



PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY

The New Cruiser

It's clever, accommodating and easy to use. Is this the cabin cruiser for the 21st century? REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

Scan the QR code to watch the Jeanneau NC9 in action

The brief...

Those of you with long memories will recall something called a cabin cruiser, which were practical, comfortable and affordable things designed to be used by people. In the NC9, Jeanneau might just have rekindled this genre, as long the NC11's winning formula can work on a smaller scale. **Mark**

LOA: 30ft 11in (9.43m)
PRICE: from £166,435
TOP SPEED: 26.7 knots
BUILDERS: Jeanneau
ENQUIRIES: www.jeanneau.com

Last year, Jeanneau's reputation for practical wheelhouse boats went into overdrive with the launch of the NC11. The NC bit stands for New Concept but we don't think we would be doing anyone a disservice to suggest that what the NC really did was amalgamate every good cruising idea from the last 10 years into one super-versatile cruiser. In a 35ft hull, the NC worked brilliantly, packing in an extending cockpit, a multi-talented wheelhouse saloon and two good cabins. Jeanneau thinks it can offer the same box of tricks in a 30ft hull. If it can, not only could we be looking at one of the most accommodating 30 footers ever built, but with its single diesel sterndrive it could also be one of the most efficient to run. The question is, has anything vital been lost in the downsizing?

Design & build

The NC9 hull is of course shorter than the 11's, but it's also a massive 2ft narrower. This puts considerable pressure on the interior volume but, and don't ask us how, all the NC features are in places with no obvious space issues. The transom has an access gate either side through to the cockpit, like on the NC11. When the sliding seat module here is trundled back onto the bathing platform to increase deck space in the cockpit, you can still hop aboard whichever side the boat is lying. Jeanneau's asymmetric side deck layout takes on greater importance at this length, with one good deck far more appealing than the usual two poor ones. The port deck gets the extra width with an impressive 10in to play with and a reassuring depth of gunwale gives a walkaround feel.

Halfway along this deck you can dive through the side door by the helm station. Back in the cockpit, the three-part patio doors can be slid to one side or the other, enabling the rear portion of the wheelhouse dinette seating to do an about-face into the cockpit. The cleverness doesn't stop there either. The forward end of the seating flips forward so that, when in flight mode, two people can sit up and accompany the skipper. The dinette will also easily seat four people for lunch. At this juncture it is worth mentioning that all these supremely useful, big-boat features work brilliantly on this 30ft platform, and it goes on. The galley is neatly tucked into a cabinet behind the helm station and is kitted out for extended cruising with a two-burner gas hob, full oven/grill and a big sink. There is also a built-in fridge, rubbish bin and a reasonable

amount of storage. Should you need to stock up for a longer voyage, there is stacks of room in the lined-out cavern under the cockpit sole. Jeanneau offers, as an extra, a neat bank of well-secured drawers to help keep things tidy as well. So, at deck level, the layout has shrugged off the effects of downsizing. The wheelhouse is definitely helped in its quest for space by the fact that it opens up so eagerly to the elements, either by way of the standard

"One good deck is far better than two poor ones"

manual sunroof or the optional electric one shown here. Signs of compromises though can be found in the two cabin layout below decks. The forward cabin boasts a good-sized island double – made full-sized by an easy-to-deploy extension piece – but the mid-ships cabin takes a hit. Rather than a pair of singles, which would have been handy for a family, room has only been found for a narrow double. Stowage is also in short supply in both cabins, although neither is lacking in headroom or natural light thanks to the elongated topside windows. The final cut-back concerns the toilet compartment, which does not have a separate shower stall, as found on the NC11. Then again, if you can find us a 30ft cruiser that does, we will be very impressed.

WHEELHOUSE



WHEELHOUSE



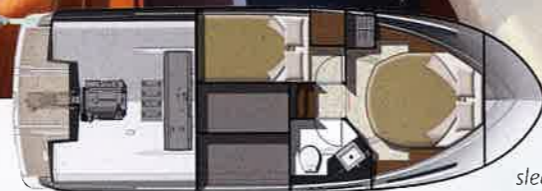
Interior

Versatility is the name of the NC game

Masses of light, access and seating options for the wheelhouse. The optional sunroof – a nicely

engineered piece of kit Jeanneau has developed with Webasto – and triple cockpit doors turn the practical, all-weather nature of this area into something far more social and fun.

The galley is well appointed, and if stowage is found wanting at all, then there is bags of space under the



double berth extends to a full 6ft 6in for sleeping, then shuffles back to give several inches more standing and changing room during the day. Potential owners may be frustrated that the berth in the mid cabin is a friendly double, rather than a twin.

sole (lifting easily on gas struts). Below decks there are compromises to be made but space-saving ideas do work well. The master cabin is accessed via a sliding door, while its



STOWAGE



FORWARD CABIN



GALLEY



MID CABIN

HEADS

From the helm

A happy helm for every occasion

When the weather turns foul, a wheelhouse makes a lot of sense. On the Jeanneau, two large wipers keep the large one-piece screen clear, as do the standard-fit demisters. But when the sun shines, so does this design. The sunroof opening allows the skipper



HELM



DOOR TO SIDE DECK



VISIBILITY



SUNROOF

a view out, a portion of the seat squab hinging back to give standing room, as well as a clearer passage through to the side door.

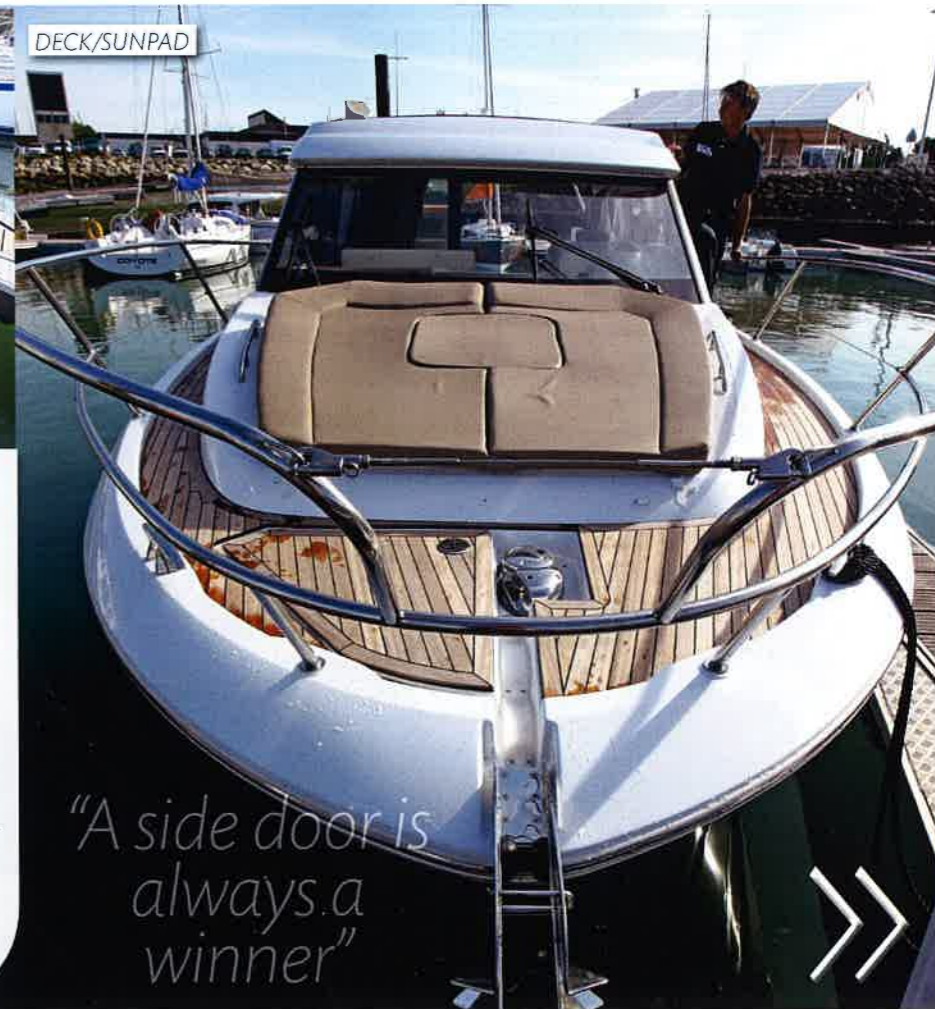
The helm itself may look simple, but there has been some thoughtful design work here. The engine instrumentation is set in a run of dashboard that is actually stepped down into the console, rather than raised. It might be a small design

feature, but it's one that helps to maximise forward visibility.

The wheel and throttle are at just the right height and ahead of the wheel is space for a 8in display. Having the bow thruster joystick control by the side door is useful too, allowing for any short-handed skippers out there to make a last-minute adjustment from the side deck.



COCKPIT



DECK/SUNPAD

Exterior

Dynamic decks really deliver

For a 30-footer that carries a pretty spacious wheelhouse, port hand side deck access is impressive. A side door is always a winner and being able to nip out is a boon for anyone who has to run the boat single-handedly or support a less confident crew member. The starboard side deck is less generous, but at 6in wide it is not unusable.

The cockpit seat trundles back effortlessly to increase cockpit space by 16in and there is no reason why this should not be its default position because, with transom doors either side, there is always easy access. Stowage is found in the cockpit seat and more space could be utilised in the engine bay. Steps to each side of the cockpit lead forward where there is a decent-sized anchor locker with the optional windlass stepped into a well.

"A side door is always a winner"





Performance & handling

As a sensible boat/engine package, the single Volvo Penta D4 rated to 260hp is spot on. With a clean hull and little gear aboard, it will deliver just under 27 knots flat out and near enough 22 at cruising revs. Add a bit of fur on the hull, boating paraphernalia and personal effects, and you can expect these to shed a good knot or two but this will be adequate for most boaters. While a bit more zip might not go amiss – certainly the hull looks good for it – the



essence of the NC9 is about reliable, versatile cruising and with 2.5mpg on offer across the rev range, it carries out the task brilliantly. In any case if the 300hp D4 were offered, the extra cost would be pretty prohibitive.

As it stands, the hull does all you ask of it. It moves through turns predictably and pushes up through revs and speed without fuss. As with the economy, the hull is happy to sit at whatever speed takes your fancy, taking up much the same relaxed stance in the low teens as it does when striding out into the 20s.

"It will deliver just under 27 knots flat out"



Specification & value

The NC9's £130,000 base price looks pretty keen, especially when it is offering this much versatile accommodation. However, you really need to add on Jeanneau's £10,000 Premiere package because it gives you all the must-have hardware (electric windlass, bow thruster, trim tabs and shorepower) along with the rather attractive grey hull. A further upgrade also includes an electric toilet and the under-sole storage arrangement, plus carpeting and decking for the cockpit, comes in at £16,250, which doesn't seem such good value. Better to spend the difference on the tidily engineered electric sunroof, which is central to the whole feel of the boat, and forego the standard pair of sliding hatches. The cockpit canopy also needs to be budgeted for and there are some electronics to consider. All up, you are looking at around £160,000.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	30ft 11in (9.43m)
HULL LENGTH	29ft 10in (9.10m)
BEAM	10ft 4in (3.15m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 11in (0.91m)
AIR DRAUGHT	10ft 4in (3.15m)
DISPLACEMENT	4.8 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	66gal (300lt)
WATER CAPACITY	35gal (160lt)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	10in (25cm) & 6in (15cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in (1.93m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 5ft (2 x 1.52m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 4in x 3ft 5in (1.93 x 1.04m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	single Volvo D4-260 diesel sterndrive
Configuration	4cyl, 3.7lt, 260hp at 3500rpm
Conditions	wind SW'ly Force 3, sea calm
Load	fuel 75%, water 50%, crew 3

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
2500	12.1	4.8	22	2.52	134	76
2800	16.5	6.2	28	2.66	141	77
3000	19.7	7.5	34	2.63	139	78
3200	21.9	9.0	41	2.43	129	79
3400	24.0	10.3	47	2.33	122	80

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the wheelhouse.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with single Volvo D4-260	£133,123
with premiere package (bow thruster, electric windlass, shorepower and charger, trim tabs, CD radio)	£9964
HEATING	£3477
ELECTRIC SUNROOF	£4929
COCKPIT CANOPY	£3075
ANTI FOUL	£870

BOAT AS TESTED £166,435

As tested with preference package

Engine bay

We fully endorse Jeanneau's decision to only offer a single-engine installation, but it also only offers a single choice of engine. A 260hp D4 is going to do the job admirably, but Jeanneau doesn't mention the 300hp variant, which would allow the hull to tip its cap at 30 knots. With just a single unit in the engine bay, there's plenty of space to check things over, as well as for auxiliary pieces of kit such as batteries and a calorifier. The plastic fuel tank is set low down across its forward end. Access is through a gas-strutted hatch, that boasts a double helping of sound insulation.



THE VERDICT

Jeanneau's New Concept delivers one of the best, most down-right usable boats you will ever find this side of 30ft. We can't really knock the mid cabin as no one offers better, so instead let's just say that the cabin cruiser is back and it means business.



Meet the family



BIGGER

NC11 from £204,546

LOA 36ft 6in (11.15m)

The NC9's big brother offers more space – not least in the toilet department, which benefits from a shower. Otherwise, the layout is similar.



SMALLER

Merry Fisher 855 from £73,436

LOA 27ft 6in (8.40m)

Powered by a 250hp outboard engine, this boasts identical features, including side door to the wheelhouse and two cabins below.

The rivals



Aquador 28C from £147,700

LOA 28ft 10in (8.81m)

Has walkaround side decks both sides. Sleeps four between an open-plan fore cabin and two berths under the wheelhouse seating.



Karnic 2965 Cruiseline from £132k

LOA 33ft 9in (10.30m)

A coupe with good walkaround decks and big cockpit. Interior boasts a separate double forward and a midships double.