

Jeanneau Prestige 32

French builders Jeanneau have been taking the UK market by storm with their stylish and affordable cruisers. Has the baby of their flybridge range got what it takes to tackle the best that Britain can offer? **REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON**



Last year was a good one for French boatbuilders. A stream of attractive new models with even more attractive prices proved irresistible to many British buyers. At the forefront of this renaissance were Jeanneau, moving away from their heartland of cheap and cheerful dayboats into an altogether more luxurious sector.

Their Prestige range of sportscruisers and flybridge boats has been a massive success for Monsieur Jeanneau, changing buyers' perceptions of the brand. Both the flagship 46 and 34 Open made a big impact last year. But it is the baby of the bunch, the 32, that has shone brightest since its launch back in 2002. In fact, it has proved so popular with our readers (a discerning and demanding bunch), that many have contacted us to pass on their glowing opinions and ask us for ours. So here they are.

DESIGN & BUILD

It is easy to see why the Prestige 32 has won so many fans. This is not an upmarket sportsfisher but a smooth, curvaceous, thoroughly modern flybridge cruiser. And that flybridge — a make or break design element, especially at this compact size — is one of the widest, deepest and consequently safest in its class.

Also, unlike many of its rivals, such as the Sealine F34 and Galeon 330, this craft is powered by propellers on shafts rather than stern drives. While both set-ups have their proponents, there will always be some traditionalists who prefer the superior stability and easier maintenance afforded by a shaftdrive arrangement. Beneath the waterline, semi-tunnelled tracks allow the shafts to run as flat and straight as possible, for maximum forward propulsion.

Jeanneau have been generous with the boat's beam: at 11ft 11in, it is nearly a foot more than its direct competitors. Packed within this hull are four berths, a separate galley that leaves lots of space for the saloon, and a tidy toilet and shower compartment.

As with all the entry-level flybridge boats we have tested (with the possible exception of Sealine's cavernous F34), there are always some compromises to be made internally. That said, we think Jeanneau have got the balance right. The galley is tucked away, but the payback is a proper saloon with seats on both sides. Similarly, the toilet compartment may be a tad on the small side, but that means bigger cabins.

The quality of fit and finish is pretty good. The saloon's mahogany-panelled coamings and soft cream linings add texture and contrast to an interior that is refreshingly free of bare GRP surfaces. Out on deck, the theme continues with attractive stainless steel fittings, such as scuppers and handholds, and fillets of mahogany enhancing the cockpit's appearance. A proper moulded stairway leads up to the flybridge.

Dig a bit deeper and the finish remains tidy, if a little raw, with untreated wooden frames and bulkheads under the saloon seating and between the enginebay and lazaret.

ACCOMMODATION

Buyers of this size of flybridge boat expect to find the same accommodation layout as they would in craft of up to 40ft, namely two cabins, a saloon, a galley and a toilet. So

finding the right balance of space, comfort and design is crucial.

The bright, breezy style that Jeanneau have chosen works well. It might lack the warmth and substance of the more traditional timber-clad designs, but it is clean, comfortable and easy to look after. The synthetic teak sole that runs through the interior is a perfect example: it's not as good as the real thing, but it's still prettier and more practical than carpet or GRP.

By shifting the galley down below, into a lobby that also feeds the two cabins and toilet, the feeling of space in the saloon is greatly enhanced. With less to clutter its 9ft width, it can easily accommodate six people around a smart, but sadly not fiddled, mahogany table. And there are more than enough strategically placed cabinets to hold everything from almanacs to armagnacs.

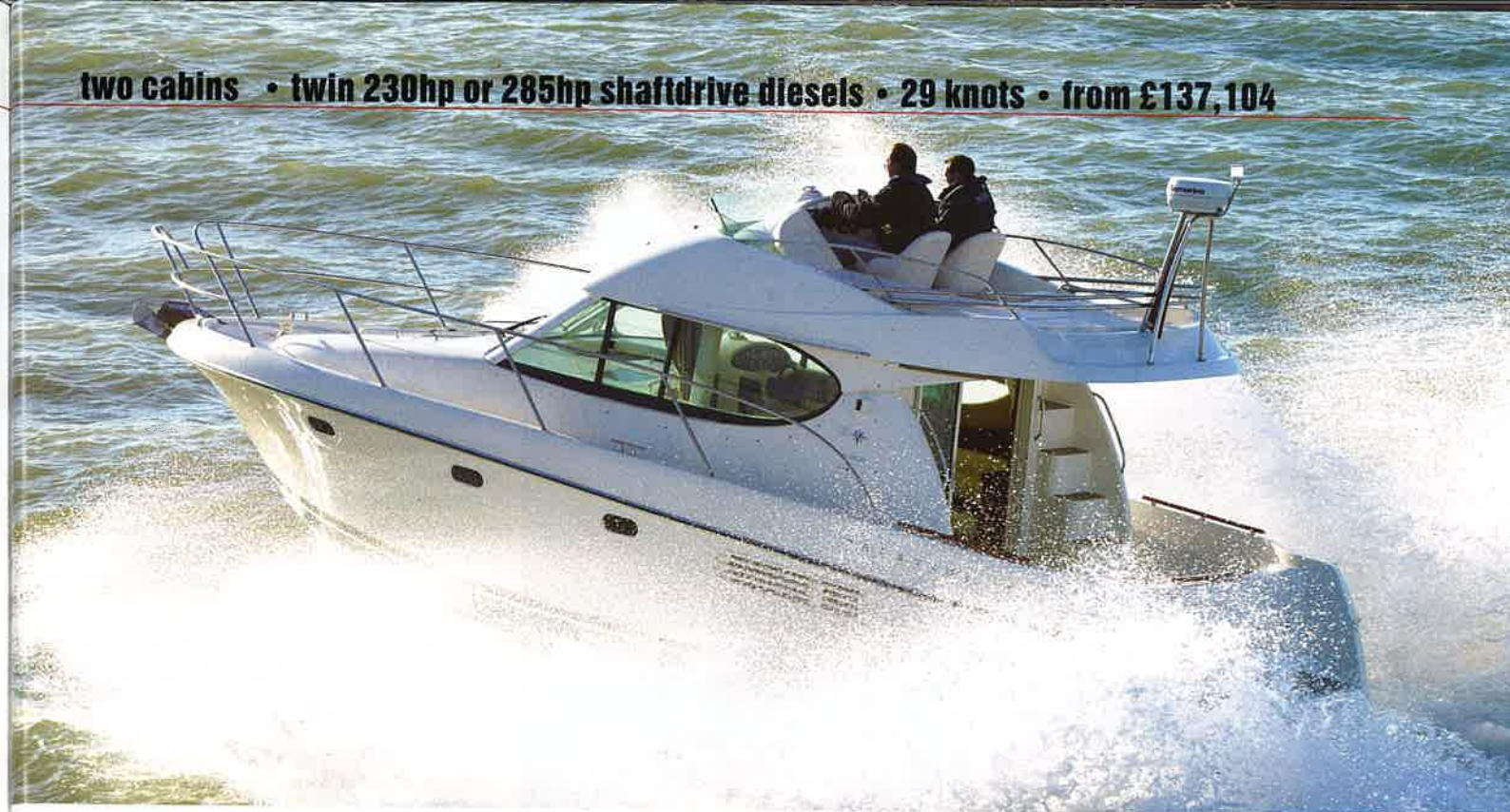
The forward stairwell is bordered to port by a tall moulding, capped with a useful hatch into the midships cabin, and to starboard by the single-seat helm station. As helms go, this looks a little odd, with very little depth to the console before it cuts away to the galley below.

Down here, the ship's cook is faced with a handy U-shaped countertop and a range of cabinets, one of which hides the fridge. A three-burner hob and microwave oven provide all the basic tools for decent meal preparation, albeit with no ventilation.

The smaller than average toilet/shower compartment is still fit for its purpose. A neat vanity unit is set behind a flush-mounted mirror, and there is an opening porthole.

There is no room for a second doorway to make this WC en-suite to the master cabin, but the latter's size and inviting appearance more than make up for the need to make a

two cabins • twin 230hp or 285hp shaftdrive diesels • 29 knots • from £137,104



short trip across the lobby. Good headroom and plenty of natural light ensure it feels spacious during the day, while an abundance of mahogany makes it feel snug and cosy after dark. Storage is plentiful, from a hanging locker to a handy bedside tray.

Instead of trying to shoehorn bunks into the midships cabin, Jeanneau have gone down the sportscruiser route, providing a low-set double berth. With the saloon bulkhead set well back from the doorway, there is plenty of standing space, and enough room for a full set of lockers.

Intelligent allocation of space, benefiting the saloon and cabins.

below The interior helm has a neat two-tier dash.



below A competent galley is set below the saloon.



EXTERIOR

In the words of every conductor worth his baton, let's take it from the top, which in this case means Jeanneau's excellent flybridge. We reckon the design is about as good as it gets in this class, and will prove so popular with skipper and guests alike that the lower helm is in danger of being seriously underused.

An L-shaped bench with a table happily seats four, or converts to a sunpad for two. Forward, snug padded bucket seats face a reassuringly tall helm console, and can be swivelled around to join any party going on behind when the boat is at anchor.

Decent-depth coamings surround the flybridge, and are topped with stainless steel guardrails, providing protection and handholds wherever you go. Their swept lines also add a little visual panache to this cleverly thought-out design.

Back at deck level, the aft cockpit features a bench seat which conceals a painted-out void, handy for ropes and tools. Below the sole (finished in teak for an extra £1800), a large lazaret will swallow the bulk of your cruising gear. Aft is an integral bathing platform.

A Jeanneau peculiarity is asymmetrical side decks. The idea behind having decks of unequal width is that it affords a full 10in of walkway to the port side; of course, this leaves something much narrower to starboard, but the assumption is that you will always try to berth along the wider side.

Should a sudden squall turn a measured port-side approach into a starboard scramble, the narrower deck is still just wide enough to shuffle along. On both sides, guardrails and a useful toerail aid your movement and add to your safety.

Good everywhere, and great up top on the safe and spacious flybridge.

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

There are the only two engine options available, both twin Volvo Penta diesels: 230hp KAMD43Ps or 285hp KAMD300 EDCs. But both are a good match for this Prestige. The choice is purely down to how much performance you need, and whether your budget can stick it.

However, if deciding on your engines is relatively straightforward, getting at them is a trickier proposition. The boat's two-tier floor arrangement doubtless helps insulate the noise, but having to lift out six separate boards to get at the machinery seems a bit laborious, to say the least.

Nor does it end there. To get at the starboard dipstick, you need to lift a separate hatch in the base of the saloon seating, which will doubtless be stuffed full of gear. Thankfully, the water strainers and batteries can be reached more easily from the lazaret.

Once you are inside the enginebay, there is enough space to crawl around inside, even if the finish leaves something to be desired.

Raw wood and plastic fuel tanks give a budget feel, which the rest of the boat does so well to avoid.

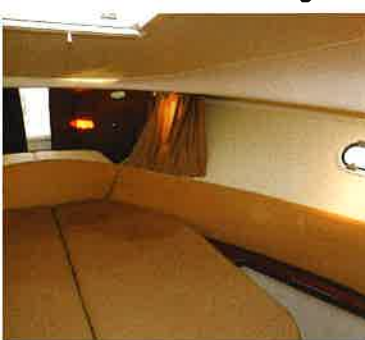
PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Fitted with the more potent of the two engine options, twin 285hp Volvo Pentas, this boat packs a mighty punch.

The pick-up is sensational. The Prestige 32 rockets from rest to 20 knots in just 8sec, with 25 knots coming along just 2sec later. It won't quite manage 30 knots flat-out but, on this kind of boat, who's counting?

Unless you are looking to break synchronised waterski records, this kind of

below The master cabin is inviting and cosy, with good storage, but the adjacent WC is not en-suite.



below With room for six people, the saloon feels spacious despite including a helm.



below The cockpit has good stowage as standard, teak as an extra.





above There is stowage under the transom seating, and the stairs to the flybridge are easy to climb.



above Up top, seating for four converts into a sunlounger and the bucket seats swivel for sociability.



performance might seem a tad unnecessary, but it's great fun. Be warned, though: the temptation to play with throttles could make for an erratic journey, not to mention tired EDC controls.

Moreover, you might find that your fuel economy starts to suffer. Better to keep things at a still swift 20-25 knots, at which speeds you can expect anything up to 1.4mpg. On this basis, the twin 70gal fuel tanks should carry you around 190 miles between fills.

On the day of our test, for once, the waters off Brighton did not throw up the kind of testing, confused seas we have come to expect. With little to trouble it, the hull moved smoothly along at cruising speeds. At

the very top of its performance curve, the ride did become a little harsh, with some degree of slam coming from the chine, but at the edge of its capabilities this is hardly a criticism.

The only part of the package that struggles to keep up with the pace is the lifeless steering. For such a dynamic boat, the turn-in is strangely slow.

Perhaps the steering is simply a victim of the sheer power of the engines? The optional trim tabs certainly seem to struggle with their output. At slower speeds, they provide a useful level of adjustment, but as the revs rise their effectiveness is swamped. Given this, and the hull's inherently good balance, we are not convinced they are really

worth the extra £1562 which Jeanneau dealers ask for them.

For a pure driving experience, a flybridge helm station is hard to beat, and this one offers two padded bucket seats that shame the single bench at the interior helm. The console is tall enough to offer some decent protection, and there's plenty of space for adding navigation equipment.

At the lower helm station, noise levels remain fairly even across the cruising range, becoming intrusive only when you push past 3500rpm. Visibility is good, too. The forward screen is aided by standard-fit demisters, and although the thick side screen pillars can impede slightly, a gentle lean forward restores your full view aft.

The design of the console ensures there is plenty of space for all manner of navigation aids and electronics. The dash is a simple two-tier affair, which runs the core engine instruments clearly across a top panel with secondary instruments set nearer and lower

down. But it's a pity the helm seat is not adjustable, and there is no 'bits' tray for odds and ends.

✓✓✓✓
Decent sea-keeping and balance combined with great power.

SPECIFICATION & VALUE

Jeanneau boats tend to come with a lighter standard inventory than some of their rivals, so it pays to consider carefully what you need, as opposed to what you want.

The extra power of the KAD300s adds £6037 to the standard price of £137,104 with 230hp KAD43s. Having lived with the smaller engines on our first Sealine F37, which was a heavier boat, we reckon these will be more than man enough for the job, returning a top speed only a few knots down on our test boat.

Although hot water, shorepower and a battery charger are standard fitments, the base price still has some way to go before it can be considered conclusive. Canopies, an anchor (just the hook), ropes and fenders, a holding tank and the cushion that makes up an occasional berth in the saloon add almost £4000, and that's before you get to the more

below You can crawl around the enginebay, but there are too many panels to remove. Access to the foredeck is easier, with the port deck being 20in wide.



wallet-challenging stuff such as a bow-thruster (£4290) or heating (£2633).

With all of the above, and more besides, our fully loaded test boat comes out at £160,833 inc VAT, although this figure would drop to £154,796 with KAD43 engines.

By way of comparison, Sealine's larger, faster F34 starts at £159,333 inc VAT with KAD43s and a standard equipment list that includes an electric windlass and trim tabs. Bringing the F34's inventory into line with our fully kitted-out Prestige would take the price up to £170,822 which makes it roughly £16,000 more.

While this makes the Jeanneau look fairly good value, we would still like to see it offered with a far more inclusive standard

specification, one that makes the published base price a more realistic starting point.

✓✓✓✓
Limited standard spec means you will spend money on extras.

Verdict

The Prestige 32 is without question an excellent introduction to the world of flybridge cruisers. If you insist on a shaft-driven boat, we don't believe there is a competitor that can stand up to its winning combination of style, comfort and ability.

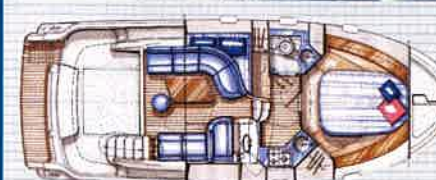
Jeanneau have designed a boat that delivers both inside and out. The flybridge is safe and luxurious, the saloon is spacious and the cabins more than comfortable. And let's not forget the impressive performance meted out by those big engines.

Only the rather ambitious asking price for a fully equipped 32 stands in the way of potential class honours. A lower base price, or a more inclusive standard inventory, would make the whole experience much sweeter.

Still, we hear on the grapevine that Jeanneau dealers can be a generous bunch when push comes to shove. So it might be worth your while looking up your nearest (but not dearest) to find out exactly what's on offer.

MBM RATING 7/10
✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓

Jeanneau Prestige 32 technical data



specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	32ft 5in (9.90m)
BEAM	11ft 11in (3.64m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 1in (0.93m)
DISPLACEMENT	6 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	140gal (640lt)
WATER CAPACITY	55gal (250lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	(starboard) 0ft 10in
HEADROOM IN WHEELHOUSE	6ft 2in
HEADROOM IN MASTER CABIN	6ft 2in
HEADROOM IN MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 8in
MASTER CABIN BERTH	6ft 3in x 4ft 7in
MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 4ft 9in

performance

engines twin Volvo Penta KAMD300 EDC diesels.
configuration 6cyl, 3.59lt, 285hp at 3800rpm.
conditions wind southwesterly Force 3, sea slight.
load fuel 100%, water 50% crew 2.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
2000	8.1	8	36	1.01	113	75
2500	13.5	13	59	1.04	116	77
3000	19.8	15	70	1.32	147	78
3200	22.1	16	73	1.38	154	79
3500	24.8	19	86	1.30	145	80
3950	29.2	25	112	1.16	129	83

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

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 230hp Volvo Penta diesels	£137,104
with twin 285hp Volvo Penta diesels	£143,141
COMMISSIONING, DELIVERY & LAUNCH	standard
ANTI-FOULING	£800
COMFORT PACK	£2,572
(includes flybridge cover, sundeck cushions, window covers, crockery & cutlery, removable saloon carpet)	
CANOPIES	£1,306
TEAK COCKPIT DECKING	£1,801
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£2,097
BOW-THRUSTER	£3,691
TRIM TABS	£1,417
HOLDING TANK	£1,111
BOAT AS TESTED	£160,833

ENQUIRIES Walton Marine, Brighton Marina,
Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5HA.

Tel: 01273 670707. www.waltonmarine.com

the rivals



SEALINE F34
from £149,500 inc VAT
Very spacious cruiser with a flybridge that even beats the Jeanneau's. Real speed and manoeuvrability from stern drives.
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A smaller boat, but one with a similar amount of interior space, and a higher level of finish at that.
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