react to leg trim. Just get the dealer to fit pair of QL trim tabs for you.

As for the other engine options, the 225hp D4 looks a little light. An estimated 30 knot top speed will suffer with a full complement of gear and a bit of growth. Far more exciting is the promise of the new 300hp D4 with a top end of 36 knots. The boat is clearly up for it, and we think you will be too.

#### Performance & handling

Fast reacting hull thrills on test



#### Exterior

There is no question that the Monte Carlo's deck area gets the basics right, but it rarely rises above

that level. We could be kind and describe the cockpit as minimalist, but it's really just bare. A simple U-shape seating layout and a wet-bar tucked inside the moulded side screens make up the social graces. The upholstery is designed to be removed for easy storage or cleaning but it takes on a rather temporary feel, especially the unsupported forward section. Stowage is found underneath the seating via simple, loose fitting plastic lids. There are some useful rope lockers added on to the seat bases, but there is no lazarette, or cavernous lockers like those found on the smaller, but more socially laid out, Jeanneau Prestige 34 Open.

Forward, past a long blank coaming, lies the stand out feature. The helm has a single, well-bolstered bucket seat, joined by a



### Bénéteau Monte Carlo 37 Stepped hull design

Bénéteau's Air Step is an exciting evolution on the stepped hull. The benefit of a stepped hull is the creation of two planing surfaces, one in front of the step and one behind, which are more efficient in creating lift than a single level hull.

**Hot Air?**  
The outboard section of a standard step allows air to be sucked in along its aft angled vee (fig A). What is different about Bénéteau's Air Step system is that the air does not simply feed in but is

Injected directly down to the centre line via two air scoops set at deck level, just behind the bow sections. This means the vee is reversed, allowing air to flow aft (fig B).

**Problems**  
The main issue with stepped hulls is how they turn. A greater lift and

reduced drag means there is concern over the hull slipping when put into a turn. To combat this, 'reverse chines' are designed to run vertically and grip the water on a turn. A potential problem is the amount of aerated water sent aft to the propellers, creating more chance of cavitations – when the props choke on air – and a drop in performance.



Fig A: Traditional step

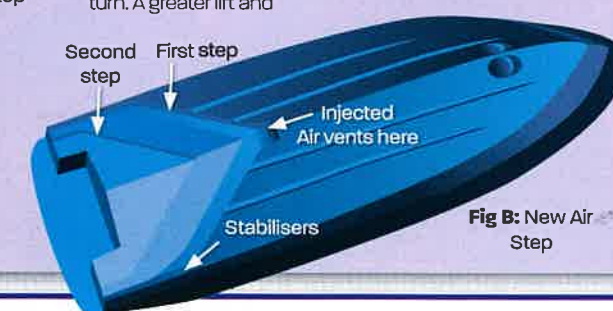


Fig B: New Air Step



Dressed up with some owners' gear, the forward cabin will work, offering space, stowage and style



Clever mid cabin maxes on headroom but not light





Space for a 12in plotter screen is a real bonus

two-person bench, complete with a decent back rest and an even better grab rail that juts out from the helm console. It's perfect for a young family of four to enjoy the ride from and very easy to get in and out of. The helm is sensibly laid out, apart from the high glare metallic finish to the dash. There is space for a 12in plotter screen smack bang in the middle of it all, and the steering and throttle fall comfortably to hand.

Getting up to the side decks is easy from either side and tall, if loose fitting, stanchion rails do give support. The decks are gripped all the way forward with an optional sunpad spread across the foredeck. The anchor locker is split into

### Exterior

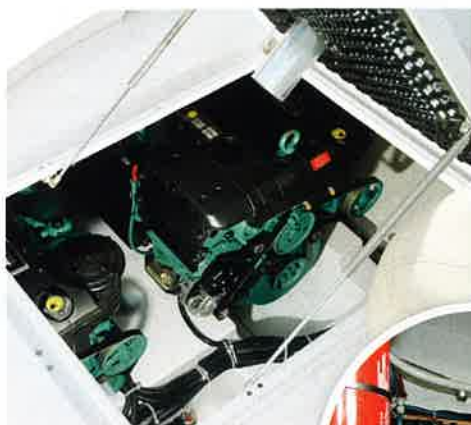
Simple but effective is not enough at this level



compartments, so it can take a few ropes without tangling up with the anchor chain. Getting back down to the cockpit feels a bit more exposed and some rails along the radar arch would help.

### Accommodation

Perhaps the reason why Bénéteau kept the cockpit basic was to give the interior a chance to look a bit more involved. The finish in the saloon is very clean, reflecting the current trend for flat,



A liner for the D4 engine bay

minimal surfaces and contrasting modern timbers. But, whereas this interior style can look cool, here the lack of any real detail might just leave you cold. Not the largest in its class, the saloon is on a par with the Bavaria 35. It offers up seating for four, the cushions are designed to pull out and bunch up for extra comfort, and the galley is good for the odd Pot-Noodle. There is a row of eye-line cabinets and some neat square down-lighters set into the deckhead.

But it fails to shine. The main reason is the lack of any natural light. Those cool stainless steel ports look good on the outside but they are way too small to let any light in, which is not helped by the decision to fit a tambour cockpit door. Bénéteau are going to open up the overhead hatch but, unless they can get a lot more light in here, the decision to fit a near-black wenge floor might not have been the best idea.

The forward master cabin does a good job in upping the style and detail ante. More inviting than the saloon, it has a decent berth and two



Engineering on hull no.1 wavered



Top side air scoops feed the step hull



Pipes leading to the air step vent

hanging lockers. There is no ensuite, so it's a trip back through the saloon to the toilet compartment. But you might be better off heading to the marina facilities, as there is no separate shower cubicle in here.

The big story to the interior is found further aft. The mid-cabin's daringly different layout has paid dividends on space by running along the centre-line of the boat rather than across the beam. Running along the deepest part of the boat has returned excellent headroom in its entrance way, hitting close to 7ft, and the minimal, modern fitout looks good. But again the shadow of poor lighting looms up. We can't help thinking that Bénéteau have missed a trick by not fitting some tall feature windows into the topsides. Had they spent a bit more money and

**“The Monte Carlo is unquestionably good value”**



The cockpit seating area will be upgraded to include a teak-topped table. Note the under seat rope lockers



The wet-bar can house optional fridge and grill

ignored the bean counters, this cabin, and quite possibly the whole boat, would have hit the heights of exceptional. As it is, you can't see out from the mid cabin, so instead of staring out over the water you are left pondering why no one fitted any hinges to the locker doors.

### Accommodation

Cool but where is the love?



### Specification and value

The Monte Carlo is unquestionably good value for a boat of its length and looks, but not for its internal fitout or standard specification. It isn't rocket science why builders opt for the lowest possible starting price, especially when everyone's at it. But marketing a boat for one price when it clearly will cost another is getting a tad dull. Bénéteau are by no means alone in this sales strategy, but because the Monte Carlo is being touted for its low price, it leaves the door open for a bit of criticism.

The starting price of £147,111 inc VAT is almost redundant, as we think most people will opt for the £153,307 260hp engine boat. From here you need to pay close to £8000 to get it to the UK (unless you plan to cruise from the Bénéteau factory) and, among other things, £1000 for a windscreen wiper. The red hull that sets this boat out from the crowd also needs to be paid for.

Using our standard MBM specification we reckon the base price for this boat is approximately £176,000. The daft thing is that even with this specification, the Monte Carlo is still a fairly cheap boat.

### Specification & value

Cheap boat, shame about the spec



## Verdict

This is an easy boat to buy. It looks good, goes well and costs less than it should. Up close the sacrifices on interior finish are hard to overlook, but maybe Bénéteau have got it right. After all, how often do we go away for weeklong cruises or even just stay the night? If you are shouting "ALL THE TIME" then perhaps the Monte Carlo isn't for you. But for the increasing numbers of people who only need looks and performance, the Monte Carlo 37 is a roaring success.

7/10



## Bénéteau Monte Carlo 37 technical data



### specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	Category B
LENGTH OVERALL	37ft 0in (11.3m)
BEAM	12ft 3in (3.7m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 6in (1.1m)
DISPLACEMENT	6.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	143gal (650lt)
WATER CAPACITY	44 gal (650lt)

### key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDEDECKS	8in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 3in
HEADROOM IN MASTER CABIN	6ft 3in
MASTER CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 4ft 2in



### performance

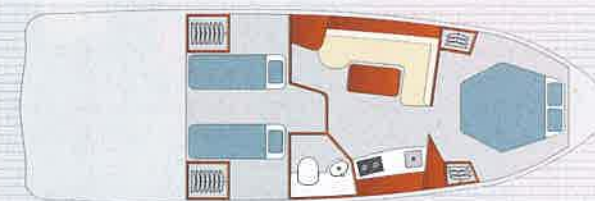
Engines	Twin Volvo Penta 260hp D4s
Configuration	4cyl 3.7lt 260hp @ 3500rpm
Conditions	wind SWly, Force 3, sea state slight
Load	25%, water 100%, crew 3

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
2100	14.4	27.7	6.1	2.38	272	74
2300	17.7	35.0	7.7	2.30	263	76
2500	20.8	42.3	9.3	2.24	256	76
2700	23.8	51.3	11.3	2.11	241	78
3000	28.1	70.4	15.5	1.81	205	82
3300	31.1	87.7	19.3	1.60	183	82
3500	33	104.1	22.9	1.48	169	83

Range figures in miles, based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in the saloon.

### prices

STANDARD BOAT with 225hp D4s	inc VAT £147,111
with 260hp D4s	£153,307
COMMISSIONING	£3478
UK DELIVERY	£4230
BOW THRUSTER	£3516
TEAK COCKPIT SOLE	£241
CANOPY	£2525
RED HULL	£1824
WIPER	£995
BOAT AS TESTED	£176,613



ENQUIRIES  
Dickies International,  
www.dickies.co.uk

### the rivals



BAVARIA 35 SPORT

From £150,400 (2x260hp)

A slightly smaller boat with less dynamic handling but it offers a similar amount of interior space and a decent cockpit for less money.

Tel: 02380 450001  
www.ancasta.com



JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 34

From £140,632 (2x260hp)

A smaller boat but that doesn't stop the Prestige from delivering a higher level of cockpit specification and below decks luxury.

Visit the website for more info:  
www.jeanneau.fr



SEALINE SC38

From £222,663 (2x260hp)

Launched at the same time as the Monte Carlo, the SC38's practical and stylised detail work goes some way to justifying its higher price tag.

Tel: 01562 749100  
www.sealine.com