

# Bénéteau Swift Trawler 42

**What's this? A French production boatbuilder muscling in on the territory of the bespoke trawler yacht specialists? Can it do as good a job? Or can it offer a cheaper route to the same lifestyle?**

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON

The trawler yacht is a rare constant in motor cruiser design, having graced our waters for over 40 years. It was inspired by the tough North American 'wooden boats' and deep-sea fishers, with their hard-chine displacement hulls and tall superstructures.

Whilst today's teak-dressed, flybridge examples might be rather more comfortable than the pioneers of the genre, in essence very little has changed. Until now.

Hitherto, the European market has been dominated by two builders, Grand Banks and Trader, both of which pursue a 'premium product at a premium price' strategy. Now they have a new rival, in the form of Bénéteau, one of the world's leading high-volume builders, who have launched a semi-planing 42-footer dubbed the Swift Trawler.

Make no mistake, this is big news. It's also a big gamble. Can the French company's production boatbuilding mentality deliver a serious competitor in what has become a specialist, almost bespoke, sector?

## DESIGN & BUILD

As the world's largest sailboat builders, Bénéteau must have an eye on retaining customers who are

looking to cross over from sail to power. The trawler yacht's lines will surely find favour among them, as they do among the legion of motorboaters who appreciate timeless style.

The dinky, toy-like looks that we first caught sight of in artists' impressions of the Swift Trawler have, in the flesh, been transformed into something far more handsome. The aft-cockpit design stays respectfully true to the genre, while still managing to bring something new to the party.

Designed by the Joubert & Nivelte team, this engaging 'trawler nouvelle' is personified by a glossy royal blue hull, highlighted with small circular ports and stainless steel rubbing strakes and air intakes, that contrasts cleanly with the brilliant white superstructure.

The hull's ample beam is carried well forward, while the deck line runs level a long way aft, but when the boat is viewed from the bows there is plenty of shape and detail for the eye to linger on. By keeping a good run of low level coachroof along the foredeck, pushing the raised part of the superstructure aft, Bénéteau have also allowed the proportions to stretch out and breathe.

If the looks appeal, then life on deck positively impresses. The sheer practicality and space that the deck layout offers is this boat's real ace. It comes on two separate levels, with the wide flybridge upper deck stretching out over the aft cockpit and side decks.

The decking feels solid underfoot and

incredibly safe, and Bénéteau have been especially clever with fixtures and fittings, installing no-nonsense 15in cleats and ensuring that grabrails are pleasingly chunky. In fact the whole boat reflects the yard's continually improving build quality. A tidy liner grid sits over the 10mm lay-up, providing treadplates in the enginebay and keeping bilge compartments clean.

Bereft of an aft cabin, the Swift Trawler's interior layout offers two cabins, both forward of what is a spacious, open-plan wheelhouse/saloon with convertible seating.

The underwater shape stays true to trawler yacht tradition, with a hard-chine semi-displacement form, but there is a twist in the tail. A moderate forefoot falls into a shallow three-quarter-length keel, but this gives way to flatter planning sections aft,

inset with deep propeller tunnels to allow for greater running speeds than most rivals.

## ACCOMMODATION

The interior design pays homage to the classic trawler style, and the spacious, open-plan layout will be familiar and attractive to any aficionado of the breed. However, it lacks something in finesse and detail.

Traditionally, trawler style relies more on

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A brave concept, but a successful and appealing design.





quality of materials and craftsmanship than on design statement; eschewing the striking curves and sculpted features of modern flybridge boats in favour of a traditional, warm ambience with acres of top quality woodwork. The dark veneered ply and sporadic white mouldings that cover the Swift Trawler don't quite muster the character needed to carry off such a simplistic approach. And there are other issues too.

The saloon is neither terribly convivial nor practical. The only fixed seating is a rather sober bench to starboard, which can be augmented by two standard-issue directors' chairs that look like surplus stock from a garden furniture catalogue. The wide expanse of sole could easily have accommodated a deeper, cosier and more comfortable U-shape or L-shape settee on which to while away an evening.

Similarly, considering the square-footage available, the galley offers precious little

workspace, being split into separate modules fore and aft of the starboard side door. It's all a little contradictory with the boat's image as a serious cruiser, and the lower helm's plastic console, although well laid-out, is not really in keeping with the trawler yacht ethos.

There are, of course, plenty of pluses. The ferry-style windows that line the saloon allow light to pour in and create a wonderful frame for the view outside. Access around the boat is superb, with no fewer than three separate

routes out on deck. Stowage is well thought out, with plentiful cabinetry, especially along the port side of the saloon, where some of the numerous lockers can double up as iceboxes and even hide a dishwasher.

Both of the cabins also work well. The forward master is suitably large and luxurious, while the double-berth guest cabin is cosy and has plentiful storage.

Lying to port of the forward lobby, the boat's single WC has its toilet and shower areas divided by a frosted doorway. The loo can be entered directly from the master cabin, or from the lobby by walking in via the shower.

There is space for a washing machine to be fitted into the shower area. Alternatively both sections are big enough to be

permanently separated at a buyer's request, leaving two independent compartments.

plenty of space in the after section; once the tender is launched, you have access to the full width of a vast sunpad. With tall guardrails safely ringing the whole area, and a non-slip deck, you never feel exposed.

The helm console allows for plenty of electronic instruments to be fitted, with space on either side for charts and handheld kit.

**ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS**

Currently, twin 370hp Yanmar 6LYASTP turbo-diesels are the only engine installation available. There is hushed talk of 200hp diesels being made available for owners content with semi-displacement cruising, but this has not been confirmed.

Although most of the saloon's wooden floorboards can be lifted, the satisfyingly heavy main hatchway is enough to gain entry. The engineroom lights automatically



An immensely enjoyable and practical deck arrangement.

below At the inside helm, the traditional yacht-style wheel contrasts with a modern console moulding.



below The master cabin is large and luxurious, the guest cabin cosy with good stowage. The one WC is handily divided into separate shower and toilet areas.



below With little fixed seating, the saloon is disappointing. Dark veneers aim for traditional ambience. The galley is split in two, which limits its workspace.



below The open-plan wheelhouse layout and good headroom will appeal to trawler yacht fans, but the available space could be used better.



**EXTERIOR**

Bénéteau have done a great job of providing practicality and form to the deck areas. Essentially, there is two boats' worth of space.

Boarding from either the wide shelf of bathing platform or the wonderful little bulwark gate amidships, you are transported into a world of teak that is a joy to walk upon.

The side decks are wide and deep, protected by a near waist-high gunwale and the upper deck's overhang. On each side there is a sliding door into the wheelhouse/saloon.

The side decks step up towards the bow, at which point sturdy guardrails take the place of the gunwale. The working area of the foredeck is flat and safe. Twin lockers flank the windlass, and a stainless steel and teak anchor platform pushes out over the prow.

Back aft, the cockpit is perfect for alfresco but sheltered socialising, and can be fully closed off by way of canopies concealed inside the upper-deck supports. This effectively extends the interior accommodation right out into the cockpit, especially if the optional heater is set up here.

In the sole, there are no fewer than three separate hatches down into the cavernous, compartmentalised lazaret. Steps lead down into the main chamber, which is big enough to house a generator as well as providing general stowage and giving access to the steering gear. On either side are the twin water tanks, topped by veneered trays for smaller stores.

The upper deck is reached via a wide and sturdily framed stairwell, topped by a huge entranceway with a gas-strut hatch. With seating for five or six, in addition to the skipper's chair, and served by a wet-bar, a coolbox and a table, this is likely to be where you spend most of your daylight hours, weather permitting. And if the sunshine gets too much, the bimini will provide some shade.

Even with an inflatable neatly stowed up here (the boom is a £1065 extra), there is still







**above** You can crawl on a treadplate between the engines. A ladder and automatic light help you down.

illuminate, providing just enough visibility for general service checks.

The wide and spacious enginebay makes it possible to crawl right around the Yanmars on the aluminium treadplate. With the floorboards still down, there is 3ft of headroom, and Bénéteau's neat network of liners tidies up the bilge and ensures that there is always somewhere to place a supportive foot.

At the forward end, the 330gal stainless steel fuel tank runs athwartships, with the pre-filters and water strainers mounted beside it. Neat cable runs ensure that everything is shipshape.

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A neat and tidy installation with good all-round access.

**PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

Now that you have got used to the idea of this Bénéteau being a trawler yacht, we would ask you to clear your mind of all such associations.

The Swift Trawler has none of the rolling,

wallowing traits of the trawler breed. With so much weight up top, we were expecting it to have a certain sway, at least at low speeds, but it simply didn't materialise. Admittedly the conditions were calm, but the hull suggested it would be just as rigid and steadfast in rougher sea states.

We simulated a beam sea by turning fast and sharp before powering off, letting our wake catch up with us. We swayed once down the approaching slop, and then steadied immediately. If the only thing stopping you owning a trawler yacht was the thought of a green-gilled ride, then this vessel could be your passport into the club.

It's no slouch either, hitting 20 knots in under 12 seconds before powering on to a top speed of just under 28 knots at 3350rpm.

When running hard, the small keel has no obvious effect, and the boat turns surprisingly well too, although the wheel requires a cumbersome eight turns lock-to-lock.

Fuel economy is no better than average, but

a useful 330gal tank capacity provides a lengthy cruising range. At a reasonable cruising speed in the order of 18 knots, you could manage something close to 300 miles.

If you really want to cruise on the cheap, you can pull back to 1200rpm and 8 knots. At that rate, you will manage around 2.5mpg, creating a range of 600 miles plus.

Visibility from the upper helm is predictably first-class. If you're driving in a seated position down below, the bow just breaks the horizon, but it can be edged down using the standard-fit flaps; hot-air blowers are fitted to clear the forward screens.

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Impressive cruising range, without the usual trawler yacht roll.

**SPECIFICATION & VALUE**

It's verging on redundant to compare any other make with a Grand Banks in terms of build quality, but this Bénéteau offers a similar cruising ethos with a similarly high specification at a whopping £130,000 less than its equivalent model, the GB42.

Indeed, the Swift Trawler looks even better value when you strip it back to its base price of £241,197 inc VAT. But, as ever with Bénéteau, the standard specification is not as well stocked as it might be, and neither does that sum include delivery or commissioning.

The blue hull colour, teak decking, canopies and upper deck lifting crane are all optional extras, and ones that add significantly to the boat's character and usability. And there are

other cruising essentials, such as a holding tank and an anchor, which should really have found their way onto the standard inventory. All this means that the cost of the boat as tested is not far off £300,000.

Mind you, the standard equipment still includes a shorepower connection, a battery charger, trim tabs, an electric windlass and, most pleasing of all, a bow-thruster.

Depending on your needs, about £260,000 should get you a perfectly usable inventory to match a wonderfully usable boat, albeit with delivery and commissioning still to be added. That's good value when compared to most existing trawler yachts, but nothing special when compared to its faster flybridge rivals.

To put it in perspective, the same money would almost buy the excellent new Princess 42.

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Much cheaper than a Grand Banks, but far from all-inclusive.

**Bénéteau Swift Trawler 42 technical data**



**specifications**

BUILD	glass reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	44ft 8in (13.6m)
BEAM	13ft 8in (4.17m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 5in (1.05m)
AIR DRAUGHT	13ft 1in (4.0m) with mast down
DISPLACEMENT	10 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	330gal (1500lt)
WATER CAPACITY	140gal (640lt)

**key dimensions**

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	15in
HEADROOM IN WHEELHOUSE	6ft 6in
HEADROOM IN MASTER CABIN	6ft 4in
HEADROOM IN GUEST CABIN	6ft 4in
MASTER CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 5ft 6in
GUEST CABIN BERTH	7ft 1in x 4ft 9in

**performance**

engines twin Yanmar 6LYASTP diesels.  
configuration 6cyl, 5.18lit, 370hp at 3300rpm.  
conditions wind southwesterly Force 2-3, sea state slight.  
load fuel 75%, water 75% crew 4.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1200	7.0	3	12	2.30	607	62
2200	12.5	14	60	0.89	233	66
2500	17.6	18	80	0.98	260	69
2800	20.0	23	102	0.87	230	74
3000	22.1	28	124	0.79	210	79
3200	24.1	30	140	0.80	212	80
3400	27.8	34	150	0.81	214	81

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin. Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the saloon.

**prices**

STANDARD BOAT with twin 370hp Yanmar diesels	inc VAT £241,197
LAUNCH, COMMISSIONING & DELIVERY	POA
COLOURED GELCOAT	£1,516
TEAK COCKPIT DECKING	£2,860
TEAK DECKS	£4,491
MORSE ELECTRONIC CONTROLS	£3,445
LIFTING CRANE	£1,065
COCKPIT CANOPY	£1,553
FLYBRIDGE AWNING	£1,680

BOAT AS TESTED £266,515

**ENQUIRIES**

A M Dickie & Sons, 1C East Lockside, Brighton Marina, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5HA.  
Tel: 01273 675755. www.dickies.co.uk

**the rivals**



**GRAND BANKS 42**  
from £409,100  
The 'classic' trawler-yacht, with acres of solid woodwork and plenty of elbowroom. Tel: 01932 243722. www.boatshowroomsolondon.com



**TRADER SUNDECK 41+2**  
from £337,640  
Advantages include a huge aft cabin, two WCs and the option of a third bunk cabin. Tel: 01243 375211. www.tarquin.co.uk



**HARDY COMMODORE 42**  
from £393,584  
A fast, handsome-looking three-cabin trawler yacht from a British builder. Tel: 01692 408700. www.hardy-marine.co.uk

**Verdict**

Bénéteau should be applauded for this brave new design. That the result comes so close to unqualified success is testament to the ability of this increasingly impressive French yard. From a blank sheet of paper, they have created a modern take on a classic style and gifted it with the performance and price to rival most modern flybridge cruisers.

For many customers this alone will be enough to secure their order, and we have no doubt other boatyards will be watching with more than a passing interest. Our only concern is that, by trying to be all things to all people, the Swift Trawler may end up falling between two stools.

On the one hand, existing trawler yacht owners might be put off by the production-boat feel of the saloon, despite the obvious cost benefits. On the other hand, flybridge owners might be surprised that a 42ft Bénéteau, even one as classy as this, is not significantly cheaper than a similar-sized Princess.

Time will tell, but neither issue is incurable if sales don't turn out to be as swift as its name suggests.

**MBM RATING** 7/10  
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**below** The aft cockpit offers sheltered relaxation.



**below** There are three hatches to a huge lazaret.



**below** Visibility from the upper helm is perfect.



**below** The upper deck has seating for up to six people, in addition to the central helm chair.



**below** Side decks offer security and a bimini gives shade.

